A Philosophical Reading of the Concept of Revolution According to Bukhari Hamana

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Abstract:
This study aims to shed light on one of the most prominent Algerian thinkers, Boukhari Hamana. He seeks to examine the philosophy of revolution as a political concept, exploring the mechanisms for activating the term and linking it to lived reality, while also exploring the possibility of experiencing the idea in its theoretical dimension. He aims to initiate a philosophical and psychological inquiry into the reinterpretation of history and its course, emphasizing the relevance of the idea and its religious manifestations. It is a call for liberation from the brutal colonialism that ravaged the Algerian nation.
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Introduction

Revolution is one of the most influential human phenomena in the course of history, as it has marked turning points in the fate of peoples who rose against injustice, colonization, and tyranny. It is not merely a passing rebellion but a conscious liberatory act aimed at radical change in the political, social, and intellectual structure of society. Contemporary history has witnessed many revolutions that have documented profound transformations in human reality. This is reflected in the works of many Arab thinkers motivated by cultural belonging to their homelands, which were subjected to occupation. Boukhari Hamana serves as an example reflecting the attention of thinkers to the issues of their countries and their interaction with prevailing conditions.

For Boukhari Hamana, revolution struggles toward changing reality and advancing in all forms and at all levels, whether intellectual or cultural. It is a call to break chains in all their manifestations, which may have led to the emergence of the theory of cultural criticism represented in postcolonial cultural studies as a reaction to the acts and illegitimate practices of colonization. This aimed to restore everything taken from the peoples of the Third World, from freedom to identity, including culture, which has historically been a foundational element of societies and a tool for the division and classification of peoples according to existing cultures and the level of development of these cultures. Western culture was set as a standard to judge other cultures as advanced or backward, and thus to determine whether a culture is valid or obsolete, to be replaced by a supposedly better one. Yet the alternative culture is always Western.

Thus, we pose the following question: **What is the concept of revolution according to Boukhari Hamana?**

1. The Concept of Liberation

Liberation has long been a central theme in human thought, as societies throughout history have sought to achieve freedom politically, socially, and intellectually. From national independence movements to intellectual struggles against oppression and domination, the concept of liberation has evolved to encompass deeper dimensions beyond mere removal of colonial or tyrannical rule. At the heart of this discussion, the philosophy of liberation emerges as a framework aiming to dismantle structures that reinforce dependency and alienation. Liberation is not limited to freeing oneself from external constraints but extends to freeing consciousness from restrictive modes of thinking, making philosophy a tool for understanding power relations and emancipating the self from all forms of subjugation.

Michel Foucault views the concept of liberation as tied to understanding the relationship between power and subjectivity. He asserts that liberation cannot be achieved simply by removing external authority, such as colonial or oppressive regimes, but requires deep awareness, as power is not just direct coercion. Power is defined as: *"One of the basic functions of social organization, it is the commanding force capable of directing human activities by coordinating conflicting interests of individuals or groups and uniting them under one administration through persuasion or coercion."*

This can be interpreted as power not always being coercive; it can be persuasive and subtle, like values and traditions that appear natural but actually shape individuals and determine their behavior.

Liberation is the reshaping of the self. The primary goal of exercising the self is for the individual to become intellectually and existentially independent, not entirely subject to the social and cultural systems that shape them: *"The liberated self from matters of the future represents a fortified position and protects itself within the context it belongs to."* *"Liberation is the act of becoming free, and thus, liberation lies in the process of granting someone the right to determine their destiny politically, socially, economically, and culturally."*

Liberation is a process through which the individual is empowered to control their fate and exercise their abilities freely, without constraints. Liberation is not merely an individual state but also encompasses social, economic, political, and cultural dimensions. Achieving liberation requires removing obstacles that prevent individuals from exercising their rights freely in all aspects of life.

2. The Concept of Revolution

Revolution is a radical movement aimed at reshaping the political, social, or economic system of a given society. Revolutions often arise from injustice, oppression, or corruption, where popular anger escalates into a mass movement seeking justice, freedom, and reform. Revolutions differ in nature and methods: they may be peaceful, relying on protests and civil disobedience, or armed, involving confrontation and violence. Outcomes may result in positive change for a better future or chaos and unrest aimed at toppling oppressive governments. A revolution seems impossible until it becomes inevitable, and when inevitable, it occurs as if it were never impossible. This reflects how crises can lead to a revolutionary explosion initially unexpected but ultimately unavoidable.

Karl Marx says: *"Revolutions are the locomotives of history."* Marx meant that revolutions are not mere transient events or social disturbances but driving forces of history and social change. Just as a locomotive pushes train cars forward along the tracks, these revolutions propel societies toward radical transformations that reshape political, economic, and social systems.

