

September 27, 2021

Dear Professor Mumtaz Ali,

We are writing to propose a lasting intellectual and pedagogical partnership between the Islam Actuel Institute and the International Islamic University of Malaysia, specifically the Department of Usûl al-Dîn and Comparative Religion.

Islam Actuel is an institute that aims to make the Qur'an and the Islamic worldview work in the fields of academic study and in daily activities. In this sense, we are in line with the problematic and research program of Islamization of Knowledge.

We wish for our two institutions to benefit mutually by developing Islam as Worldview and universal Wisdom. At the moment, this is what we have to offer:

- Synthesize and translate publications by professors and intellectuals who inspire the IIUM and that we can use in our 5-year training program;
- Select and encourage French and Maghrebi students to come and pursue their studies and research at IIUM.

This is what IIUM and your Department of Usûl al-Dîn and Comparative Religion can bring us :

- The initiation to Islam as a worldview, source of knowledge and universal wisdom (through texts and interventions);
- The initiation to an Islamic Methodology of Research (through texts and interventions);
- Pedagogical advice to help the Islam Actuel Institute to design a 5-year training program, inspired by the approach of Ismail al-Faruqi but lightened, considering the particular French context;
- The organization of a Summer School with approximately thirty French and Maghrebi Muslim students in 2022.

I hope that this proposal finds a favorable response.
I remain at your disposal for any need that might arise.

Sincerely,



Mohamed Oudihat
Director of Islam Actuel Institute (Paris)
10 Rue de l'Industrie
75013 Paris, France

September 27, 2021

Dear Professor Mumtaz Ali,

The Islam Actuel Institute extends its gratitude for your timely interventions during our annual Summer School in August 2021 on the following themes:

1. Critical thinking: An Islamic Perspective
2. Crisis in Knowledge and Education
3. Need for Rethinking Knowledge and Education
4. Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan — 1982 and 1989
5. New Perspective for Education
6. Rethinking Modern Science

We hope that we will be able to renew our collaboration in the near future.

Sincerely,

Mohamed Oudihat
Director of Islam Actuel Institute (Paris)
10 Rue de l'Industrie
75013 Paris, France

CRISIS IN KNOWLEDGE AND HIGHER EDUCATION

The Problematic of Knowledge and Education: Need of Humanity

Crisis in Education

If we proceed with the project of contemporary human knowledge and higher education we find that both knowledge and education are suffering from acute crisis in contemporary time.

Hence, I argue it is not the urgent need of the *Muslims* alone; rather, the whole of humanity is suffering from this crisis.

The empirical realities of modern societies, in the east and the west, highlight the fact that highly educated people gone through modern education system as a whole have become the root cause of crisis, chaos, corruption, extremism, violence and terrorism in modern world.

Crisis in life and society is not created by the labour class or low paid workers such as vegetable seller or streets cleaners.

The weapons of mass destruction have been produced by the high quality scientists. Orders were given to them by the cream of educated people who run the state and governments.

The problem of education and knowledge is highlighted by a good number of scholars. See some remarks of the experts:

According to **Michel Godet**, the current education systems, despite vast differences between them, are suffering from crisis:

“If education is universally called into question, it is not because less is required of it, but rather because something more, and perhaps different is demanded” in *Worldwide Challenges and Crisis in Education Systems*, 1988, 243.

He identified eleven major crisis factors. Some of them are: epistemological crisis, crisis of aim, crisis in the quality of education and teachings, and teachers’ identity crisis.

For **Tom P. Abeles, modern universities have become big businesses as the leading universities of the world now behave as multinational corporations with global partners. [Rethinking the University, 2001]**

According to **Tomozii, Simona Elena and Ioana Topala there is an urgent ‘need to change the educational paradigm’ because ‘the entire world faces unprecedented challenges: economic, technological, social and personal’ and higher education is just not capable of meeting these challenges [Why Do We Need to Change the Educational Paradigm, 2014].**

Here we need to look into the views of **Harry R. Lewis, Gordon McKay Professor of Computer Science and former Dean of Harvard College. He observes the following:**

In short, universities have forgotten their larger educational role for college students. They succeed, better than ever, as creators and repositories of knowledge. But they have forgotten that the fundamental job of undergraduate education is to turn eighteen-nineteen-year-olds into twenty-one and twenty-two-year-olds, to help them grow up, to learn who they are, to search for a larger purpose for their lives, and to leave college as better human

beings. So totally has the goal of scholarly excellence overshadowed universities' educational role that they have forgotten that the two need not be in conflict.[13]

He further observes that:

Peruse the speeches of the leadership of any university and you will see plenty of talk about the world's problems, about the pursuit of knowledge, about hard work and success. Rarely will you hear more than bromides about personal strength, integrity, kindness, cooperation, compassion, and how to leave the world a better place than you found it. The greater the university the more intent it is on competitive success in the marketplace of faculty, students, and students, and research money. And the less likely it is to talk seriously to students about their development into people of good character who will know that they owe something to society for the privileged education they have received.[14]

Because according to him

Education is not the teaching of dates and formulas and laws and names and places. Education, in fact, is not mere classroom teaching at all...Universities have lost the sense that their educational mission is to transform teenagers, whose lives have been structured by their families and their high schools,

into adults with the learning and wisdom to take responsibility for their own lives and for civil society.[15]

Muslim Scholars on Education

Other than this, it was forcefully asserted by Muslim scholars that modern civilization turned science and technology into a means of both production and destruction. Modern man perceives science and technology as the means to control nature and society.

