

Critical Reflections on Fārūqī's Islamization of Knowledge



Yasien Mohamed

Introduction

The scholar Ismā'īl Rājī al-Fārūqī (1921–1986) was deeply troubled by the crisis of knowledge in Islam today. In an attempt to reconcile his faith with the intellectual challenges of the very varied and interconnected world we live in, he developed the concept of the 'Islamization of Knowledge': the synthesis of old and new within an Islamic epistemological framework.

Fārūqī's is not the only Islamic revivalist response to secular modernity. This chapter explores his idea of the Islamization of Knowledge, reviews the modifications and alternatives proposed by other Muslim scholars, and concludes with a new proposal.

The Biography of Ismā'īl Fārūqī

The Palestinian Fārūqī is noted for his valuable contribution to comparative religion, his critique of Zionism, his theory of Arabism, and his exposition of *tawhīd*. He received his early Islamic education from his father, an Islamic judge, and his early secular and Christian religious education from French Dominicans. At the American University of Beirut, he took a B.A. in Philosophy and English. On his return to Palestine, he was appointed Governor of the Galilee district. With the creation of Israel in 1948, he was deprived of that office and exiled. The Israeli occupation of Palestine had a lasting effect on his thinking, highlighting the vulnerability of Muslims without a vocabulary true to their faith to engage with the modern

Y. Mohamed (✉)

Foreign Languages, Faculty of Arts, University of the Western Cape,
Cape Town, South Africa

world. His most influential idea, the ‘Islamization of Knowledge’, was born in an attempt to resolve the religious-secular dichotomy of education in the interests of the social transformation of the *ummah* or Islamic nation (Hashim and Rossidy 2006). He promoted it through the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), which he founded, and the *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*.

After completing a doctorate in Western philosophy, Fārūqī entered the al-Azhar and committed to an intensive programme to gain a deeper appreciation of Islam. In Egypt he was inspired by Muslim reformers such as Muḥammad ‘Abdu. This gave him the impetus to attempt bridging the gap in thought between Islam and the West (Fletcher 2008: 52).

The Islamization of Knowledge was not Fārūqī’s only concern. Imtiyaz Yusuf, one of his former students, argues that it is unfortunate that he has been judged only in relation to this project. Fārūqī’s concerns were broader than Islamization. He was the Muslim trailblazer in the academic study of other faiths: “engaged in Islam’s dialogue with other religions, especially Christianity in the West.... He was not theologically exclusivist, rather a Muslim pluralist scholar of religion. This is evident from Fārūqī’s elaboration of the concept of metareligion as presented in his book, *Christian Ethics*” (Yusuf 2014: 112).

The Crisis of Muslim Education

In the classical Muslim world, knowledge was integrated. There was no bifurcation of the kind evident today between revealed Islamic knowledge and acquired human knowledge. The two levels of knowledge were complementary, Islamic knowledge providing the general principles and human knowledge the particulars, based on observation and experience. However, in the modern Muslim world, there is a split: the universities are secular and the Islamic seminaries focus on traditional Islamic theology. There is generally no attempt from either side to integrate these two systems of knowledge, partly because the epistemologies that characterize them are in conflict: secularized knowledge relies on empirical observation, but what is referred to as Islamic knowledge is based on both divine revelation and reason. Muslim educationists have realized the need to resolve the contradictions and bring about a synthesis. Several attempts at that synthesis are explored in this chapter.

In *Truth and Method*, Hans Gadamer showed that bias is inevitable in the interpretation of a text. Thus bias is not wrong in itself, but unrecognized it can have negative consequences. Elmessiri’s *Epistemological Bias* provides examples of such consequences in Western social sciences. And, in *Orientalism*, Edward Said demonstrates an insidious European bias in treatment of the East in English literature and in the orientalist’s ‘othering’ of Eastern people as objects of study rather than knowing subjects. Such bias can have far-reaching implications. For example, German philosopher, Emmanuel Kant, gave currency to the notion of Africans as incapable of rationality. That notion was used as a justification for the European colonization of non-European people.

