

Developmental Contributions in the Philosophy of Abdallah Cheriet

الإسهامات التنموية في فكر عبد الله شريط

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Abstract :

This study addresses a critical topic in the history of Algerian thought: the concept of development in the philosophy of 'Abd Allah Cheriet. It seeks to illuminate the condition of Algerian society across its cultural, social, religious, and political dimensions during and after the era of brutal colonization and the resulting repression and tyranny. These historical circumstances significantly hindered Algeria's developmental trajectory compared to that of industrialized Western nations, leading to a prolonged state of subordination. Among the intellectual responses to this stagnation is the philosophical work of the thinker 'Abd Allah Cheriet, whose writings reflect a sustained effort to confront underdevelopment. This study examines the intellectual tools and frameworks he proposed to overcome this regression and rehabilitate both rational thinking and intellectual clarity within Algerian society. It emphasizes the pivotal role of philosophy in this effort, particularly in relation to development and the demands of modernity across various domains. Philosophy, in this context, is seen as a vital contributor to the advancement of Arab societies, offering epistemological insight and the correction of errors as a foundation for envisioning a secure and progressive future.

Keywords: Development, Reason, Modernity, Freedom, Ideology

ملخص باللغة العربية

تعالج هذه الدراسة احد المواضيع الهامة في تاريخ الفكر الجزائري، والمتمثلة في مسألة التنمية في فلسفة عبد الله شريط، ومحاولة تسليط الضوء على واقع المجتمع الجزائري بمختلف أبعاده (الثقافية، الاجتماعية، الدينية، السياسية)، وذلك أثناء وبعد فترة الاستعمار الغاشم وما خلفه من قمع واستبداد، الأمر الذي ترتب عنه تكبير عجلة التطور أمام الدول المتقدمة (العالم الغربي)، والدخول في التبعية، فمن جملة التحديات التي وقفت أمام هذا الانهيار فلسفة المفكر عبد الله شريط من خلال ما تضمنته كتاباته عبر مساره الفكري، حيث سنستعرض جملة الآليات التي قدمها للخروج من بؤرة التخلف وإعادة الاعتبار للعقل الإنساني وطريقة التفكير السليمة التي ينبغي على المجتمع الجزائري التحلي بها، مبرزاً الدور المنوط الذي تؤديه الفلسفة في هذا السياق، خاصة ما تعلق بمشروع التنمية و ما تمليه علينا الحدائثة من منتجاتها في جميع الأبعاد، كما أن للفلسفة دور له من الأهمية ما تسمح للشعوب العربية النهوض بوعيا وثقافتها عن طريق إضفاء الجانب الإبيستيمي من خلال مراجعة الأخطاء وتصحيحها للتمكن من التنبؤ لمستقبل آمن.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التنمية : العقل : الحدائثة : الحرية : الإيديولوجيا.

***- Introduction**

The issue of development has gained prominence in both the Arab and Western world's due to its importance across intellectual, cultural, economic, and social contexts, among other dimensions. In discussing the philosophy of development in Algeria, we are compelled to recall one of the prominent Algerian thinkers, the late Professor Abdallah Cheriet. His ideas and contributions played a crucial role in rethinking the mechanisms and premises needed to improve society.

Dr. Cheriet's life in the second half of the twentieth century is vital to understanding the circumstances of the time. This period was heavily influenced by French colonialism, which impacted various sectors of Algerian society. Dr. Cheriet was one of the leading intellectuals and revolutionaries of his time, which underscores his deep connection to his society. His relentless pursuit of progress aimed to break free from inertia and stagnation, and to liberate societies from the tyranny of colonial rule. The works of Abdallah Cheriet illustrate the rich diversity of phenomena affecting individual identity within society. His broad knowledge across history, sociology, philosophy, and religion positions him as a thinker with great intellectual depth.

Critic Abdallah Cheriet presents a set of principles based on his sharp critique of a society dominated by foreign powers. This is evident from the various forms of invasion, and, according to Cheriet, the most troubling aspect was the passive acceptance of foreign ideas without any critical engagement. This study will focus on key points related to these issues, which are framed by the following questions: What is the background of Abdallah Cheriet's approach to development? Where are the features of development visible in his philosophy? How far have his developmental approaches progressed in Algeria?

