

The Dead Weight That Is Hindering the Islamisation of Knowledge

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Abstract

*This article posits that two factors made Islamisation of knowledge (IoK) movement less effective in achieving the objective of Islamising the philosophies of the sciences to permit the emergence of novel approaches compatible with the Islamic worldview of *tawhīd*. First, the theorists of the movement outlined how knowledge could be Islamised, but they did not lay down the foundations of an innovative intellectual project; and second, the way the project was designed attached its success to institutional support. Therefore, the IoK movement must be revitalised by a new generation of scholars who will focus on synthesising the existing IoK literature and building on it, rediscovering past Islamic scholarly heritage, asking new questions for reshaping the sciences so to produce paradigms, analytical, methodological and interpretive tools compatible with the vision of Islam, and training a critical mass of young scholars to sustain the IoK movement.*

Keywords

obstacles to Islamisation of knowledge (IoK), suggestions to reinvigorate IoK, Ismail al-Faruqi, Naquib al-Attas, Seyyed Hossein Nasr.

Introduction

The Islamisation of knowledge (IoK) is a concept proposed during the 1960s and 1970s by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (b. 1933),¹ Muhammed Naquib al-Attas (b. 1931),² and Ismail Raji al-Faruqi (d. 1986) with Abdul Hamid A. Abu

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¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Islam and the Problem of Modern Science," *Islam & Science* 8, no. 1 (2010): 66, <http://link.galegroup.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/apps/doc/A230685062/CPI?u=victoria&sid=CPI&xid=d743a4cd>.

² Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Islām and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1993), xi.

Sulayman (b. 1936).³ It gained momentum after the World Conference on Muslim education in Mecca in 1977.⁴ Scholars named here have different conceptions of IoK.⁵ Indeed, since the 1930s, both Muhammad Asad (d. 1992)⁶ and Abū 'l-A'ālā Maudūdī (d. 1979)⁷ urged Muslims to Islamise the philosophies of the sciences because Western secular philosophical assumptions underlying modern science are not always compatible with the Islamic worldview.

Despite differences in views of scholars who call for Islamising knowledge, they all agree that IoK is justified because philosophical assumptions stemming from the renaissance and the enlightenment for approaching and applying the sciences are not always in line with the Islamic worldview of *tawḥīd*. For instance, Nasr posits that “If the Islamic world is to survive while guarding its authenticity, it must master modern science, criticize it in the light of Islamic teachings, create a paradigm drawn from Islamic sources”⁸ to create “another framework than the existing modern scientific paradigm, a framework in which *tawḥīd* reigns supreme.”⁹

In the same vein, al-Attas confirms that “knowledge is not neutral, and can indeed be infused with a nature and content which masquerades as knowledge,”¹⁰ and modern-day knowledge “is in fact knowledge *infused* with the character and personality of Western culture and civilization.”¹¹ Therefore, “our task will be first to *isolate the elements* including the key concepts which make up that culture and civilization.”¹² In this respect, “the ‘islamization’ of present-day knowledge means precisely that, *after* the isolation process referred to, the knowledge free of the elements and key concept isolated are *then* infused with the Islamic elements and key concepts.”¹³

³ Suleman Dangor, “Islamization of Disciplines: Towards an Indigenous Educational System,” *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 37, no. 4 (2005): 526, doi:10.1111/j.1469-5812.2005.00138.x.

⁴ Ghulam Nabi Saqeb, “Some Reflections on Islamization of Education since 1977 Makkah Conference: Accomplishments, Failures and Tasks ahead,” *Intellectual Discourse* 8, no. 1 (2000): 47, <https://journals.iium.edu.my/intdiscourse/index.php/islam/article/view/481/426>.

⁵ Dangor, “Islamization of Disciplines,” 526.