Egypt was the first Arab country to be conquered and colonized by the French. The secular system of school education the colonizers introduced ignored Islam as a factor in Egyptian society, promoted French but neglected Arabic, and taught learners about the greatness of French generals like Napoleon Bonaparte, but not about Arab and Muslim generals like Khālid ibn al-Walīd. Muḥammad 'Abdu, the late nineteenth-century religious scholar and liberal reformer, was critical of this kind of biased French education, which was indifferent to the local cultural heritage of the Egyptian people, cultivating a sense of inferiority in Egyptian children and leaving the main religious tradition of the country completely out of account.

Unfortunately, the Muslim world has increasingly adopted the Western system of education and its ideological bias on a binary basis, allowing no conceptual space for valuing the Islamic world's history and its living intellectual and religious tradition. This has had serious consequences. In Saudi Arabia, postgraduate students of Sociology know about Karl Marx, Durkheim, and Adam Smith, but know little, if anything, about Ibn Khāldūn, the fourteenth-century North African pioneer of sociology. Similarly, in the West, many valuable concepts in economics and sociology, such as the division of labour and the labour theory of value, were developed only in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, without any sense that an Islamic scholar had articulated them five centuries earlier.

Recent Muslim social science graduates of American and European universities have tended to adopt Western versions of their own Islamic societies for want of an intellectually compelling alternative. The combination of ignorance of their Islamic intellectual legacy and the bias towards the West at these universities has left them vulnerable. At an academic level, Syed Farid Alatas refers to this phenomenon as *academic dependency*: “a condition in which the knowledge production of certain scholarly communities is conditioned by the development and growth of knowledge of other scholarly communities to which the former are subjected” (Alatas 2010:56).

Perhaps more profoundly, the bias in European and American universities and those which follow their curricula elsewhere is not only towards the West. It is also secular and materialist. This conflicts directly with the Islamic world view, creating an epistemological duality for Muslim students. Western secular knowledge is based on the triumph of the mind in interpreting the observable world and celebrates the human being as a physical and rational animal. From an Islamic point of view, this is not enough. The human intellect alone cannot guide man through life: divine revelation is also needed. Whereas Western secular knowledge sees man as a physical entity determined by the laws of physical nature, for Muslims, the human being is only partly a physical creature, and nature is both physical and spiritual: man is a microcosm of the universe and part of the creation of God. Without acknowledgment of the spiritual dimension of human nature, Western education cannot provide adequate knowledge for a person to know himself and so to know his Lord – the key to his true happiness in this world and the hereafter. For Alatas, this does not mean that secular knowledge from the West should be rejected. The epistemological duality can be overcome by identifying and countering the harmful assumptions which accompany Western secular knowledge before integrating it into the Islamic world view (Alatas 2010, 18–20).

Similarly, Elmessiri argues against blind submission to foreign ideas that are secular and materialistic. Western social scientists are concerned with how material progress can be achieved in society and measure the progress of Muslim societies only on those terms. But Muslims, according to Elmessiri, should measure progress within the framework of their own vision. They should not fear foreign ideas, but should weigh them according to their own standards. “What they are really against is having their own concepts weighed for them by scales thrust into their hands by others” (Elmessiri 2006:10).

The twentieth century brought unprecedentedly rapid change, and the Muslim world has not been immune to it. The challenge is to change without losing the fundamentals of faith. Early responses by Muḥammad ‘Abdu in Egypt and Sayyid Aḥmad Khān in India rejected the changing morality of the west, but accepted its science and technology without awareness of the accompanying ideological bias. Ismā’īl Fārūqī was critical of their assumption that “the modern subjects are harmless and can only lend strength to the Muslims”. “Little did they realize”, he says, “that the alien humanities, social sciences, and indeed the natural sciences as well, were facets of an integral view of reality, of life and the world, of history, that is equally alien to that of Islam” (Fārūqī 1982: v).