The primary goal of Abdallah Cheriet's writings was to revive the spirit of development in Algerian society. He sought this revival within the context of a socialist system, which had created an environment of openness, progress, and freedom of expression. In this atmosphere, intellectual discussions on various issues flourished, without the restrictions or limitations seen today. Today, however, we face a system characterized by bias and inertia, which hinders progress, both in the present and for the future. Dr. Cheriet's work was further motivated by the presence of other influential researchers and activists of the time, such as Malik Ibn Nabi and Abdul Majid Mezian. Together, these figures contributed to a vision that sought to move Algerian society forward, focusing on its needs and aspirations.

Abdallah Cheriet's philosophy was marked by a dual vision. The first aspect was his effort to free society from colonial oppression and tyranny. The second was his desire to keep pace with the development of the Western world, correcting the principles that governed backward

societies. In his work, he stated, "We have recognized some of our shortcomings, whether in religious beliefs, political and social deviations, cultural misconceptions, or psychological distortions" (Abdallah Cheriet, 1975, p. 7). This statement reflects his view that numerous flaws existed in the minds of Arabs, particularly Algerians, which created contradictions in their way of thinking and hindered the ability to foresee what was necessary for progress.

From this perspective, Abdallah Cheriet seeks to emphasize the essential role philosophy can play in restoring the position we ought to occupy. In his contribution to advancing the development project, Dr. Cheriet demonstrates a mastery of dialogue. He uses this skill to navigate the diverse perspectives within society and to anticipate the many errors that this collective may carry. This ability facilitates the process of identifying, correcting, and overcoming the shortcomings that hinder the intellectual development of Arab society.

It is also important to highlight the position of the scholar Ibn Khaldun, particularly in his writings and studies on morality and its importance in regulating human behavior. He emphasizes the transmission of values and the ideal image that should be conveyed. This focus is evident in Dr. Cheriet's doctoral dissertation, which centers on "Ibn Khaldun's Practical Moral Thought," aligning closely with the same intellectual direction Cheriet advocates. He places strong emphasis on the mental dimension and its contribution to enhancing the effectiveness of thought in general. This process leads to certainty in the understanding of phenomena and the appropriate ways to engage with them.

Furthermore, the analysis of ideas supports a rational approach based on logic and aligned with the demands of contemporary lived reality. However, the most notable feature of human intellectual composition, particularly in the context of reform, lies in its intuitive—or *badīhī*—mode of thinking. Notably, Abdallah Cheriet anchors his perspective on two foundational statements. The first is drawn from the Greek philosopher Socrates: "Know thyself." The second comes from the Arab-Andalusian philosopher Ibn Bājjah: "Fix thyself by thyself."

The foundational reference upon which Abdallah Cheriet builds his vision is the concept of reform, grounded in religious doctrine and ethics derived from the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet. This ethical and spiritual framework is the same one that the scholar Ibn Badis devoted his life to preserving and implementing.

The consequences of long-standing stagnation and regression in Arab societies—conditions that persisted for decades—compelled Abdallah Cheriet to present a series of critical issues for

discussion and clarification. His goal was to reveal the fallacies that have hindered, and continue to hinder, societal development. Cheriet's approach seeks to engage with the modern world through a dynamic framework that aligns with contemporary progress and the pursuit of growth and prosperity. In this context, his method of criticism reshaped a number of commonly used concepts. He reinterpreted them from a new perspective, focusing on the nature of the concepts themselves. This introduces us to a core dimension in his thought: the issue of concept formation.

1 – The Concept Issue:

The concept plays a vital role in the history of science. The *term* serves as the fundamental tool for defining all types of knowledge and is a reflection of the civilizational essence of each nation. It expresses the underlying meaning of individual terminology. Consequently, concepts represent an intellectual system characterized by internal harmony, yet they are also shaped by temporal shifts and differ in their connotations across various cultural environments. Terms, in this sense, are components of broader conceptual systems. They emerge from concepts and contribute significantly to shaping cultural identity and directing the trajectory of education.