⁶ Muhammad Asad, *Islam at the Crossroads*, 1982, 67–72. PDF. <http://muhammad-asad.com/Islam-at-Crossroads.pdf>

⁷ Abdul Rashid Moten, “Islamization of Knowledge in Theory and Practice: The Contribution of Sayyid Abul A'ālā Mawdūdī,” *Islamic Studies* 43, no. 2 (2004): 247–72, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20837343>.

⁸ Nasr, “Islam and the Problem of Modern Science,” 69.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Al-Attas, “*Islām and Secularism*,” 133.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 162.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, 162–63.

For al-Faruqi, past education reformers in the Muslim world did not realise that “humanities, social sciences, and indeed the natural sciences, were facets of an integral view of reality, of life and the world, and of a history that is equally alien to that of Islam.”¹⁴ Therefore, “the reform of education should be the Islamization of modern knowledge itself.”¹⁵ It “must be re-conceived and rebuilt, given a new Islamic base and assigned new purposes consistent with Islam. Every discipline must be recast so as to embody the principles of Islam in its methodology.”¹⁶

Based on what precedes, the discussion about IoK in this paper is limited to questions surrounding Islamisation of the philosophies of the sciences based on metaphysical, epistemological, and axiological assumptions stemming from the Islamic worldview of *tawhīd*. As such, Islamisation of the philosophies of the sciences must lead to innovation of paradigms and methodological, analytical and interpretive tools that allow academics for approaching and applying the sciences in a manner congruent with the tenets of Islam.

IoK is discussed herein from two standpoints. First, it is maintained that IoK is a noble intellectual endeavour that must be pursued by Muslims because natural facts are neutral, but knowledge produced from studying natural facts is value-laden; and second, while adherents of IoK produced important works aimed at Islamising knowledge, the goal of Islamising knowledge to the point of erecting a viable alternative to Western paradigms and theories to the satisfaction of academics is yet to be achieved.

The purpose of this paper is then to attempt answering the following questions: what may be the dead weight that is hindering the IoK movement from achieving the goal of Islamising the philosophies of the sciences by innovating paradigms, and methodological, theoretical, analytical and interpretive tools, so the Islamisation movement becomes a viable, omnipresent and distinguishable intellectual current in academia? To this end, what may be some possibilities of reinvigorating the movement?

Evidence That Justifies Standpoints Adopted in This Paper

Before answering the above questions, I will provide evidence for the standpoints of the paper (i.e., IoK is important, but its success was limited, and it must be revitalised). Three types of literature will be reviewed: 1) writings of

¹⁴ Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, “Islamization of Knowledge: Problems, Principles and Prospective,” in *Islam: Source and Purpose of Knowledge* (Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1980), 16.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

critiques who object to IoK; 2) writings that analyse challenges of IoK; 3) and writings for explaining and clarifying.

Example of writing that objects to IoK is that of Tariq Ramadan (b. 1962).¹⁷ He insists that the problem of modern science is not philosophical but ethical, so there is no need for IoK because the subject area dictates the methodologies of each discipline. He admits, however, that there is room for interpretation, subjectivity, and ideology in social sciences, but the room for subjectivity is limited in natural sciences. For him, ethical awareness is what is needed to resolve the problems raised to justify IoK.

In reality, Ramadan's ethical awareness proposal can rather be integrated into IoK, but it is not an alternative to IoK because by admitting that researchers hold subjective views while researching, one is compelled to accept that scientific outputs are a mixture of scientific truths and subjective views. Because subjective views are to a large extent stained with people's beliefs, there is still a need for IoK. The problem is, therefore, not reducible to merely applied ethics because ethics derive from a worldview.

Like Ramadan, Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988)¹⁸ reduced the problem of modern science to the absence of moral responsibility and critical thinking. His alternative to IoK is to train scholars to think critically in the light of the Qur'ān about both Islamic and Western intellectual traditions, for both traditions include what can be qualified as Islamic and un-Islamic. This suggestion of Fazlur Rahman is also not an alternative to IoK because critical thinking cannot be a substitute for philosophical paradigms and theoretical propositions.