They are not for him the means to some higher end, the nature of which “is determined by the moral and spiritual character of the human agent[s] who makes the decisions.” [16]

The modern education system creates an atheist and materialist mentality and character. “The fact remains that so long as a secular and material mentality dominates our educational and political systems, product, nationalism, militarism, and economic will be the goal.” And this will necessarily result in chaos. [17]

The aim of education, in truth and reality, is to cultivate a personality and character that can fight against selfishness, greed, and all forms of evil and corruption.

In fact, a good education system is one that is able to develop one’s life on the principles of the Truth and Reality of life and the world, following a set of morals for the development of good conduct and law with the intention of establishing right relationships with our Creator, man, and nature; and thus promotes order and justice, guarantees the protection of human rights and freedom for everyone.[18]

Syed Ali Ashraf elaborates on this:

The development of personality is seen in the context of Man's relationship with Allah swt, Man, and Nature. Therefore the organization of disciplines and arrangements of subjects are planned with reference to Man as an individual, Man as a social being and Man as a being who has to live in harmony with Nature. His individuality, his collective existence and his existence as a natural entity are all conditioned by his relationship with Allah swt.[19]

In the case of modern culture and civilization, and with reference to the sociology of knowledge, the modern world has defined knowledge and education in a different way.

The only hope for solving the problems of modern life lies in the radical transformation of life and the character of man. Without bringing a radical change in the concept of life there is no possibility for a meaningful dialogue and change.

John Sahadat feels that, despite all noble intentions and good remedies, we will continue to suffer.

As long as a materialist and secularist mentality governs our educational and political institution,

revealed truth will be relegated to a secondary position in relation to science and technology; and the problem of divisiveness will persist while the threat to our total well-being will continuously haunt us...All forms of enlightened doctrines on ethics, morality, and the philosophy of education will fall short of a satisfactory remedy,...but it is not until human beings submit themselves to the will of Allah swt that there can be any real hope for a lasting remedy.[21]

Muslims' Concern

Muslim thinkers argued that Muslims need to take lessons from everyone especially modern liberal education, and definitely from western seminaries and theological colleges whose educational programs are profoundly rooted in their worldviews.

Muslims' effort to study modern liberal educational concepts for alternatives is to motivate for free, rational, and critical investigation so to propose helpful methodologies suitable in intellectual inquiry. A good education system should place so much emphasis on a sense of duty, responsibility, and community along with individuality—individual rights, freedom of choice, freedom of speech and expression. We need to recognize that having a right is subject to the sense of duty and a keen sense of responsibility. We cannot deny the whole idea of 'right' and 'wrong.'

Keeping in mind the modern liberal educational background, Muslim scholars have elaborated the central goal of a good education. At the First World Conference on Muslim Education they agreed on the following definition of the aims of education:

Education should aim at the balanced growth of the total personality of Man through the training of Man's spirit [the purpose of life], intellect, his rational self, feelings and bodily senses. Education should cater therefore for the growth of Man in all its aspects: physical, ethical, spiritual, moral, legal, intellectual, imaginative, scientific, linguistic, both individually and collectively and motivate all aspects towards goodness and the attainment of perfection. The ultimate aim of education lies in the realization of the Truth and Reality, the existence of Allah swt, complete submission to Him on the level of the individual, the community and humanity at large [22].

The aim of modern education is not in line with the above-mentioned aim of education. A good education is not meant only for Muslims. It is equally meaningful for all communities. One can observe today that it is not illiterate and uneducated people who are involved in organized crimes and corruption rather such is the domain of the highly educated.

How can they be changed? The Islamic paradigm of education is one of the measures as suggested by Muslim thinkers.

Hence, the agenda of Islamic education is not an agenda to regain the lost past glory of Islam and Muslims. The agenda of Islamic education is an agenda for the safety and security of humanity given the problems presently generated by greed and lust for power, there is no alternative to violence, terror and bomb blasts except the development of human capital on the basis of the aim of Islamic education.

The aim of education must be in line with the purpose of life, society and the world. The design of educational institutions in the modern world must be to serve the needs of people and society as well.

