DİNİ VE FELSEFÎ METİNLER

YİRMİBİRİNCİ YÜZYILDA YENİDEN OKUMA, ANLAMA VE ALGILAMA

RELIGIOUS AND PHILOSOPHICAL TEXTS:
RE-READING, UNDERSTANDING AND COMPREHENDING THEM IN THE 21ST CENTURY

CİLT - 1
DİNİ VE FELSEFİ METİNLER
YİRİMİBİRİNCİ YÜZYILDA YENİDEN OKUMA,
ANLAMA VE ALGILAMA SEMPOZYUMU
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An Analysis of the Islamization of Knowledge Project: International Islamic University Malaysia as a Case Study

Serdar Demirel*

Abstract
Islamization of Knowledge is a project to reorient systematically and restructure the entire field of human knowledge in accordance with a new set of criteria and categories, derived from, and based on the Islamic worldview. As a researcher during my Bachelor’s and Master’s programmes in International Islamic University Islamabad, another university renowned for its contributions to the Islamization of Knowledge project, and my doctoral program and later tenure as assistant professor in International Islamic University Malaysia, I have had the opportunity to experience this process as an insider. In this research, I aim to evaluate this experience analytically. The paper also aims to provide further suggestions to contribute to the project.

Introduction
Since the emergence of modernity, Muslims have lost their role as pioneers of sciences. As a result, Muslim scholars and intellectuals have proposed various solutions to regain this role. One of the most important propositions is the project of “Islamization of Knowledge”. The International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM) has been trying to realize this project since its inception in 1983. This university regards it its mission to reevaluate profane knowledge produced and formulated

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IIUM declares its mission at its official website as follows:
Towards actualizing the University’s vision, IIUM endeavours to:
• Undertake the special and greatly needed task of reforming the contemporary Muslim mentality and integrating Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences in a positive manner.
• Produce better quality intellectuals, professionals and scholars by integrating the qualities of faith (iman), knowledge (ilm), and good character (akhlaq) to serve as agents of comprehensive and balanced progress as well as sustainable development in Malaysia and in the Muslim world.
• Foster the Islamization of the ethics of Muslim academic and administrative staff of IIUM, and certain aspects of human knowledge- particularly in the social sciences and
devoid of the sacred, reconcile it with the sacred and, if possible, reproduce it within an Islamic paradigm. Paying due respect to humanity’s tremendous achievements and progress in scientific discoveries, the university highlights that knowledge is not objective as it claims; on the contrary, it is value-laden. It is especially conspicuous in social sciences. IIUM aims to educate its students not by denying modern knowledge but by benefiting from it in ways that will prevent them from falling prey to its ideological pitfalls. The university also aims that its graduates will further contribute to its project of “Islamization of Knowledge”.

What is the Purpose of Islamization of Knowledge?

We are in a period of time when Western knowledge and technology have penetrated into all aspects of our lives and rendered us addictive. For this reason, a comparison between the theory of Islamic knowledge and the theory of modern knowledge still maintains its significance. Facing the omnipresent modern knowledge in the global sense on an epistemological plane is inevitable not only for Muslims. This issue bears utmost importance for other ancient Eastern civilizations which, historically, established unique systems of knowledge and civilization.

Today, it is obvious that heirs of the Hindu, Buddhist and Confucian traditions, namely India, China and Japan, are going through a major crisis of civilization paradigms. In this regard, Muslims are also at a stage of crisis. The crux of the crisis is preference for technical over theoretical knowledge.

humanities- with the view to making them more useful and more relevant to the Muslim Ummah.
• Nurture the quality of holistic excellence which is imbued with Islamic moral-spiritual values in the process of learning, teaching, research, consultancy, publication, administration, and student life.
• To exemplify an international community of dedicated intellectuals, scholars, professionals, officers and workers who are motivated by the Islamic world-view and code of ethics as an integral part of their work culture.
• To enhance intercultural understanding and foster civilization dialogues in Malaysia as well as across communities and nations.
• To develop an environment which instills commitment for life-long learning, and a deep sense of social responsibility amongst staff and students

The summary of the Mission should read as follows:
• Integration
• Islamization
• Internationalization, and
• Comprehensive Excellence

Technical knowledge is indispensable for its convenience of application. Putting aside the “knowledge theory”, feeding and organizing it entail epistemological mis-framing and results in overlooking the ethos which produces and sustains it in a world of technology advancing at a dazzlingly fast pace. This process results in a cultural alienation of the self and eventually abandoning it to emulate the “other”.