For his part, Farid Alatas¹⁹ asserts that IoK achieved limited success, for it is discursive and theoretically abstract, so he doubts its success in the future. Alternatively, he believes that it is better to use theories and concepts of past Muslim scholars in research and teaching. He himself puts this solution into practice by using Ibn Khaldūn's works in some of his researches.²⁰ In my view, using the works of past scholars is not an alternative to IoK. Rather, it must be part of the process of Islamising knowledge.

¹⁷ Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 70–76.

¹⁸ Fazlur Rahman, "Islamization of Knowledge: A Response," *Islamic Studies* 50, no. 3–4 (2011): 449–57, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41932607>.

¹⁹ Syed Farid Alatas, "Research: The Islamization of Knowledge—Interview with Farid Alatas," *Relioscope*, 2, 2008, <https://english.religion.info/2008/01/02/research-the-islamization-of-knowledge-interview-with-farid-alatas/>.

²⁰ Syed Farid Alatas, "A Khaldunian Exemplar for a Historical Sociology for the South," *Current Sociology* 54, no. 3 (2006): 397–411, doi:10.1177/0011392106063189.

Vali Nasr²¹ also sees that the success of IoK is limited, for it has hardly evolved from rhetoric to erecting methodologies informed by the Islamic worldview. He argues that IoK did not reach its potential even in fields where it could make breakthroughs such as economics. For him, Islamising the existing knowledge is futile, and IoK must not be limited to critiquing Western science or proving the superiority of Islamised science. Instead, scholars must focus on creating Islamised methodologies. Though this view is similar to the view held herein, the problem is seen from a broader perspective.

After exploring the opinion of select scholars about IoK, it is now appropriate to provide supporting evidence for the paper's stand points. Evidence for the limited success of IoK is found in a study conducted by Abdallah, Hussien, and Hisham at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) to answer the question, "to what extent has the mission of Islamization been actualized at IIUM?"²² They found that a major reason that has limited the success of IoK at the IIUM was the lack of Islamised textbooks and well-elaborated theoretical propositions for teaching and research.²³

This situation, they find, results in confusion about IoK and prevents its methodical implementation. This research finding has two possible explanations. First, it is possible that IoK movement has not sufficiently produced clearly defined paradigms and theoretical, analytical, and interpretive propositions for teaching and research; and second, it is possible that scholarly works produced by the movement worldwide were not sufficiently diffused in academia nor did they reach the necessary accumulation to make scholars understand the distinguishable features of an Islamic perspective on the sciences.

For instance, al-Attas reports that from 1989 onward the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) has published books to explain Islamic philosophies of education, science, epistemology, and psychology.²⁴ Considering that ISTAC was later merged with IIUM,²⁵ it becomes clear that books published at ISTAC might have not reached the level

²¹ Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, "Islamization of Knowledge: A Critical Overview," *Islamic Studies* 30, no. 3 (1991): 387–400, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20840045>.

²² Ssekamanya Siraje Abdallah, Suhailah Hussien, and Nik A. Hisham, "The Experience of Islamization of Knowledge at the International Islamic University Malaysia: Successes and challenges," in *New Intellectual Horizons in Education*, ed. Yedullah Kazmi (Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press, 2011), 91–110, http://irep.iium.edu.my/14493/1/The_Experience_of_Islamization_of_Knowledge.pdf.

²³ *Ibid.*, 102.

²⁴ Al-Attas, *Islām and Secularism*, xiv.

²⁵ Abdallah, Hussien, and Hisham, "Experience of Islamization of Knowledge," 94.

of clarity or sophistication to let academics utilise them as a basis for explanation, analysis, and interpretation or textbook elaboration at IIUM.

Then it follows that IoK movement has not yet succeeded in fully Islamising the philosophies of the sciences because there might be limited Islamised paradigms and theoretical propositions at the level of explanatory clarity or sophistication of Western paradigms. It may, then, be suggested that IoK movement presented Islamised frameworks (i.e., demonstrating the Islamisation process), but it did not produce enough Islamised paradigms and theories (i.e., complete Islamised theories suitable for the explanation, analysis, and interpretation of phenomena).