In this regard, André Lalande, in his *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie*, defines a concept as "the idea in the sense as abstract and general or at least generalizable, and the various doctrines differ about the perception and interpretation of the formation of concepts" (Qamiti Khadija, "The Problem of Concepts in Contemporary Intellectual Critical Discourse: Muhammad Abed Al-Jabri and George Tarabshi as a Model," *Journal of Social and Human Sciences*, No. 1, 2020, p. 188).

The discussion surrounding "the issue of the concept" in Abdallah Cheriet's work is not merely significant; it is a matter worthy of earnest struggle. Many concepts have been lost or conflated amidst confusion and suffocation, necessitating reevaluation and correction. Moussa Mairech articulates this sentiment: "The issue of the concept of Abdallah Cheriet is not only an important issue, but it is an issue worthy of man to fight for a real battle, because many of them were lost and mixed in the midst of congestion and suffocation, which requires recounting and correction" (*Islamic Thought in the Maghreb: Studies and Research in the Algerian Mind*, Dar Al-Kitab Publishing and Distribution, Cairo, 2009, p. 75).

Describing this battle, Mairech further states: "It is a more dangerous battle than the battle to liberate the homeland from the colonizer, then, is the battle of concepts in which the Algerian people must win to deepen the best of its past and to reach this past with a better future than a contradictory turbulent present" (*Islamic Thought in the Maghreb: Studies and Research in the Algerian Mind*, Dar Al-Kitab Publishing and Distribution, Cairo, 2009, p. 76).

As conclusive evidence of Abdallah Cheriet's focus on the issue of concepts, he dedicated specific attention to the "Battle of Concepts," elaborating on the pitfalls encountered by Arab science in general and Algerian society in particular. Through this analysis, he highlighted contradictions in modes of thinking, not only within cognitive and cultural domains but extending to economic, political, and even religious spheres. These contradictions stem from the misuse of concepts by groups employing them without a clear understanding of their meanings and implications.

Dr. Cheriet emphasizes that concepts contribute to societal development across various fields. He clarifies that "Arab societies are generally characterized by a tendency to work directly without setting preconceptions, directed ideas and drawn plans, and the real battle is not over terminology; rather, the battle is the production of what meets our material and mental needs" (Saim Abdel Hakim, *Globalization and Cultural Controversy between Openness and Closure, Journal of Communication and Acculturation*, Publications of the World of Education, Casablanca, 2010, p. 115).

It is understood from this statement that the real conflict identified by Abdallah Cheriet is an intellectual and conceptual one, a battle that is fundamentally different from the physical struggle of arms and force. The conflict, as Cheriet explains, is not fought on the battlefield but in the realm of thought and discourse. The essence of this "battle" is situated in the arena of hybrid and contradictory meanings and perceptions, where concepts are often distorted or misused. Abdallah Cheriet observes, "The Islamic world has become devoid of valid concepts at a time when it needs concepts as a weapon in the face of the West and the things we buy from conceptually strong societies" (Abdallah Cheriet, *Battle of Concepts*, National Company for Publishing and Distribution, Algeria, 1981, p. 47).

This statement highlights the centrality of concepts as the tools of intellectual empowerment. Cheriet argues that without valid concepts, societies are left vulnerable to external ideological influences, especially from the West, which often operates with a clearly defined conceptual framework. For Arab societies, this battle is one of reclaiming, redefining, and reconstructing concepts that reflect their cultural, religious, and intellectual heritage. By doing so, they can forge a path that resists the imposition of foreign ideologies and build a strong intellectual foundation to guide their societal development.

2- The Problem of Ideology:

One of the most significant issues that shaped the Algerian thinker Abdallah Cheriet's cognitive framework is the inconsistent relationship between philosophical thinking and the ideological aspect. The latter, represented by a set of intellectual systems adopted by a certain group, exerts control over individuals or societies. In reality, the issue of ideology does not emerge from a singular direction or field but rather varies and multiplies across different sectors (political, intellectual, religious, etc.) that belong to the system based on it. Thus, according to Cheriet, there is often a neglect of the role that philosophy can play in this context, as ideology cannot achieve any substantial goal without deep, reflective thinking based on knowledge that analyzes and critiques the reality of society.