Islam proposes a theory blending physical and metaphysical perspectives. This unitary perspective produces and organizes knowledge in harmony. On the other hand, modernity denies metaphysics, and consequently revelation, as a source of knowledge. In Islam, observable and non-observable facts are indistinguishable. Facts and their knowledge in the material world are projections of the non-observable truth.

Man has two realities; seen and unseen. His unseen reality is his true reality. His reading and perception of the nature and himself are the production of his psycho-intellectual activities in the unseen realm. What gives man his true identity is his spirit. His capacity for perception and character are all about this aspect. The mission of being Allah (swt)’s vicegerent on Earth is about this aspect of man. This situation shows the significance of metaphysics in the generation of knowledge.

Spirit is man’s inexhaustible eternal capacity, and his material aspect is his exhaustible capacity. In Islam, production of knowledge stems from this inexhaustible capacity. According to Islam, absolute reality is entirely metaphysical. Absolute reality refers to Allah (swt), the Owner of the metaphysical realm. Man’s reality, on the other hand, reflects his metaphysical realm, his soul. This does not mean that knowledge from the outer world, from the world of visible beings, is not significant. The ‘ideal human model’ of Islam, however, is the man who discovers his metaphysical potential and uses it. Allah (swt) shows absolute truth to those steadfast on their metaphysical journey as a reflection of His beautiful names.

Secularism is the hard core of modern epistemology. Secularism has been designed to secure knowledge and epistemology from the irrational interferences of Christian Church. In order to establish this goal, it has distanced man from the knowledge of absolute truth and confined him to a mere reflection of the metaphysical realm, the physical world. Confinement of the sources of knowledge to the physical realm is the crux of modernity’s problem, and the main area where it conflicts with Islamic knowledge. Muslims cannot be unrequired Western produced knowledge. Alternatively, they cannot adopt this knowledge and the modern epistemology which produces such knowledge as it is because this knowledge, especially in social sciences, is not value free. It is forged and designed according to the Western edifice. Thus, the question of how to engage in a dialogue with Western heritage of knowledge while remaining Muslim gains significance. The Islamization project is an answer to
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the question “how”. Professor Rashed Moten, a prominent academician executing this project in IIUM, says:

“It must be noted that, however, the primary concerns of the Islamization of Knowledge are epistemological and methodological questions about how best to utilize modern and Western disciplinary knowledge for the benefit of Muslim societies.”

Al-Faruqi’s concept of Islamization and Integration of Knowledge is “to reorient systematically and restructure the entire field of human knowledge in accordance with a new set of criteria and categories, derived from, and based on the Islamic worldview.” The aim is to evaluate critically the current secular-religious duality of the educational system in Muslim societies and the lack of clear vision to guide and direct Muslim action, reformulating the existing educational system within the framework of Islam.

The belief of Muslims that science and revelation are not contradictory lies at the foundation of this project because in the Muslim system of knowledge, science refers to the divine secrets embedded in nature by Allah (swt). Scientific pursuit, then, is deciphering this system on which the universe is built, and formulation of findings in daily application. In sum, science is the pursuit of discovering Allah (swt)’s actions. Revelation is His eternal word, so no contradiction between Allah (swt)’s words and His actions can exist. This is a natural result of belief in *tawhid* because *tawhid*, in the unity of universe, in the unity of all mankind, and in the ifallibility of the Divine Law. All knowledge, according to the *tawhid* concept, is a confirmation of divine unity and purpose.

Therefore, in Islamic teachings, there can be no contradiction between revelation and science. Nevertheless, man’s interpretation of revelation, or the ideologic evaluation of knowledge gained regardless of revelation and theories based on such evaluation can contradict revelation. This is the reason why most of the interpretations the Western knowledge system labeled as ‘scientific’ clashes with Islamic principles. In this case, the contradiction should be attributed to the judgemental capacity of the person who evaluates the situation, his resources, his conclusions and the methods in order to reach them.