For instance, in his 1993's article titled, "Islamic Perspectives on Theory-Building in the Social Sciences," Ragab posits that al-Faruqi provides "us with a general framework of Islamic values with a bearing on Islamic scientific thinking," but "what we badly need is a framework for theory building that would incorporate and express such framework in practical terms."²⁶ Though Ragab himself did not present a usable and testable theory, it is understandable that he has done what was necessary (creating a framework) in 1993.

More than two decades later, in 2016, Ragab wrote another article titled, "The Islamic Perspective on Social Work: A Conceptual Framework."²⁷ However, he made no reference to a usable and testable theory as he was suggesting in his 1993 article. Both the 1993 and 2016 articles demonstrate the process of building theory and doing social work without showing a finished theory ready to use in teaching, research or real-life.

Someone may object to the foregoing claims on the ground that no exhaustive review of the literature was done or that some of the sources are dated. The response to these objections is that there is a consistent pattern of complaint in the literature about the lack of well-elaborated Islamised textbooks, theories, and methodologies. See, for instance, the year of publication of these articles: Nasr²⁸ in 1991, Ragab²⁹ in 1993, Saqeb³⁰ in 2000, Abdallah, Hussein and Hisham³¹ in 2011, and Rothman and Coyle³² in 2018.

²⁶ Ibrahim A. Ragab, "Islamic Perspectives on Theory Building in the Social Sciences," *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 10, no. 1 (1993): 5, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283422226_Islamic_Perspectives_on_Theory_Building_In_the_Social_Sciences.

²⁷ Ragab, "The Islamic Perspective on Social Work: A Conceptual Framework," *International Social Work* 59, no. 3 (2016): 325–42. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0020872815627120>.

²⁸ Nasr, "Islamization of Knowledge," 387–400.

²⁹ Ragab, "Islamic Perspectives on Theory Building," 5.

³⁰ Saqeb, "Some Reflections on Islamization of Education," 63.

³¹ Abdallah, Hussein, and Hisham, "Experience of Islamization of Knowledge," 102.

The abundance of evidence like these in the literature makes one inclined to agree with Saqeb³³ that until “practitioners, educators and teachers have available to them, standard textbooks, . . . guidance on Islamic concepts of knowledge, . . . methodologies and teaching aids, Islamization of education will remain a pie in the sky.” This warning must be taken seriously given that Saqeb was a member of the organising committee of the first World Conference on Muslim education of 1977, and all its follow-up conferences.³⁴

The Problem of the IoK as Viewed in This Paper

The crucial problem of IoK project is not because the political rhetoric took precedence over the intellectual rigour as viewed by Nasr,³⁵ or that the project stalled at the level of abstract theorisation as viewed by Alatas.³⁶ The problem of IoK is inherent in its proposals. IoK has two major problems. First, the theorists of IoK movement did not put enough effort into paradigm, methodology and theory elaboration at the initial stage, and second, the project expected institutional support for its success.

Regarding the first problem, the initiators of the movement should have presented a concretely Islamised knowledge in their respective areas of specialty. Presenting a concretely Islamised knowledge and elaborating on its methodologies would have served as a model upon which a solid intellectual enterprise could have been built. Those initially Islamised methodologies and paradigms would have permitted younger scholars to further the Islamisation of other disciplines.

Scarcity of precise Islamised methodologies and theories might have been the reason for the endless speculations about IoK. For example, Dangor³⁷ finds that a major obstacle to the success of IoK is the diversity of scholars’ approaches to the idea of Islamisation. Contrary to this opinion, the diversity of opinion is a good phenomenon as long as each scholar contributes to the progress of IoK by innovating paradigms and theories.