The first thinker to introduce the concept of Islamization was Syed Naquib Alatas (Wan Daud 1991: 35; Mohamed 1993a, b: 12), but it was Fārūqī’s version of the concept that became popular in the Islamic world. In his 1982 book, he proposed the Islamization of Knowledge to overcome the problem of a dichotomous education. In recent years the popularity of the concept has waned, and scholars of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) are now talking instead of the integration of knowledge. The rest of this chapter will focus on an exposition of the Islamization of Knowledge, the modifications made to the concept by IIIT scholars, the address to the same problem by two other scholars, and a further possibility.

Fārūqī’s Islamization of Knowledge

As we have seen, modern secular knowledge is not value-free. To bring about the Islamization of Knowledge, the epistemological paradigm of secular modernity, with its conceptions of the self and the world, has to be thoroughly understood. Elmessiri (2006:4) describes a paradigm as a mental abstract picture, which can accept some features of reality and reject others. It is usually hidden because it is taken for granted within a particular discourse. Fārūqī identified the source of the crisis of Muslim society in the paradigm of secular modernity which rejects the reality of faith, leading to the dichotomy of modern secular and Islamic knowledge, each then necessarily with its own system of education. For much of the Islamic world, this dichotomy was reinforced by the colonial experience. The colonizers established Western schools and universities and ignored local cultural and religious values. Islamic education tended to react in unfortunate ways. Increasingly, Western

education came to stand for freedom and enlightenment and Islamic education for control and conformism.

As Professor of Islamic studies at Temple University in Philadelphia, Fārūqī had direct contact with Muslim students and graduates in the social sciences. He noticed that their sentimental attachment to Islam was not enough to engage the philosophical assumptions of modern science. After 4 years, their Islamic consciousness was ravaged, and they felt inferior, with a keen sense of the value of Western knowledge but little idea of the vibrant intellectual heritage of their faith. The crisis they faced was both epistemological and ethical. It was not only about the nature of knowledge but about its informing value system. The secular sciences assume that all knowledge is based on observation, leaving no room for revelation. They also silently embody a value system alien to Islam. Fārūqī sought to resolve this crisis, as representative of the much larger challenge of modernity for Muslims everywhere, through what he called 'the Islamization of Knowledge'. The rejuvenation of the ummah requires that, "the present dualism in Muslim education, its bifurcation into an Islamic and secular system must be removed.... The two systems must be united and integrated" (Fārūqī 1982). This goes beyond a mixing or juxtaposition of Islamic and Western sciences to a total reorientation of knowledge in the light of five universal principles that form the foundation of an Islamic epistemology (Safi 1993:25). These are the unity of God, of creation, of truth, of life, and of humanity.

On the basis of these five principles, Fārūqī introduces a 12-step work plan as a general strategy to realize the Islamization project. The aim is to recast every discipline to be informed with the world view of *tawhīd* (Oneness of God). This orientation must be reflected in the textbooks of each discipline (Fārūqī 1982: 10–11). A creative synthesis is achieved through reinterpreting and adapting the components of secular knowledge in ways consistent with the world view of Islam to produce university textbooks in Islamic sociology, Islamic psychology, and Islamic political sciences. This requires cooperative input from both sides of the divide. The chief responsibility for it lies with modern Muslim scholars, well versed in the disciplines and trained in critical thinking. However, it also demands the input of traditional Islamic scholars with a knowledge of the depth of the Islamic intellectual tradition (Fārūqī 1982: 43).

The first edition of Fārūqī's *The Islamization of Knowledge* was received with great enthusiasm, and its thesis gained wide acceptance. He was concerned with the failure of the traditional Islamic seminaries which were unable to deal with the challenges of secular modernity, so he wanted to ensure that Muslim graduates would have a comprehensive understanding of Islamic culture and civilization while also being strongly grounded in their particular area of modern specialization. To achieve this, he proposed that all students at universities in Islamic countries take an Islamic Civilization course alongside their other subjects over the full undergraduate period (al-Fārūqī 1982).