It is widely acknowledged that all major civilizations have their own unique epistemologies parallel to their paradigms. This system fosters their cultural identity and distinctive social system. At this point three main components can be identified:

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comprehensive ethos (worldview), comprehensive ethics and ethnos (a common social identity).5

Ethos, ethics and ethnos components distinguish a civilization from others. In this regard, there are significant differences between the ethos, ethics and ethnos systems of Islam and the West. Such differences distinguish sources of knowledge as well as their interpretation and application in daily life. For this reason, the Islamization of Knowledge project can be considered as a reconstruction of the epistemology of Islam and an assertion of the Muslim identity in scientific pursuits spearheaded by the West.

**Historical Background**

Muslims enjoyed glorious times in the production of knowledge in history. In those times when they pioneered scientific endeavours, unique scientific projects in various disciplines were produced. The Abbasid, Andalus and Ottoman State can be given as examples of this era. Nevertheless, they lost their pioneering position to the West which emerged with the renaissance, reforms and discovery of new naval routes. Ali Bulac summarizes this difficult, inadmissible position:

“For two centuries, our education institutes, universities, bureaucracy, intellectuals and media have been under constraint. At this point, we have lost our ability to produce knowledge, identify our problems, in short our ability to think and use our intellect, within the capacity of our resources, references and methodology. We think with the Western mind, admire its accumulation of knowledge inherited from its historical experience and try to emulate it. Nevertheless, no copy can replace the original.”6

As Bulac points out, relinquishing the pioneering position in the production of knowledge has had severe consequences. First, Muslims had lost their leading military position and this entailed occupation of the Muslim world. They retreated in economy and became dependent on foreign sources. Those who produced knowledge not only transformed knowledge to material riches, but also constructed a “modern world dependent on the West” aligned with their edifice. Globalization, in a sense, narrates the story of the hegemony of the Western edifice in a global scale.

After this defeat, Muslims gathered around the same dream of regaining their leading position in sciences and reviving that historical experience because main-

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taining their religious identity, establishing political unity and economic welfare as well as preventing foreign interference required such measures. There is no dispute among the Muslims in this regard but seculars who regard development as tantamount to “absolute Westernization” and “absolute foreign expansion”. The dispute around this issue focuses on how this project can be realized, as a result, Muslim intellectuals and scholars have proposed many projects.

Some of these scholars suggested eclectic solutions as to be open westernisation with control, while some defended that retreating to tradition and ourselves can solve the problem. Some, on the other hand, maintained that knowledge is universal and universals cannot be Islamized.7

Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) of India and Muhammad Abduh (1845-1905) of Egypt believed that adding modern sciences to the curriculum of Islamic institutes would suffice for Islamization. Aligarh University in India was established on this basis. Gamal Abd al-Nasser, the President of Egypt, applied this project in Al-Azhar University. This approach was also prevalent in Ottoman institutes which emerged in the declining era of the State to replace the traditional education institutes. Imam Hatip schools of modern Turkey followed such examples. Products of such experiences have proven this modern eclectic method not to yield the expected results.

The most attractive project among all the others to regain the leading role in sciences can be summarized as “restoring the Islamic system of knowledge, analyzing the Western knowledge within this system, identifying corresponding results and leaving out the non-corresponding ones, and reproducing the result of this process within the capacity of Islamic epistemology”. Initially, this project did not have a name. Later on, with its additions and a new road map, it came to be known as “Islamization of Knowledge”.

Islamization of Knowledge, though did not emerged under this concept at first, but emerged with Panislamism and its descendant Islamism with similar meanings. Opinions on roadmaps to solve the crisis led to Islamism movement and this movement resulted in the awareness of the need for Islamization.