3. Revolution in Language

Linguistically: *"Disturbance and commotion commonly associated with the verb 'to rise' (هاج)."*

In *Lisan al-Arab* by Ibn Manzur, the verb *thara* means *"to surge or rise"*, and *thara al-shay'* means it surged or rose. From this linguistic root, the word *thawra* (revolution) was derived to indicate movement, uprising, and change.

For instance, *"Thara al-ghubar"* (the dust rose) indicates disturbance and sudden change. It is also said: *"Thur al-ghadab haddah, wa al-tha'ir al-ghadban"*, meaning the roots of revolution are tied to commotion, eruption, and anger, also associated with upheaval and radical change.

In *Al-Mu'jam al-Wasit*: *"Thara thauran wa thuran"* means it surged and spread. Examples: *"Thara al-dukhan wa al-ghubar wa thara al-dam bi fulan wa tharat bihi al-hasba"*—the smoke, dust, blood, or disease surged violently.

The Qur'anic example: " فَأَلْمُغِيرَاتِ صُبْحًا فَأَثَرْنَ بِهِ نَقْعًا " (*Al-Adiyat 3:4*)—refers to horses attacking in the morning, raising thick dust in their charge, illustrating sudden violent commotion.

4. The Technical Concept of Revolution

The linguistic meaning of revolution implies strong connotations of movement and drive, denoting violent change and disturbance. However, as a social and historical phenomenon, revolution has become more complex in political and philosophical thought, understood as a collective movement seeking radical transformation of the existing system, whether political, economic, or cultural.

Technically, revolution carries intellectual and organizational dimensions, varying by philosopher or philosophical and political references. Abdul Moneim Hanfi defines it as: *"A fundamental change in the state system that replaces one ruling class with another. If the change is not ideologically comprehensive in all aspects of human activity in society, it is better termed an uprising or merely a coup."*

Different philosophical perspectives exist. For instance, Hannah Arendt sees the essence of revolution not as violence but as creating a new political space based on freedom and participation, distinguishing it from rebellion or mere violent overthrow.

Modern views link revolution closely with the idea that history can start anew, a completely fresh story, as emphasized in Arendt's book *On Revolution*: the ultimate goal of revolution is freedom.

Jamil Saliba defines it as: *"A fundamental change in society's conditions not following constitutional methods,"* implying deep societal transformation through popular movement or confrontation with authority, rather than conventional legal reform.

Karl Marx views revolution as *"a means of social growth and development; the socialist revolution aims to abolish capitalism and end human exploitation by humans."*

Malek Bennabi states: *"A revolution cannot achieve its goals unless it transforms the human being irreversibly in behavior, thought, and speech,"* implying that without deep intellectual and cultural change, a revolution will fail or reproduce the problems it opposed.

Dr. Souarit Ben Omar, discussing Sartre and revolution (with the Algerian Revolution as a model), says: *"Revolution (la révolution) is a transformative act by humans, shaking what was natural in their life, often violent and radical."*

The Algerian Revolution was not a regional issue for Algerians alone; the desire for freedom and independence extended beyond borders, shared by many free voices outside Algeria, including Sartre, as a reaction to French colonial atrocities. Sartre's stance represents human solidarity and ethical engagement, reflecting a wider intellectual response in France.

Boukhari sees true philosophy as capable of causing radical change and revolution. This philosophical shock transforms human life from mere existence toward death, as Heidegger suggested, to existence aiming for self-realization, with the ultimate goal not being death but the achievement of self.

Thus, according to Boukhari, revolution requires philosophical consciousness. Without philosophy, revolution leads to chaos; with it, revolution attains purpose and direction, avoiding metaphysical speculation disconnected from real-life struggles. He states: *"If revolutionary philosophy were merely an arbitrary alignment of reality with reason, as Hegel suggested, the absurdity of reality and the necessity of revolution against it would not emerge, nor could revolution itself be conceived."*

Boukhari's concept of revolution: *"It is the process of society aiming to be radical and

comprehensive, making what preceded it different from what follows, through the elevation of individual and collective consciousness, not to reject reality but to push for its transformation."

The aim is radical change through awareness, not solely via violence or arms. Collective awareness drives societal development and improvement. Boukhari links the Qur'an to revolution, interpreting the term as *"change"* (since the word *thawra* does not appear in the Qur'an): *"Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves"* (Surah Ar-Ra'd 13:11). The Qur'anic concept of revolution implies continuous spiritual and material transformation of humans toward betterment. A revolution without change cannot be considered a revolution.

He further defines it as: *"Revolution is a rupture in history, dividing time, thoughts, traditions, laws, and ways of thinking and expression,"* signifying a moment of civilizational birth, demolishing the old and building a new reality in thought, culture, law, and consciousness.