Since Fārūqī had direct contact with Muslim students and social sciences graduates in America, his Islamization project was initially inspired by them, so he created the IIIT journal as a platform for research and sharing of ideas. Before he died,

Fārūqī founded the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM), which became the main experimental site for the Islamization of Knowledge. At this university, every student has to do a double major: in Islamic studies and in one of the social sciences. They are also required to master both English and Arabic so that they are qualified to be employed in the civil service, the teaching profession, or private business (AbūSulaymān 2007:13–19).

Critical Reflections of Scholars Connected to the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT)

A project as wide-ranging as the Islamization of Knowledge requires ongoing monitoring and critique. I shall first discuss the work of two leading scholars inspired by Fārūqī, AbdulHamīd AbūSulaymān and Taha Jabir al-Alwani, both pioneering members of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT). They have progressively adapted the theory of the Islamization of Knowledge and its work plan. I shall then turn to the work of three other scholars, Elmessiri, Sardar and Henzell-Thomas. Although their views do not necessarily reflect its official position, their books are published by the IIIT, so they point to a general change of direction in critique of the social sciences and a search for a new paradigm.

AbdulHamīd AbūSulaymān, former president of the IIIT, and former Rector of the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM), agreed with Fārūqī that the first step in Islamization should be mastery of the secular social sciences, but he emphasized that this was a temporary measure. In the classical period, the Muslims were at the forefront of philosophy and science, and the West borrowed from them; but today, it is Western scholars who are pioneering philosophy and science, and Muslims are borrowing from them. He emphasizes that there is no problem in borrowing from the West, provided modern knowledge is integrated with the Islamic intellectual legacy in a creative synthesis. This may restore the confidence of contemporary Muslim scholars. Such a synthesis depends on reformulating modern thought in accordance with the world view of *ṭawḥīd* (Oneness of God). AbūSulaymān notes that the IIIT has cooperated with Muslim elites throughout the world to this end and, through conferences and its *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, has provided platforms for dialogue and significant scholarly contributions (AbūSulaymān 2007:13–19).

AbūSulaymān sees Islamization as an educational project, involving the integration of disciplines. He speaks of: “a remarkable intellectual integration of knowledge fusing the disciplines of revealed knowledge and those of human and technological sciences” (AbūSulaymān 2007, 13). The question is whether this kind of Islamization can be regarded as genuine intellectual integration or rather as a preliminary attempt at combining the Islamic and Western disciplines. There is nothing wrong with the latter. Students need to be exposed, as a first step, both to the knowledge that emanates from the modern secular university and to that from the Islamic revealed legacy. Such exposure does not produce full intellectual integra-

tion, but is perhaps a starting point towards attaining that goal. At the IIUM the undergraduate must first gain exposure to Islamic and Western disciplines, and only at the postgraduate level can they hope to work systematically on the much longer project of intellectual integration of disciplines. The IIIT has worked towards this goal and cooperated with Muslim academics and intellectuals throughout the world in joint efforts, providing platforms for dialogue and publication of research papers through the *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*. This peer-reviewed journal has appeared regularly since its inception and has even published articles critical of the Islamization of Knowledge project or its work plan. Generally, scholars have been in agreement about the crisis of a dichotomous education, but have differed as to how to bring about unification.

Fārūqī proposed the Islamization of Knowledge, to lead ultimately to creative synthesis of knowledge and the publication of textbooks for the Islamic university in Islamic economics, Islamic psychology, and Islamic sociology. This was his first priority at a time when the Muslim world was losing its best minds to the West. Not all the textbooks produced have achieved the envisaged goal of creative synthesis. They have, however, been important in a time when Muslim students in Western-style universities have felt threatened and even overwhelmed by modern higher education and desperately in need of alternative perspectives to enhance their self-worth and build their confidence in their Islamic intellectual heritage.