However, when the debate is restricted to whether there is a need for IoK, or scholars limit themselves to the elaboration of frameworks for carrying out IoK, very little progress is made in terms of paradigms and

³² Abdallah Rothman and Adrian Coyle, “Toward a Framework for Islamic Psychology and Psychotherapy: An Islamic Model of the Soul,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 57, no. 5 (2018): 1731–44, doi: 10.1007/s10943-018-0651-x.

³³ Saqeb, “Some Reflections on Islamization of Education,” 63.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 45.

³⁵ Nasr, “Islamization of Knowledge,” 387.

³⁶ Alatas, “Islamization of Knowledge.”

³⁷ Dangor, “Islamization of Disciplines,” 528.

applicable methodologies and theories. Then, the door is left wide open for fruitless speculations. It is appropriate here to use Muslims' past scholarly achievements as a frame of reference to elaborate more on this point.

Lessons from the Islamic Past

When Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/820) saw the need for *uṣūl al-fiqh* (principles used for extracting Islamic laws from the Qur'ān and *sunnah*), he did not simply launch a wakeup call or argue for the practical or intellectual justification for his vision. Rather he materialised it by writing the first book of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. Then scholars from other *madhāhib* (schools of jurisprudence) took part in the debate by elaborating additional methodological tools to further *ilm al-uṣūl*. Their collective achievement was monumental because it was critique combined with elaboration of intellectual tools.

It may appear to some that this example does not apply to IoK because it was not meant to be a new science. My response is that the two situations are not identical, but it is possible to infer that only a materialised intellectual vision can be the precursor to serious intellectual achievements. Accordingly, IoK will move forward if its adherents put more effort into elaborating Islamised paradigms, methodologies, and theories.

Another example from Muslims' past intellectual achievement that is in a way similar to modern-day IoK is that of Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ghazālī's (d. 505/1111) warning about the negative implications of blindly embracing Greek philosophy by Muslims. In his work, "*Tabāfut al-Falāsifah*" (the inconsistencies of the philosophers), al-Ghazālī was doing some of the things that IoK adherents are calling for today in regard to Western science.

Even though the scope of IoK is much broader than what al-Ghazālī accomplished, many important lessons can be learned from his example. On the one hand, it is incumbent upon scholars who believe in a given IoK perspective to present an Islamised work. On the other hand, critiquing philosophies that are not compatible with the Islamic worldview necessitates the mastery of those philosophies and presenting an alternative.

Accordingly, critiquing alone does not produce an alternative unless it is coupled with innovating new paradigms, methodologies, and theories. To innovate, one must ask new questions about old problems or challenge oneself to resolve new problems. Critiquing philosophies of sciences with authority combined with innovating Islamised alternatives by asking thought-provoking questions inevitably—in the long run—will lead to complete IoK and mastery of the sciences based on new metaphysical, epistemic, and ethical grounds. It is in that direction IoK must move.

A final lesson to infer from al-Ghazālī's example is that the success of intellectual projects meant for advancing a cause depends more on the determination of individual scholars than the support of institutions. It is undeniable that institutions can easily concentrate human and material resources for advancing a cause (as recommended by the organising committee of the World Conference on Muslim education 1977).³⁸ However, it is also indisputable that institutions will only mobilise enough resources to advance causes that help them in achieving their objectives and fulfilling their leaders' visions.

Consequently, revolutionising intellectual projects intended for achieving overarching goals such as those envisaged by IoK adherents may best succeed when undertaken by level-headed scholars outside institutional constraints. This argument brings me to analysing the second problem of IoK movement (i.e., presupposing a favourable institutional, academic, and social environment).

The Problem of Presupposing a Favourable Environment

IoK pioneers (i.e., Nasr,³⁹ al-Attas,⁴⁰ and al-Faruqi⁴¹) list various reasons that allow secularisation to dominate the educational system in Muslim-majority countries, making a true commitment to IoK difficult. They also analyse the sociological factors that sustain secularisation and make it a driving politico-economic and socio-cultural force in Muslim majority countries. Their analysis was sober assessment of lived realities of the *ummah*.