Intellectual and religious ijtihad (independent reasoning) is a type of quiet revolution aimed at changing thought methods and reconstructing religious and social consciousness to serve liberation and progress. Boukhari states: *"Such a process requires effort in all branches of knowledge, especially in religious sciences, to support, guide, and rationalize this awakening and to clarify the concept of Islam in governance and leadership, facilitating dialogue between the awakening and political authorities in the Islamic world."*

Thus, a successful revolution, whether social or political, requires a strong intellectual and cultural foundation, achieved through ijtihad, to prevent revolution from being mere emotional reaction instead of conscious civilizational change.

Hence, according to Hamana, revolution is not only rebellion, uprising, or resistance against injustice and tyranny but a liberatory act of radical change across all dimensions, surpassing political, military, and violent means to reach societal consciousness and the pursuit of building free, dignified humans. Revolution is an existential and ethical process engaging popular will and civilized intellectual awareness.

5. The Philosophy of November According to Boukhari Hamana

The philosophy of November, according to Boukhari, is *"a philosophy of national liberation through revolution."* He does not mean it as a revolution solely for reclaiming land or ending French colonization but as a deep intellectual and existential project to liberate Algerians through conscious and organized revolutionary action. The philosophy of November aims to free the mind from alienation, the identity from distortion, and the will from dependency—the philosophical path to self-liberation.

Boukhari states: *"What concerned the November 1954 Revolution primarily was not merely slogans or abstract theorization, but the unity of the Algerian people, mobilized morally and materially to regain their stolen freedom and dignity, even through armed struggle."*

The November Revolution was not devoid of thought, as colonial powers claimed, but arose from popular awareness and deep experience of injustice. Thus, the philosophy of November embodies the essence of Algerian national thought, a living intellectual experience reflecting the nation's resolve to liberate itself. It provides the revolution with its profound meaning as a comprehensive liberatory project, not mere political rebellion. This is the reality of modern and contemporary Algerian national thought, explaining the true philosophy of November 1954.

Many researchers have addressed the November Revolution from multiple perspectives—historical, political, and social—but Boukhari Hamana offered a different approach, giving the revolution a deep philosophical dimension. He sought to go beyond historical narration to see in this revolution an embodiment of what he called the *"Philosophy of November."* This philosophical perspective does not rely on abstract theorization or borrowing from other

revolutions but emerges from the specificity of the Algerian experience itself—that is, from the suffering, struggle, and resistance of the people. Finally, *"A reader of the book Philosophy of the Algerian Revolution fully understands the intellectual efforts Boukhari made in transferring the study of the November Revolution from its historical framework to another framework, the philosophical one."*

Thus, according to Hamana, the Philosophy of November is not merely a justificatory idea or a post-facto organization of the revolution; it is prior and concomitant consciousness accompanying revolutionary action, derived from the reality of the people and their movement toward freedom and the restoration of dignity.

This revolution also succeeded in expelling France, which had remained historically connected to Algeria and its revolution. This success was due to the triumph of the national idea, aimed at transforming reality and regaining national sovereignty to build a strong, independent, and free state. In this context, Boukhari says: *"The Philosophy of November confirmed that the revolution it embodied, which surprised many, was not a gratuitous or spontaneous event but the inevitable, swift culmination of the struggle that generations of the Algerian people had led against the colonizer."*

Anyone familiar with the true history of the Algerian people knows that the Algerian Revolution was neither random nor unplanned; it was the result of a long path of suffering, culminating in the fruit of prolonged struggle waged by successive generations against French colonialism to reclaim freedom and sovereignty.

Boukhari also attributes the success of the November Revolution, compared to other philosophies, to several reasons, including: *"the originality of its view of national reality, unity of leadership, unification of the Algerian people through armed struggle, ethical and humanistic tendencies, and finally, unconditional commitment to all causes of freedom worldwide."*

All these reasons reflected the bitter reality experienced by the Algerian people under colonialism and the suffering, oppression, and injustice it caused. From this arose the glorious November Revolution, which led the people toward independence and liberation from pessimism and despair to achieve freedom, forming an organic unity between the people and the revolution that resulted in the withdrawal of France from the homeland.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, we deduce that Boukhari Hamana succeeded in consolidating the November Revolution in the minds of future generations through his intellectual and critical study of this revolution. His research attempted to transfer the concept of revolution from a purely intellectual dimension to one linked with reality. He sought to transcend ready-made concepts of revolution, giving it a philosophical and spiritual dimension rooted in the reality of the Arab and Muslim human being. We have also shown that, according to Boukhari Hamana, revolution is not only a political movement or an uprising against colonialism but primarily a transformation of consciousness, renewal of the human being from within, and a rejection of all forms of exploitation, oppression, and alienation. Boukhari Hamana also demonstrated intellectual capacity to frame the revolution philosophically by linking political struggle with cultural and social liberation.

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