Integration and Islamization in General

Contemporary Muslim scholars have argued that the concepts about man, society, government, culture and civilization are presently based on the modern worldview. Even Muslim societies in the Muslim world are not an exception to this.

Hence, some scholars argue there is a need for a comprehensive Islamization of all dimensions of private and public life. But according to them, this goal cannot be achieved until and unless contemporary knowledge [disciplines] and modern educational system are Islamized. Thus, one of the outstanding proponents of Islamization and Islamization of contemporary knowledge, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas has defined Islamization as follows:

[I]n the individual, personal, existential sense Islamization refers to what is described above in which the holy Prophet represents the highest and most perfect example; in the collective, social and historical sense Islamization refers to the community's striving towards realization of the

moral and ethical quality of social perfection achieved during the age of the Holy Prophet [may God bless and give him peace].[27]

Another important exponent of this tradition, Ismail Raji al-Faruqi defined Islamization as follows:

It must be made explicit here that, in fact, “Islamization” represents the truth, the justice, the transformation, and the reformation that concerns all Muslims. Its care and concern, by definition, extends to all human beings. It seeks to bestow dignity and honor upon all humans living on this earth. “Islamization” is the call that divinely based civilization has addressed to the present world which is torn apart with disaster looming large and clear. A true Muslim is the standard bearer of that mission and he/she represents all salutary norms and values, symbolizing in practice the comprehensive model of a civilization based upon truth, justice, peace, and security. Islamic civilization is the best one suited for the current age. It is the boon that all the wise and learned, and those imbued with insight and living conscience, have been awaiting all these centuries.[28]

After elaborating the need for and meanings of Islamization, these scholars have explained the need for Islamization of contemporary knowledge as a very important mission of the Muslim *ummah vis-à-vis* mankind. For example, according to Syed Mohammad Naquib al-Attas, the process of the

Islamization of Knowledge requires firstly, the separation of foreign elements and errors from the body of knowledge.

Secondly, it demands that what is left be remoulded in accordance with Islam. He further clarifies that the Islamization of present-day knowledge does not simply mean to “accept present-day knowledge as it is, and then hope to ‘Islamize’ it merely by ‘granting’ or ‘transplanting’ into it Islamic sciences and principles; this method will but produce conflicting results not altogether beneficial nor desirable.”[156][29]

Similarly, Ismail Faruqi made it clear that the “Islamization of Knowledge” represents only one aspect of “Islamization”. In its entirety, “Islamization of Knowledge” is a comprehensive, normative framework for individuals and society, for thought and action, for education and practice, for knowledge and organization, for the rulers and the ruled, for this world and for the world to come. By applying “Islamization” to everything one does, a Muslim seeks the pleasure of Allah [SWT] by practicing what is true and just, through transformation and improvement, to achieve happiness, peace and security in this life as well as in the hereafter.”[30]

In recent years in the discourse of Islamization of Human Knowledge a few new aspects have been identified. They are related to the concept of IOHK. This will be discussed shortly. I would first like to introduce to you the views of some pioneers of this concept and movement. IOHK is for me both a concept and movement.

Historical Background of Integration and Islamization

Some people are unable to understand the proper background of the movement of IOHK. They relate it to the past movement of Imam al-Ghazzali and some other relates it to the time of the Prophet Muhammad [pbuh]. It is a new concept and movement. We find some reference to it in the writings of Said Nursi, Ali Shariati, Muhammad Asad, Muhammad Iqbal, Sayyid Qutb, Sayyid Mawdudi, Sayyid Hossein Nasr etc.

Nasr refers to the first International Conference on Muslim Education held in Makkah in 1977 and says: “For several years I had worked on this project with Abdallah Naseef, then the President of King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah, Syed Ali Ashraf, Bangladesh, a well-known Muslim educator.

This conference led to the establishment of several Islamic universities from Malaysia to Nigeria.

In later conferences the need for the Islamization of various disciplines were discussed.

In one of the conferences the whole idea of Islamization of knowledge was introduced by my colleague at Temple University, Ismail al-Fariqi, and later the International Institute of Islamic Thought.

He further says I had in fact spoken of the necessity to integrate knowledge cultivated in the modern West into the Islamic perspective from the 1950s onward but had not used the term “Islamization” of knowledge.

What I and Syed Ali Ashraf had proposed during these conferences was precisely the integration of all forms of knowledge into the Islamic perspective and the creation of an educational curriculum based on the Islamic worldview.

The goals set by the Makkah Conference were not only reached, but the Impact of the conference was great and the Question of the “Islamization of Knowledge” continues to be one of the central intellectual concerns of the Islamic world today.