Whatever caused Panislamism in the past also paved the way for Islamization of Knowledge. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the Muslim world was in a religious-intellectual-political crisis. The Western world, which had carried out the Industrial Revolution, had managed to surpass the Muslim world in terms of technical ad-

vancements. As a result, the whole Muslim world was shaken by the military defeats against the West. Such defeats triggered political and domestic upheavals all around the Muslim territories. After the defeat of the Ottoman State in 1774 with the treaty of Kucuk Kaynarca, in 1789 Egypt was occupied by the French and this was followed by the English occupation of Bengal in 1757 and Indio-Pakistan subcontinent in 1852. With the increasing effect of Western educated diplomats on Muslim intellectuals, admiration towards the West and inferiority complex started to reign in the Muslim world. This psyche caused them to believe that their faith, lifestyles and edifice were insufficient to cope with the West. After these defeats, the idea of “regaining stability is only possible through emulation of the victorious countries” started to gain grounds among the elites and intelligentsia.8

Since attributing defeats, downfalls, psychological, social and political disintegration to Islam infringe faith and historical facts, Muslim scholars and intellectuals endeavoured to devise various solutions to establish political unity in the Muslim world. The possibility that Islam was practised among Muslims wrong and scientific pursuits should be reconstructed were among the most debated issues. In this regard, researcher and academician Ismail Kara states that, “the term ‘Islamism’ was first used by Ziya Gokalp." He also used ‘islamization’ and ‘Islamicism’ in his writings.”9

Professor Moten also maintains, “The Muslim intellectual response to modernity eventually gave birth to the Islamization of Knowledge debate that addresses the impact of modern cognitive transformations and their impact on Muslim societies.”10

So far we have established that different projects revolving around the main goal of Islamization of Knowledge have been proposed in different countries by different scholars. Said Nursi’s (1877-1960) Madrasatu Al-Zahra project12 in the late Ottoman era and Sayyid Ebu’l Ala El Mevdudi’s (1903-1979) new project in Pakistan are two examples of such attempts.13

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9 Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924) was a Turkish sociologist, writer, poet, and political activist.
10 Kara, Ismail, Türkiye’dede İslâmcılık Düşüncesi, vol. 1, p.33.
Professor Ahmed Ibrahim Abushouk mention to formal journey of the project, “The idea of Islamisation of knowledge began its formal journey sometime in 1977, when the First World Conference on Muslim Education was held in Makkah at the invitation of the King Abd al-Aziz University in Saudi Arabia. Around three hundred Muslim scholars attended the conference and discussed, among other issues, the need for reform of the education system in the Muslim world and Islamisation of knowledge.\textsuperscript{14}

This concept was popularized in the academic circles since 1982 by the late Dr Ismail Raji al Faruqi. The proposed Islamization and Integration of Knowledge project for reforming the existing educational system was taken by the Washington-based International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT). Several Islamic universities were established for the same purpose including International Islamic University Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur\textsuperscript{15} and The International Islamic University in Pakistan.

**Evaluation of the IIUM Experience**

The staff who assigned the mission of Islamization of Knowledge to IIUM, undoubtedly, hoped for the development of Muslims and take their future into their own hands. Being a university, IIUM prioritizes “knowledge”. Thus, its mission is confined to knowledge and production of new generations. We have mentioned that Islamization is the special mission of this institute and it has accomplished significant goals in this regard since its establishment in 1983. Unfortunately, the realization of this project faces many challenges. Following is an evaluation of the important issues that come to my attention in my ten-year IIUM experience.

1. Islamization of Knowledge cannot be confined to a particular race or country. An enterprise of such a tremendous scale renders it inevitable for the whole Muslim ummah to contribute. Therefore, the Muslim mind, comprised of different races, colour, historical and cultural experiences, needs to think collectively. IIUM provides the perfect opportunity for such a task. The university rightfully bears the title of ‘international’ with its students body from 90 countries and lecturers from 42 countries. All international lecturers hold doctorate degrees. Most of the local lecturers also hold doctorate or post-doctorate degrees and new regulations have rendered it


compulsory for all local lecturers to obtain such a degree. The purpose of such regulations is to maintain the highest educational level of the lecturers. The university offers education to all Muslims in the world, and it is also open to the contribution of all the Muslim intellectuals in the world. It encourages its international and local staff to volunteer in contributing to this mission. The university organizes many events to encourage and sensitivize its staff and students in this perspective.