The second pioneering IIIT academic, Taha Jabir al-Alwani, an eminent Shari'ah scholar and president of IIIT for a decade, differed with AbūSulaymān on the sequence of the Islamization of Knowledge work plan. The first step for him was mastery of the Islamic sciences, as the main task of Islamization and creative synthesis had to come from traditional Islamic scholars (Ragab 2006, 76–77). Alwani appears to have had little faith in the modern educated graduate to bring about genuine Islamization. His scepticism is revealed when he says, "Islamization is not a cosmetic addition of religious terminology and sentiment to studies in the social sciences and humanities or the grafting of relevant Qur'anic verses onto the sciences or disciplines intended for Islamization" (al-Alwani 2005: 29). The first steps should be adopting the Islamic paradigm of knowledge and the Qur'anic methodology (al-Alwani 2005: 35–42). Then the Shari'ah sciences should be reformed, not only in terms of the Islamic epistemology and world view but also through adding some social sciences to the Islamic syllabus (al-Alwani 2005: 57). That would make integration of knowledge possible (al-Alwani 2005: 45).

We now turn to two other approaches within the ambit of the IIIT. Perhaps a good starting point for the synthesis of knowledge is not only a mastery of modern knowledge as Fārūqī suggested but a critique of the secular and Eurocentric bias embedded in it. Abdelwahab Elmessiri, editor of *Epistemological Bias in the Physical and Social Sciences*, focuses on the epistemological bias in Western disciplines. As they stand, he sees these Western disciplines as not always suitable for or applicable to Third World and Muslim countries because of their bias. The book contains concrete examples of this bias in almost all modern disciplines, including Psychology, Anthropology, Political Science, and Sociology. However, the aim is not to replace a Western paradigm with an Islamic one; that would amount to imposing an Islamic

paradigm on the study of Western societies, making the same mistake as “orientalists” did in relation to Islam when they interpreted it in accordance with their Europe-centred bias (Elmessiri 2006: 1–76). Scientific approaches to the study of religion are helpful, particularly in understanding the social dimensions of religion, but in other respects they tend to be reductionistic, giving an unhelpfully limited view of Islam and Muslims. They need to be complemented by Islamic understandings. Put differently, Western scholarship can look at the house of Islam from the outside only, but it is also necessary to look at the house of Islam from the inside. Both approaches are needed to arrive at an in-depth and comprehensive view of Islam. For Elmessiri it is an ongoing concern that Muslim and Arab intellectuals uncritically adopt Western approaches to the study of Islam and Muslim societies, resulting in their self-perception being defined by others, usually in a negative light. Elmessiri sees the primary need as identifying and countering the bias within modern education.

To this end, Elmessiri has edited a volume where the contributors have identified the main biases within their disciplines and pursued the implications. Hussein (2006: 77–104), for example, stresses that Muslim challenges are different from non-Muslim challenges; inevitably Muslim scholars will raise different questions from scholars from the West. From another perspective, Habib (2006, 126–144) sees the values of individualism and self-interest as alien to the collective Muslim psyche, which is more oriented towards altruism and cooperation than to selfishness and competitiveness. He says that Arabs have a collective psyche and do not see themselves in isolation from their tribe or society. But Western-developed sciences expose the Arab to a philosophy of the self-centred individual in competition with other individuals, as in Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations*, where self-interest is the basis for his philosophy of economic development.

Ziauddin Sardar and Jeremy Henzell-Thomas are the authors of an important IIIT book, *Rethinking Reform in Higher Education: From Islamization to Integration of Knowledge*. Still inspired by the first principles from Fārūqī’s work plan for the Islamization of Knowledge, they explore a significant change from the path trodden by Fārūqī, AbūSulaymān, and Alwani. It is a change first signalled by Malkawi (2014), a fellow IIIT author. The new direction focuses on the integration of knowledge so that through a multi-disciplinary approach students are also prepared for the new challenges of technology, pluralism, and ecological sustainability. The IIIT, publishers of the work, make it clear that “the views and opinions expressed in this book are the authors’ and not necessarily those of the publisher”, but it seems that in recent IIIT workshops the focus has been on integration of knowledge rather than Islamization of Knowledge. In the opening chapter, Mapping the Terrain, Sardar (2017: 23) provides a thought-provoking analysis and critique of the modern university: although the world is becoming more complex than ever before, the discipline-specific curriculum only prepares the graduate for the economic market, not to deal with the complexity of the modern world. To counter this, education must be interdisciplinary and knowledge must be integrated, not fragmented. As modern knowledge is embedded within a Western paradigm, embodying a particular epistemology and world view, the university needs to be decolonized. This “does not mean the