Nevertheless, scrutiny of IoK project reveals that it was laid out based on the presupposition of institutional favour and supportive academic milieu. This is true because recommending to an institution what to do pre-supposes that the institution will consider the recommendation, and proposing to scholars how to bring about IoK pre-supposes that they will agree to execute the proposal and they know how to do it. Laying out IoK project based on these assumptions weakened the project.

If one accepts that institutions, academics, and people are more receptive to the knowledge that is practically or theoretically useful in their lives, one must conclude that unless the practical or theoretical utility of Islamised knowledge is demonstrated, institutions, academics, and people may not

³⁸ Muhammad Wasiullah Khan, "Appendix: Report of the Committee on Education and Society, First World Conference on Muslim Education," in *Education and Society in the Muslim World*, ed. Muhammad Wasiullah Khan (Jeddah: Hodder and Stoughton, 1981), 128.

³⁹ Nasr, "Islam and the Problem of Modern Science," 63–68.

⁴⁰ Al-Attas, "*Islām and Secularism*," 104–114.

⁴¹ Al-Faruqi, "Islamization of Knowledge," 18–25.

wholeheartedly invest time and resource in it. Practical utility means applying knowledge to do practical work such as banking, and theoretical utility means applying knowledge for teaching, research, and thinking.

In modern societies, schooling and research are closely linked to economic advantages, social status, and power, so it is difficult to convince institutions and people to dedicate time and energy to promote knowledge that does not readily benefit them in real life. Moreover, many Muslim scholars have studied sciences through their secular philosophical lens, so it is difficult for them to start rethinking them through an Islamised lens in the absence of well-elaborated practical or theoretical models.

Abdallah, Hussien, and Hisham's⁴² research finding perfectly illustrates the above point. This research showed that many brilliant students at IIUM did not show interest in taking Islamic sciences courses because they believed it would not benefit them on the job market. Additionally, the appraisal of IoK two decades after the World Conference on Muslim education of 1977 showed that institutions are not reliable for advancing IoK cause.⁴³ As a matter of fact, only Malaysia sincerely engaged in IoK.⁴⁴ Thus, IoK movement must not be too optimistic about the support of people and institutions.

From a purely operational point of view—unless there is a committed leader—modern-day institutions may not readily embrace IoK, considering that these institutions take in inputs, performs operations on them, and deliver outputs. This process happens within a context where the education system must be harmonised with a mostly secularised politico-economic system. Also, people's expectation of education is influenced by the economy and politics.

Additionally, there are power dynamics within education institutions, changing policies, priorities, strategic orientations, and leadership all of which are influenced by broader contextual factors. Therefore, for IoK movement to remain innovative and focused on its aims, it must not depend on or expect the support of institutions, sceptic scholars, or people who see education only as path to the job market and social prestige.

How IoK Movement Can Possibly be Reinvigorated?

IoK movement must be reclaimed by a new generation of scholars who will concentrate and coordinate their efforts for the sole purpose of innovating Islamised paradigms, methodologies, and theories in the various fields of knowledge by asking thought-provoking questions. They must build on Islamic scholarly tradition as well as the achievements of IoK movement, free

⁴² Abdallah, Hussien, and Hisham, "Experience of Islamization of Knowledge," 105.

⁴³ Saqeb, "Some Reflections on Islamization of Education," 64.

⁴⁴ Ibid.; Dangor, "Islamization of Disciplines," 527.

themselves from institutional, economic, and intellectual constraints, and be committed to IoK cause.

Only when scholars committed to IoK cause will focus on developing intellectual tools able to concretise their visions on a practical or theoretical level, adherents of the movement can expect the birth of a true intellectual movement aimed at Islamising knowledge exactly as their forefathers did with respect to revealed sciences, as well as sciences they borrowed from Persia, Greece, India and China, etc.

Committed scholars who will start the new wave of IoK must make it their top priority to train a solid group of earnest young scholars to whom the future of the movement will be entrusted exactly as past Muslim scholars did with their schools of thoughts. Once a critical mass of committed young scholars are armed with a clear vision and cogent theoretical, methodological, analytical, and interpretive tools, the IoK movement will impose itself as a potent intellectual force in the academic world.