2. The main aim of Islamization is to face the modern knowledge in an Islamic way. Therefore, the medium of the education at the university is English. At the Faculty of Islamic Revealed Knowledge (IRK), classes are conducted both in Arabic and English. Although in other faculties Arabic language classes are compulsory, they, unfortunately, fall short of being sufficient. IIUM encompasses all faculties necessary for a fully-fledged university except the Faculty of Agriculture. The Islamic Revealed Knowledge Faculty provides education for 1500 students in the fields of Qur'an & Sunnah Studies, Fiqh & Usul al-Fiqh and Usul al-Din & Comparative Religion at undergraduate, master and doctorate levels. Compared to the university’s total number of 18,000 students, the number of students in the IRK Faculty remains relatively small. The university mainly focuses on modern science disciplines such as law, architecture, engineering and medicine in accord with its mission. There are many universities in the world that provide Islamic education. Their main goal is to raise experts in tafsir, hadith, fiqh and other Islamic disciplines. On the other hand, IIUM focuses on modern science disciplines because it aims to reevaluate knowledge produced and formulated in modern sciences regardless of the sacred and then engage it with the sacred and, if possible, regenerate it.

3. One of the most important missions of IIUM is to have its staff prepare its own textbooks in all fields, especially in social sciences.16 This project aims to generate our theories by relying on our traditional resources. The first priority of the Islamization

16 I listened to an anecdote indicating its significance from Prof Ahmet Davudoglu. He said that he had experienced a shock when he started to teach ‘History of political thought’ in IIUM. Davudoglu enters his class with a copy of Sabine’s famous book widely used as textbook in Western universities. His intention was to use the book as course book for his class.

“I had a shock when I entered the class. It was like a mini United Nations. Chinese, Indian, Arab, African, Turkish, Iranian, Bosnian students and even students from El Salvador were sitting side by side. I tried to hide the book because this book titled ‘History of Political Science’ started with Plato and Aristo and skipping middle ages moved onto Machiavelli. And it continued, as you may guess, with Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Hegel and Marx. Using this book would be saying to the students “You do not exist in history. Your ancestors produced no tangible ideas in governance!” Davutoğlu starts working on a curriculum on comparative political history and teaches Machiavelli’s King with Kinalizade’s Ahlak-i Ali.
of Knowledge project is to produce our own theories in our own words and own terms without disregarding Western theories. Some textbooks have been published in this regard. Nevertheless, we should admit that attempts have fallen far behind the objectives. Given the lack of textbooks meeting the objectives of Islamization of Knowledge and the advantage of using English as the medium of instruction, many books used as textbooks in the West are also used in the IIUM with no adaptation. At this point, the responsibility lies in the lecturers. Those who have the necessary background and faith in the project try to highlight the points which contradict Islamic principles. Otherwise, contrary to the mission of IIUM, students learn theories of their respective fields such as psychology, sociology and political science from the Western perspective. Bearing in mind that students coming from modern educational institutes are ill-equipped against the heritage of knowledge produced from the Western perspective, it can be clearly perceived that unless the university produces textbooks parallel to its mission, it will encounter various challenges.

4. IIUM requires contribution of its academic staff to the Islamization of Knowledge project. The university organizes workshops and many academic events to elaborate and enhance its mission of Islamization for new lecturers. According to our observations, despite the strenuous efforts of the university, some problems have not been overcome. First of all, some lecturers do not welcome the idea of Islamization, believing in the logic that knowledge is universal and all universals are essentially Islamic. Thus, they do not believe in the feasibility of something Islamic to be reIslamized. The university does not experience any problems with such lecturers due to its free academic environment. On the other hand, such approaches deprive the university of significant contribution.