exclusion of modern knowledge: the decolonizing process is not an attack on Europe – it is to point out that modern European knowledge is one amongst various forms of knowledge. However, decolonizing does require questioning the Eurocentricism of modern knowledge and its claims to be universal”.

This awareness of the epistemological bias in modern knowledge is relevant for the reform and transformation of universities all over the world. The Islamization project provides useful models for the critique of colonial education, emphasizing that syllabus change needs to be directed by critical thinking, if the epistemological bias in the modern university is to be countered. Sardar's (2017:96) critique of the modern university is important for all students, not only Muslims:

Each academic discipline has emerged within a particular cultural context; and each has its own specific history that defines its contours.... The desire to manage and control the natives Europe conquered gave rise to anthropology. While the function of anthropology was to study the exotic Other, with the aim of proving the inalienable superiority of Europe, the objective of sociology was to inquire into the underclass, the Other within Europe.... Whatever the discipline, the overall narrative was the same: to perpetuate the [dominant] worldview of the West

This awareness of bias in disciplines, however they have developed from their origins, is a first step towards the long and intellectually arduous process of integration of knowledge.

Is the integration of knowledge an alternative to the Islamization of Knowledge? Henzell-Thomas defines the word integration to include not only the integration of knowledge but also the integration of the human personality, where human desire is subservient to reason. This broader and deeper understanding of integration is welcome. However, with respect to knowledge, what integration basically comes down to is synthesis of the old and the new, the Western and the Islamic. This is precisely the goal that Fārūqī laid out for the Islamization of Knowledge. Integration and synthesis are synonyms. So we have to ask, what is really new about the integration of knowledge?

In a draft IIIT document, *Towards an Expanded Glossary of Key Terms: Introduction and Five Model Entries*, Henzell-Thomas refers to the Islamization of Knowledge as “extreme” because it is “setting itself apart from other traditions which it may see as contaminated by secular or other foreign concepts” [Henzell-Thomas, 42]. He concurs with Sardar who sees Islamization of Knowledge as a product of its time and context, but who notes that “it has left an enduring legacy, not least in articulating concerns about the dire state of Muslim thought and education, drawing attention to the Eurocentric nature of social sciences and enunciating the first principles. We move forward with Integration of Knowledge” [Sardar and Henzell-Thomas 2017: 136].

As we approach this new model, we need to examine critically the implications of ‘extreme’ in reference to the Islamization of Knowledge. First, is it Fārūqī's vision that is seen as narrow, or is it the way Islamization of knowledge has been implemented? As mentioned above, Imtiyaz Yusuf pointed out that Fārūqī proposed the Islamization of Knowledge as a man of broad and generous concerns. He did not set himself apart from other traditions, but took part in inter-religious