Later on we see Syed Naquib Al-Attas, Ismail Al-Faruqi, AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, Taha Jabir Al-Wani, Mehdi Gulshani, Kamal Hassan and Osman Bakar highlighted this issue in detail in their writings.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr gives us a better understanding about the Islamization of Knowledge:

Nevertheless, there is a great deal of intellectual effort being spent in this domain...in what is now coming to be known as the “Islamization of knowledge”, which means integrating various subjects into the Islamic worldview. The dimensions and parameters of this important undertaking are being debated within many institutions and by many of the leading thinkers in the Islamic world today. [5]

Change in Perspective

A number of Muslim intellectuals of the 1960s and 1970s and onwards until 2005 focussed on the Islamization of Knowledge. They argued that Islam contains all that is needed today to meet the requirements of people in the modern world while protecting them from the dehumanizing aspects of modernization and secularization. Their commitment to Islam as the foundation of societal organization was beyond doubt.

Today we find a new brand of Muslim intellectuals who speak in terms of reconciliation and mediating Islam and modernity. They argue that Islam and science are compatible. They aim to reconcile reason and spirituality, religion and freedom.

These intellectuals have taken upon themselves to reconcile the modern vision of life, humanity, and the universe with those of the Islamic vision of life and society.

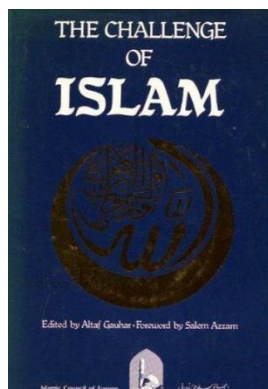
For such thinkers the concepts of *shura* [consultation] and *khilafah* [vicegerency, stewardship] correspond with Western ideals of democracy and republicanism, while socialism and social justice are represented by *zakah*.

Most important theme dearer to these intellectuals is how to reconcile Islam with modernity and how to offer an Islamic and indigenous version of modernity.

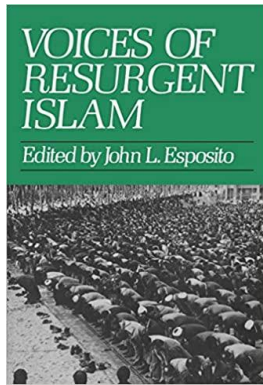
Another significant theme is how to strengthen Islam by reforming the accumulated understandings of it.

What Islam can give to Humanity? 1978

Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan 1982

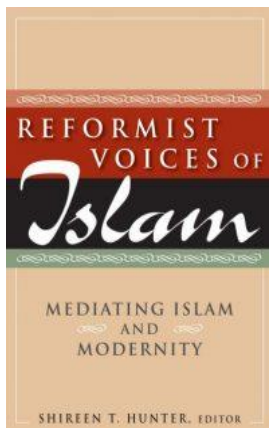


The Challenge of Islam; 1978

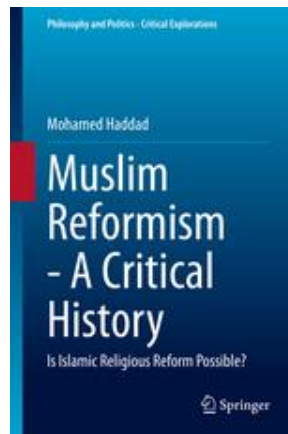


Voices of Resurgent Islam 1983

2009 to 2020

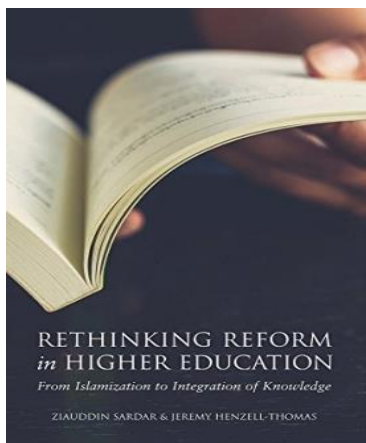


2009

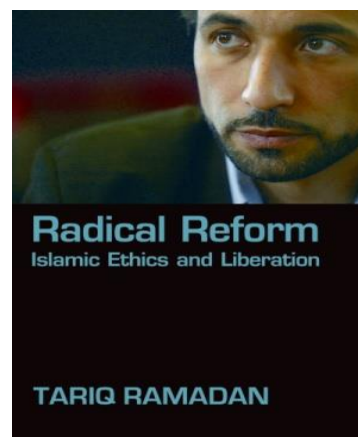


only book

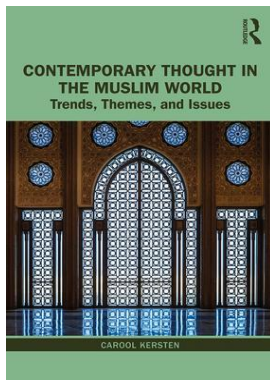
covering the history of reformist Islam and dealing with a possibility of Islamic modernisation 2020



2017



2009



The Rise of Islamic Reformist Thought and Its Challenges to Traditional Islam

=====

=====