Second, intellectual and educational backgrounds of some of the lecturers devoted to the mission prove to be insufficient to enhance its advance. In order to understand this situation better, the employment criteria of the IIUM for lecturers should be scrutinized. Both local and international lecturers apply to the university as they would to any other Western university. During the evaluation process, their expertise in their field of study, the universities they studied and worked at, and their academic qualifications are evaluated according to certain criteria. In some occasions, lecturers coming from Western universities gets to know about the concept of Islamization

I have similar experiences as this anecdote. During my years as a PhD student and lecturer I came across lecturers teaching in line with Western epistemology. Having been the coordinator of the course “Islamic Worldview”, focusing on the differences between Islamic and modern worldviews, I had firsthand experience of the difficulty of producing an alternative textbook.
of Knowledge at IIUM. It is not strange that lecturers who have not dwelled much on the differences between Western epistemology and Islamic epistemology orient themselves in modern epistemology as a result of their formal education. Even if they agree on the mission of Islamization of Knowledge, due to their lack of comprehension of its scale and depth, they may attempt to synthesize between what is Islamic and what is unIslamic. They may regard it Islamization to occasionally quote Quranic verses or ahadith between the lines or in the conclusion of their studies produced with a Western mindset.

In order to offer real and permanent solutions for the Islamization of Knowledge project, people involved in it should Islamize their mind codes first. The depth of the issue can be better grasped when it is born in mind that we expect contributions from the lecturers, not the students.

5. For the Islamization of Knowledge project to be realized successfully, people educated in IIUM or such institutions who are experts in Western and Islamic epistemology and aware of their differences should be in charge of the project. Their mind should be shaped in line with the project. Thus, it is essential for the university to employ its successful students to fill the gap in the field. These people volunteer to be a part of this project and they are more aware of the goals of the project.

6. We believe that the Islamization of Knowledge project should start with the reestablishment of Islamic epistemology. Such a start requires profound intellectuals. This is not the first time in history for Muslims to encounter an intellectual crisis. They had their first experience of such crises when they came across Greek, Persian and Indian epistemologies during early days of Islam. At first they were taken aback at the face of the epistemological challenges they were not familiar with. Then, they embarked on understanding these resources, and in order to do this they started an unprecedented translation project. Greek resources were foremost translated into Arabic. These resources were meticulously studied and an Islamic epistemology was formed to face the challenges.

Imam Shafi’s methodologic framework and terminologies he developed in his major work ‘Risalah’ exemplify such attempts. Another significant example is the transformation of the ‘atom theory’\(^{17}\) (Nazariyatu Al Zarra), the atheist foundation

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\(^{17}\) Fazlur Rahman Says: “One of the characteristic of Ash’arism is that atomism “al juz’ alladhī lā yatajazza”, according to which the world is all made up of atoms. These atoms are brought together in a certain way, structured in a certain way, so that living beings can come to existence. Then when a person dies, that atomic structure falls apart. Something of that atomic structure, however, remains and then Allah (swt), on the Day of Judgment, will recreate that body around that nucleus. This is the Ashari doctrine of resurrection.”
of Ancient materialist Greek philosophy by Asharite theologians. This theory had stirred problems for centuries and resulted in the conversion of many. At this point the field of ‘Ilmal-Kalam interfered and transformed this theory into a formidable proof of Allah (swt)’s existence using their methods of assimilation and transformation.

Today, we can name some scholars such as Faruqi, Naqib al-Attas, Taha Jabir al-‘Alwani and Kamal Hasan, but the scarcity of Muslim scholars is another shortcoming of the project.

7. There are outstanding differences between the conditions of the Muslim scholars who challenged epistemological problems in history and those of today. In earlier times, the state supported scholars in their efforts including translation projects. In the Abbasid State, efforts by Khalifah Ma’mun and his Baytu’l Hikmah are important examples of state support. The situation today, however, presents a different picture.

Previously, Muslims had military superiority. They had no major political problems and they were confident in their power. Thus, they did not face problems such as the desire to emulate ‘the other’. Even in such circumstances, facing the epistemological challenges of different edifices posed a great problem for the Muslim world and took a considerably long time to overcome.

Today, the situation is dramatically different. Muslims do not hold superiority against the military power of the West, and politically they are mere imitators of ‘the other’. In terms of knowledge and technology they depend on foreign sources. Western lifestyle penetrates into the lives of all Muslims through globalization. A sense of psychological defeat prevails in a significant majority of the Muslim population. Groups fighting for the reemergence of Muslims with their own values encounter domestic and foreign challenges. Today, Western knowledge heritage has become institutionalized, systematized and ramified. When the difficulties of raising great intellectuals, and the lack of contribution from the many current ones are taken into consideration, it can be seen how situation is for the project to develop.