Hence, the movement will be a strong intellectual current by the rational coherence of its paradigms, the explanatory power of its theories, and the number of its adherents rather than simply the cogency of arguments that prove its legitimacy. At this stage, hesitant scholars and organisations will accept Islamised knowledge. In the event some organisations ignored Islamised knowledge, the movement would remain strong by the strength of its adherents and the acceptance of its outputs by sincere academics.

The rationale of this argument is found in past Islamic intellectual achievement. In the past, many *'ulamā'*, produced monumental scholarship without institutional support. In fact, many of them refused institutional support or cooperation with institutions, and many resisted institutions such as Mālik b. Anas (d. 93/795), Abū Ḥanīfah Nu'mān b. Thābit (d. 150/767), and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855). Even when *'ulamā'* of the past taught at state-sponsored academies, they remained intellectually free, and many of them were solely motivated by the desire of serving the *dīn* of Allah.

For instance, when al-Ghazālī decided to write his *Tabāfut al-Falāsifah*, he received no research grant, took no sabbatical, and was not commissioned by anybody. Yet, he studied philosophy for three years in order to write the book that made him entitled to the title of *Ḥujjat al-Islām*. IoK scholars must learn from intellectual giants of the past that knowledge is pure because it is a search for the truth to fulfil the servitude of Muslims to Allah. Therefore, they must avoid anything that stains the purity of knowledge.

Important Conditions for the Success of the New Wave of IoK

The group of scholars able to further IoK cause against all odds should not expect or depend on institutional support to avoid subordinating the noble goal of IoK to the narrow agenda of any institution. They may establish learning circles or work individually but cooperatively. In case an institution supports IoK cause, scholars must resist inferences that restrict their intellectual freedom. Thereof, it may be better to set up an independent research facility, so scholars may focus on advancing thought that would benefit the entire *ummah* along with the host institution.

Additionally, scholars engaged with the IoK cause must not concern themselves with career advancement, fame, or money. They must avoid mimicking Western scholarship or be obsessed with proving the superiority of Islamic approaches to science. In sum, they must free themselves from the material, professional, psychological, ideological or political pressure that obstruct the pursuit of knowledge through the vision of *tawhīd*.

It must be clear to them that what is knowable is universal in the sense of natural laws, phenomena, causal relations, and underlying mechanisms of the creation. As a result, it is possible for human beings—regardless of their beliefs—to discover, describe, decipher, and know what is knowable. However, the knowledge seeker's vision, inclination, interest, and purpose all filter and alter knowledge as obtained and used (the controversy surrounding biological diversity is a case in point).⁴⁵

It must be clear that seeking knowledge through the vision of *tawhīd* is not an attempt to fit what is knowable into the normative views of Muslims (as some may believe), but it is a deliberate endeavour from scholars to subordinate all sorts of human interests and purposes to the vision of *tawhīd*, so knowledge manifests and fulfils the vision of *tawhīd*. The prism of *tawhīd* does not constrain thought, rather it liberates it. It inspires thought with the truth of divine revelation in the search of the truth of divine creation.

Therefore, knowledge sought or borrowed must be filtered through the Islamic worldview of *tawhīd* to avoid knowledge becoming a source of corruption for the revelation or the creation. That is the lesson to be learnt from past Muslim scholars when they dealt with Greek, Chinese, Persian, and Indian sciences, etc. It is then clear that borrowing knowledge between civilisations is not a problem if every civilisation is conscious of its philosophy of science and has an independent command of the sciences. Present-day IoK movement must not lose sight of these realities.

⁴⁵ Seyyed Hossein Nasr. "On the Question of Biological Origins," *Islam & Science* 4, no. 2 (2006): 181–97.