dialogue. As a Muslim scholar, he was a pioneer in the academic study of religion, and he engaged in Islam's dialogue with other religions in America. Clearly, he was not theologically exclusivist, but a Muslim pluralist scholar of religion. Secondly, dismissing knowledge because it is secular incorrectly reflects Fārūqī's vision. What is the point of Islamization if it does not respond to the problem of secularism embedded in the presuppositions of Western knowledge? Modern knowledge can only be reconciled with the world view of Islam when its inessential secular, anti-religious elements are removed. Once that has happened, knowledge can be enriched with an Islamic dimension. Fārūqī was not opposed to the integration of knowledge; he had a problem with the dichotomy in the educational system and wanted to correct that through Islamization as a means to creative synthesis. How innovative, then, is the new vision and model of Sardar and Henzell-Thomas? In many ways it is very much like Fārūqī's. The way the ideas are implemented is a different matter. There are serious shortcomings at the Islamic universities, where modern and Islamic disciplines have been combined or juxtaposed, but not actually integrated. As Henzell-Thomas points out in his *Glossary of Key Terms*, 'integration' has a primary sense of unification and fusion. This has been attempted under the Islamization of Knowledge project with varying degrees of success in fusing knowledge systems and producing Islamic textbooks. However, Henzell-Thomas distinguishes two other senses of the word 'integration'. Firstly, it can refer to the integrated personality, where wisdom predominates over the lower faculties of the soul. This is an important aspect. Integration starts with the integration of the mind and the human personality. Secondly, integration also means adapting to and co-existing with people of other cultures. This does not mean 'assimilation' where a minority culture is submerged in another culture, resulting in the loss of identity. Muslims should retain their distinct identity and nurture a healthy *asabiyyah* (social solidarity), to use Ibn Khaldun's term. However, this positive sense of community should not lead to an ethnocentric mentality, which looks down on the values of other communities. I shall be taking these two senses of integration further as I pursue my proposal for the integration of knowledge.

Critical Reflections of Muslim Scholars Not Connected to the IIIT

We now turn to the views of two scholars, not associated with the IIIT, who accept Islamization in principle and are open to foreign knowledge and its integration into Islam. They too regard the bifurcation between Western secular knowledge and Islamic knowledge as problematic and propose ways to bridge this gap in responding as Muslims to secular modernity.

The most radical departure from Fārūqī's Islamization has come from Chicago-based Pakistani scholar, Fazlur Rahman. His call is for a critique of the Islamic intellectual legacy in the light of the Qur'an and a corresponding reconstruction of

the Islamic sciences, including law, philosophy, and theology (Mohamed 1993a, b: 31).

Rahman is not opposed to Islamization, but holds that the Islamic intellectual legacy is not absolute and should also be subject to critique. For him, Islamization's attempts to build bridges are problematic, because genuine integration can only take place if the traditional Islamic scholars take the initiative. He states: "It is futile to even raise the question of the Islamization of Knowledge: it is the upholders of Islamic learning, who have to bear the primary responsibility of Islamizing secular knowledge, by their creative intellectual efforts" (Rahman 1982: 134).

For Rahman, the specific rulings in the Qur'an are not objectives in themselves, but are contingent upon definite historical circumstances. They are meant to convey quintessential Islamic moral objectives of justice, mercy, and benevolence. Unlike al-Alwani, who proposes minor reform to Islamic education, Rahman calls for a complete reconstruction of the Islamic sciences, based on the teachings of justice as a predominant theme of the Qur'an, recognizing its affinity to the dominant international culture of human rights.

The other scholar outside the IIIT, who is not only in support of the Islamization of Knowledge but was actually the first to coin the phrase, is the Malaysian scholar Naquib Alatas. His *Preliminary Statement on a General Theory of the Islamization of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago* was published in 1969 (Wan Daud 1991: 35). In it, he defines Islamization as "The liberation of man first from magical, mythological, animistic, national-cultural traditions opposed to Islam, and then from secular control over his reason and his language... It is also liberation from subservience to his physical demands which inclines towards the secular and injustice to his true self or soul" (Alatas 1985:44). Unlike the IIIT scholars, Alatas, being Sufi-inclined, gives more attention to the liberation of man from his lower self and its desires as part of the process of Islamization. The starting point for him is Islamic metaphysics focused on the reality of God. Knowledge of God goes beyond theory to experience, firmly grounded in revelation. In that context, he deals with the 'de-secularization' of knowledge, exploring it in *Islam and Secularism and the Philosophy of the Future* (Alatas 1985).