8. The project has not entered the agenda of Muslim intellectuals with due significance of its scale. Intellectuals who are expected to be a part of the solution are not paying enough attention to the project, and many of them prefer to remain neutral.

9. Many Muslim academicians, including some in IIUM, consider the ‘Islamization’ project as a simple project of coalition between the East and the West, and Islam and modernity. For this reason, they are reluctant to contribute to the project and instead, embrace a cynical approach.

10. We maintain that the main aim of the Islamization of Knowledge project in IIUM is to reconstruct value-laden social sciences. The role of the Islamic Revealed Knowledge field in this project is to renew the knowledge (tajdid) based on revelation and to instil it in contemporary discourse. This project is summarized in the term ‘relevantization’ and its aim is to run the institutes of ‘renewal and restoration’. The ability to execute this project lies in the ability to grasp Islamic heritage of knowledge and the spirit of the contemporary era as well as the ability to evaluate events from an interdisciplinary perspective. Unfortunately, not all the staff of IRK adopt this comprehensive approach, which is the reason why the university seeks for cooperation of lecturers from different departments. Nevertheless, these attempts have not yielded considerable results yet.

11. Lack of unanimity among intellectuals devoted to this project about its content of the project\textsuperscript{18} and the complexity of the epistemological aspect and terminology of the project render it daunting for IIUM students, especially undergraduates. Studies should be conducted in order to facilitate the comprehension of students in a convincing and clearer manner, without destroying the integrity of the project.

**Recommendations**

As mentioned above, Islamization of Knowledge is a sensitive issue. In order for the project to maintain its course, its methodological framework should be laid solidly. The recommendations below endeavour to deleniate this framework:

1. It is important to distinguish tradition (al-turāth) from sacred when dealing with the intellectual heritage constructing the Muslim mind. Values transcending time and space should be distinguished from values of time and space. 

*Ijtihads* are application of revelation to time and space through the evaluation of human mind. Therefore, human interference in this application should be acknowledged and it should be accepted that human solutions susceptible to time and space cannot be regarded as the fundamental regulations of Islam. The principle of “change of time and *ijtihads* are undeniable” attract our attention to this fact. In order for Islam to be presented to contemporary discourse acknowledgement of this fact is inevitable.

In other words, the Islamization of knowledge project is an answer to the extremities of ‘nothing should change in our perception of religion’ and ‘everything should change’. Islam is revealed to change the case of humanity; thus, it will interfere in

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human lives through humans. Therefore, revelation and human knowledge should be distinguished, but the latter should also be given its due importance. Another important point is that, interpretations based on revelation should not be regarded of the same value as revelation itself, and should not be regarded the same as interpretations not based on revelation.

Following our tradition of knowledge (al-turāth), Islamization of Knowledge should remain within the boundaries of “renewal (tajdid) and revival (al-lḥyā’).” Destruction fundamentals through reform will be ‘modernization’ rather than Islamization and this defeats the purpose of the project.

2. Maintain ‘criteria of the centre’ the Muslim tradition of knowledge has agreed on. By such criteria we mean the methodology created within the framework of revealed knowledge and the ‘collective mind’, ‘common criteria’ and most importantly ‘ijma’ which have been formed in accord with revelation and penetrate the mindset of Muslims. Islamist modernists have alienated themselves by not taking those criteria into account. Debates revolving the performing of salah in languages other than Arabic, performing Friday prayer with a woman imam can be examples in this regard.

3. We should refrain from explicitly or implicitly emulating Western epistemology and scientistic disciplines which stem from this epistemology. Civilizations interact and share their knowledge and experiences, which is innocuous. Islam can import and export civilizational experiences, but this exchange should be conducted in accord with its own perception of reality and logic. This should not be mistaken for emulation. Modernity benefits from the heritage of knowledge formed before its inception, including Islamic heritage. Nevertheless, instead of mere emulation, modernity deconstructs the knowledge from different civilizations and render them profane by constructing a new paradigm consisting of unique laws and imperial mentality. Secular theory of knowledge regenerates knowledge and remoulds it in modern forms according to its edifice. This leads to the formation of different modern scientific disciplines. In this regard, Muhammad Asad says:

“Europe accepted Arab influences in the matter and method of learning, but it never imitated the outward appearance and the spirit of Arabian culture, and never sacrificed its own intellectual and aesthetic independence. It used the Arab influences only as a fertilizer upon its own soil, just as the Arabs had used Hellenistic influences in their time. In both cases, the result was a strong, new growth of an indigenous civilization, full of self-confidence and pride in itself. No civilization can prosper, or even exist, after having lost this pride and the connection with its own past. But the world of Islam, with its growing tendency to imitate Europe and to assimilate Western ideas and ideals, is gradually cutting away the bonds which link it with its past, and is los-
ing therefore not only its cultural but also its spiritual ground. It resembles a tree that was strong as long as it was deeply rooted in the soil. But the mountain torrent of Western civilization has washed those roots bare: and the tree slowly decays for want of nourishment. Its leaves fall, its branches wither away. At the end the trunk itself stands in danger of collapsing.”

We should consider modernity as a great historical phenomenon but a product of history and approach modern knowledge from this perspective.

4. When Muslims engage in dialogue with modern knowledge, they should be aware of ‘absorption and excretion’ processes indicated in the Quran:

“To thee We sent the Scripture in truth, (musaddigan) confirming the scripture that came before it, and (muhayminan) guarding it in safety: so judge between them by what Allah (swt) hath revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the Truth that hath come to thee. To each among you have We prescribed a Law and Open Way. If Allah (swt) had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to Allah (swt); it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute.”

The word “muhaymin” in the verse is derived from the root ‘haymana’ as ism alfai that means observer over something, protector, witness and trustworthy. This divine call guides the Prophet and all the Muslims that the Quran has been revealed to confirm previously revealed books and protect and bear witness for those revelations. This Book will also remain intact with Allah (swt)’s protection. It will protect regulations of the other books from being lost or distorted, restore truth with its witness, and annul distortions and practices which are not in line with its teachings. This Book will be a trustworthy source, observer and witness over other books. The absoluteness of the teachings of the Torah and Bible will be evaluated according to the teachings of the Quran.

These teachings are sound evaluation criteria to apply to the Western edifice, its culture and knowledge. Knowledge imported from foreign sources will be evaluated according to these criteria and if it is found in accord with the Islamic system of values.

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then it will be transformed and absorbed. If it is found not in accord with Islam, it will be not be allowed into the Islamic body of knowledge. The ‘atomic theory’, an atheist foundation of the materialist Greek philosophy, was earlier mentioned to show how ‘absorption and excretion’ processes are executed. Three conditions should be accepted without any doubt to execute the ‘absorption and excretion’ process smoothly:

- Acknowledging the authority of the Quran and the Prophet’s sunnah,
- Observing the differences between the material and metaphysical world and the fact that the knowledge of the metaphysical world lies in the realm of Allah (swt)\(^{22}\) and the metaphysical knowledge should rely on revelation. Material world is meant for our scientific endeavours and man is assigned the task of making sense of this material world in the light of revelation.
- The fact that Islam reads creation from a theocentric perspective \(^{23}\) while the Western system of knowledge dwells on an anthrocentric perspective.\(^{24}\)

**Conclusion**

The observations above are not intended to serve as a pretext for not being able to attain the goals of Islamization of Knowledge yet. Accomplishment of such a project requires studies extending over centuries. The aim of this paper is to contribute to the progress and elimination of the shortcomings of the project. Discussing the concept itself after this point is unnecessary. From now on, despite the significance of determining the right terminology, we should try to focus on content. Apart from differences in approaches and priorities, all Muslims agree upon this aim except the seculars.

Modernity is not an irreversible, universal or objective process as defined by the modernist elites. It is true that modern history of science has been written by the West, but it will not continue forever. For this reason, the Islamization of Knowledge project refuses to yield to the claims of the universality of social sciences and associated categories designated by theories of modernity. As a natural result of this, this project points to the need to question sociopolitical approaches which claim that the limited historical experiences of the West are universal. In order to accomplish this project, Muslims should regain their leading role in history.

\(^{22}\) Al-Anām: 6/59.

\(^{23}\) Al-Mu’minūn: 23/115.