Details of a Possible Solution to Islamising Knowledge

What is more productive and conducive to intellectual breakthrough for IoK scholars is to focus on the followings: 1) they should study, synthesise, and continue to build on the work of their predecessors; 2) they should exploit the available knowledge from past Islamic intellectual heritage to link the past with the present and set the ground for the future; 3) and they should start approaching every discipline by asking new metaphysical, epistemological, and axiological questions based on the Islamic worldview.

Asking new questions may create possibilities for broadening or redefining the scope and application of some disciplines, and it might result in novel research methodologies or the adaptation of existing ones. It may even lead to the invention of new disciplines required by Muslims to accomplish distinct theoretical and practical function that cannot be accomplished using the existing disciplines.

The above three processes of critiquing Western approach to science, exploiting the past Islamic intellectual heritage, and asking new questions that may lead to breakthroughs must go hand in hand especially when training younger scholars. Because critiquing Western approach to the sciences demonstrate what is wrong with it, making use of past Islamic intellectual heritage results in appreciation and awareness that there is indeed an Islamic approach to knowledge, and asking new questions forces creative thinking.

Here are examples of questions that might be considered. Given the Islamic worldview of *tawhīd*, the responsibility of humanity on earth, and the transitory nature of life, what should be the ethical guidelines governing the conduct of Muslims when seeking or applying knowledge? How those guidelines can be organised into a coherent whole by proving their congruency with the supreme objectives of Islam as found in the Qur'ān and *sunnah*? In that regard, what can be learned from the '*ulamā*' of the past? And what has been achieved by IoK movement?

Based on the world view of *tawhīd*, the supreme objectives of Islam and the lived realities of the *ummah*, what should be the main research interests of Muslims in a given area of knowledge? Can those interests be satisfied with available research tools under the available disciplines? What new tools are needed and how disciplines must be reshaped? What is the possible range of theories, paradigms, and methodologies that can be derived from revealed sources in each area of knowledge? How to test them? And what guidelines must be established to bring intellectual rigour into that process?

How present to young scholars in an easy-to-understand language with the intellectual tools invented by past Muslim scholars? How to synthesise and test theoretical propositions made by past '*ulamā*' in the various fields of

knowledge? What has already been achieved by contemporary IoK scholars? And how to coordinate the efforts of new scholars who will carry IoK forward?

Once a new spirit is created in IoK movement in this way, IoK conferences will become vehicles for exchanging creative ideas and engaging in constructive criticism. Even without large scale conferences requiring extensive funding and massive logistics, earnest scholars can still exchange ideas and sincere advice using publications, meeting in small groups, and utilising information and communication technologies.

Conclusion

This paper is a modest contribution to the forty-year-old debate about IoK. It has argued that two issues hindered the IoK movement from achieving the goal of Islamising the philosophies of the sciences by developing paradigms, methodologies, and theories to assert the Islamic worldview of *tawhīd* in research and teaching. Then, it made propositions for a rebirth of the movement.

The first issue identified was that the founding fathers of the movement directed most of their energies to defend IoK and develop frameworks for Islamising knowledge, but they did not dedicate enough energy to developing paradigms, methodologies, theories, and concepts for transforming their philosophical visions into practical or theoretical tools; and the second issue identified was that IoK project was conceived in a way that made its success depend on institutional support, so the lack of adequate institutional support greatly hindered IoK movement.

It was then suggested that the solution to these two issues require a rejuvenation of IoK movement by a new generation of dedicated scholars who should only focus on building on the achievements of their forbearers, creating a unique Islamic approach to natural and social sciences by asking new questions, and training a substantial number of young scholars to sustain the movement. These scholars must liberate themselves from the grip of institutions, and from career, personal and economic ambitions.

The solution suggested here will make IoK movement a potent intellectual current due to the availability of a critical mass of scholars, and cogent paradigms, methodologies, and theories useful practically and theoretically for organisations, teachers, and researchers. This vision will hopefully come true if the debate about IoK is oriented to new directions, and if this paper stimulates adherents of IoK to ask the hard questions.