Cheriet dedicates part of his work, particularly in his book *The Ideological Problem and Development Issues*, to review the importance of philosophy and insist on its necessary presence within the Arab intellectual system. The book also aims to highlight the mental fallacy adopted by Arab society, which believes that philosophical thinking is mythical and disconnected from the practical realities of changing society. This fallacy stems from the belief that philosophy is primarily concerned with metaphysical issues, leading it to be marginalized for centuries. However, Cheriet suggests that philosophy today has been freed from many of the metaphysical traps and abstract problems that had consumed it for ages: "Philosophy today has been freed from many metaphysical labyrinths and abstract problems in which dozens of centuries have drowned" (Abdallah Cheriet, *Complete Realization*, Volume I, Part I, Al-Sahl Publications, Algeria, 2009, p. 127).

What supports this view is the movement of philosophy from the realm of abstraction and theorizing toward being a link between thought and reality, starting in the period of modernity, specifically the early nineteenth century. This period marked the emergence of new curricula, methods, and mechanisms aimed at realizing the project of modernity, which in turn paved the way for the development of societies and the awakening of individuals within those societies. As Cheriet argues, philosophy must start from the reality of man and work on improving what he is, focusing on what surrounds him to help him progress and keep pace with the times as dictated by the conditions of the civilized world (the Western world).

The reality of the developed world as a model of progress and prosperity did not come by chance, but rather through rational and logical thinking derived from the intellectual sciences that are embedded within society. This progress is reflected in the economic, political, cultural, and other aspects of life. Philosophy, in its contribution, serves as an indicator of a lived reality, not an abstract measure. According to Abdallah Cheriet, this progression will not be achieved in

backward societies unless they return to reforming man himself. As Malik Ibn Nabi famously states, "If man moves, society moves, and if he inhabits the housing of society and history" (Malik Ibn Nabi: *Translated Reflections*, Omar Bagharawi, Supervision of Malik Ibn Nabi Seminar, Dar Al-Fikr, Syria, 1989, p. 129) (5).

Accordingly, "True philosophy, in his opinion, is the pragmatic philosophy in which he talks about philosophical realism that does not jump from reality... Rather, through the impulses of current life in a way that transcends reality, and the difference between future exploration and realistic descriptivity is what devotes eternity to philosophical ideas" (Abdallah Cheriet, *The Ideological Problem and Development Issues*, University Press, Algeria, 1981, p. 5). This definition emphasizes how the features of ideological thinking become clear, through which human effectiveness and an understanding of its issues are generated and rationally addressed. It can be said that there is no real separation between what is rationally philosophical and what is ideological. As Nassif Nassar remarks, "The return of philosophy to ideology or vice versa, nor the separation between them, as the essence of ideology is different from the essence of philosophy" (Nassif Nassar, *Philosophy in the Battle of Ideology*, Dar Al-Tali'ah for Printing and Publishing, Beirut, 1986, p. 7).

3-Criticism of Inherited Ideas

What distinguished the writings of the second half of the nineteenth century is the critique against inherited ideas that had become major obstacles to the development of Arab society, specifically Algerian society. Religion, morality, Arabism, identity, and Islam in general became data subject to progress in terms of the way of dealing and understanding them. This new approach sought to correct past mistakes that were once subject to rumination and inertia—mistakes that neither kept pace with civilizational progress nor contributed to societal reform.

The question that can be asked in this context is: How can Algerian society benefit from the products of civilization, especially when it is difficult to access these ideas in the thought of Abdallah Cheriet?

It is very unfortunate that the answer to such fundamental questions must evoke what was absent on a day when it was needed, which is the philosophical employment based on the dislocation of concepts and their reformulation according to the requirements of the present. This is where the danger lies, as Abdallah Cheriet warned himself and his contemporaries, because the products of civilization have a strong connection to the history of thought. The latter can only be

realized through the activity of the mind leading to certainty. What Arab societies can be sure of today is knowing what should be done to overcome subjective obstacles such as over-emotional superstition. From here, it becomes clear to us that "society produces, whatever its degree of development, moral and aesthetic seeds that we find in its customs, habits, and traditions—that is, in what we term to call (its culture) in the widest meanings of this word" (Malik bin Nabi, *Conditions of Revival*, trans. Omar Kamel Maskawi, Abdul Saboor Shaheen, Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage, Qatar, no date, p. 147). This culture inhabits the soul of every human being belonging to an Arab (Algerian) society, and its source comes from its surroundings and its lived reality. Its material consists of "the newspaper, the street, the battle we are fighting every day, and the experience is the one in which we can find the basic values of ethics" (Abdallah Cheriet, *The Moral Thought of Ibn Khaldun*, National Company for Publishing and Distribution, Algeria, 1st Edition, 1981, p. 340).

From this point of view, it is possible to deal with modernity, renaissance, and everything that confronts civilization in general in a rational and changeable way, whether through criticism or transcendence. In other words, it is possible to get out of the dark controversy that remained hidden in the past of the Arab societies that replaced the delay and left the long distance between us and the renaissance achieved by the West. This is because "their philosophers have tried since Plato to Bertrand Russell to introduce these moral principles into the public policy of the country and in the minds of politicians, professors, and educators, and they do not enter politics into ethics, that is, they do not color ethics with transient politics, but rather print politics with permanent ethics" (Abdallah Cheriet, *Complete Works*, Volume I, Part I, Al-Sahl Publications, Algeria, 2009, p. 130).

Accordingly, a tape in many stations points to the value of philosophical principles that allow the possibility of knowledge at the level of all contexts related to the advancement of society through the reconsideration of the mind and what can be achieved by criticism and review of ideas. Accordingly, "criticism as determined by Muhammad Arkoun and practiced in his research lies in dismantling the cognitive structures of the mind that include theological systems, interpretations, and histories in order to transform them into a restless workshop. Rationality, as it is, is only a temporary composition that is later overcome in order to replace it with another rationality that is more compatible with new data" (Nayla Abu Nader, *Heritage and Methodology between Arkoun and Al-Jabri*, Arab Network for Studies and Publishing, Beirut, 1st Edition, 2008, p. 42).

In this way, our heritage can be saved and reformed while preserving the elements of Arab (Algerian) development, by improving the thought of Arab civilization with its tools and

mechanisms that contribute to creating a combination between what is heritage and what is required by the current at various levels. This is not to say "we move away from just glorifying the language, which is far from society, as the same happens with the glorification of moral principles, which are far from life" (Abdallah Cheriet, *Moral Thought of Ibn Khaldun*, Mufil Publishing, Algeria, no date, 2008).

Conclusion

Based on the aforementioned, it can be said that Abdallah Cheriet stands as one of the key intellectual figures advocating for the liberation of Arab societies, societies that have long been dominated by hegemonic forces, seeking to assert their existence through a group of thinkers. These thinkers have significantly contributed to creating strategies and tools to overcome the challenges of underdevelopment, particularly in our context, which is plagued by defeatism and the belief that colonialism is inevitable.

We can also conclude that the true struggle for the liberation of peoples, which drives growth and development, is not achieved through forms of force and weapons. Instead, it is deeply tied to a positive mindset that emanates primarily from within society. This mindset is embodied in the true principles that can be upheld across various contexts—whether religious, political, intellectual, or otherwise—all of which aim at societal reform.

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that Abdallah Cheriet's contributions can be seen as a bridge connecting the innate cultures of the past to the idea of reform as presented by figures like Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis, while aligning with current intellectual currents that are closely tied to his ideas. His call for the necessity to adjust concepts and return to mental awareness, as well as how to engage with the products of Western civilization, forms the cornerstone of his thought. His approach seeks to address the aspects of underdevelopment and eliminate dependency through contemporary cognitive ideologies, all while preserving the principles and heritage of the Islamic nation.

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