Alatas points out that he is not being acknowledged for pioneering the idea of Islamization and that he believes the idea has been wrongly applied at the International Islamic University of Malaysia (personal interview 2004). He founded the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) to correct matters. Daud, the deputy director of ISTAC, comments: "Professor Alatas ... has authoritatively defined the meaning of Islamization.... Without proper definitions, Islamization has often been reduced to legalization or to the establishment of some socio-political entities, and knowledge has been wrongly equated with mere facts, skills and technology" (Daud 1991: 36).

The Integration of Knowledge in Islamic Context: An Alternative Approach

In the light of this valuable debate, I should like to propose a fresh approach with deep historical roots: *the integration of knowledge in Islamic context*. My proposal is partly inspired by the models used by classical Islamic scholars for the integration of knowledge. My article, ‘The Integration of Knowledge in Islamic Context: al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī’s Concept of Justice’ (Mohamed 2009), provided for the first time a concrete example of how integration of knowledge took place in the work of al-Iṣfahānī, the eleventh-century philosopher. I showed how al-Iṣfahānī appropriated the Aristotelian categories of justice, integrating them into an Islamic meta-physical framework to develop an authentic Islamic theory of justice, concerned with both individual and social justice as contributing to happiness in this world and in the Hereafter. Al-Iṣfahānī’s approach is what I refer to as the integration of knowledge in Islamic context.

In the classical Islamic period, Muslim scholars critically appropriated Greek ideas. They enthusiastically entertained foreign knowledge and fearlessly integrated what was positive from it into their Islamic world view. They had already established themselves in all branches of knowledge and had a strong Islamic epistemological framework into which foreign knowledge could readily be assimilated. By contrast, Islamization today starts from a position of weakness, because the established bodies of knowledge are Western, and they have no strong Islamic epistemological framework of adequate complexity. Muslim scholars setting out to make meaningful connections with their Islamic intellectual heritage often end up trying to infuse Islamic concepts into a Western knowledge that is not hospitable to them.

Integrating knowledge in an Islamic context must involve the following:

- Identifying certain elements of new knowledge disciplines and integrating them within an Islamic epistemological frame
- Drawing selected methods and techniques with utility and applicability in Islamic societies from new knowledges and integrating them
- Replacing the secular paradigm with an Islamic paradigm elaborated from the Islamic understanding of human nature and creation
- Replacing secular concepts and terms or expanding the vocabulary with faith-based conceptions and terms mediating Islamic values and concerns

Modern social scientific methods may usefully be employed to study Islamic societies, especially the social manifestations of Muslim institutions, governance, economies, and education. However, these methods are not useful in understanding transcendent phenomena (*al-ghayb* – the unseen). Muslim scholars have to be critically receptive to new ideas, methods, and techniques, using what they have to offer without compromising Islamic belief. Why should psychoanalysis as a therapeutic technique not be employed by Muslim psychologists if it proves to be effective? Thus, the Islamic critique of the ideological role of the social sciences need not negate the positive knowledge to be gained from them or from physical sciences and

technology. Once foreign knowledge is integrated into an Islamic context, it becomes naturalized in Islam.

My proposal for the integration of knowledge in Islamic context differs from the current Islamization project. It is more accommodating of epistemological pluralism in a multi-religious society. Islam may share with the other religions the critique of the secular bias within the social sciences, but would integrate the beneficial knowledge into its own social context and world view. Thus, the integration of knowledge in Islamic context is more open to the present global climate of religious pluralism. It is not opposed to the integration of knowledge of other religious contexts, whether they be Confucian, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, or African.

This is not compromising religion, but allowing scholars from other religious traditions also to integrate knowledge in their own religious context. They should critically assess new knowledge, distinguishing the substantial from the ideologically value-laden, extracting what is beneficial for their needs, and filtering out what is harmful or incongruent. It also implies reforming the Islamic sciences so that they are open to new knowledge, showing their current relevance to the diversity and plurality of our communities, and taking the needs of the environment into consideration.

To sum up: Fārūqī sought a solution to the immediate problem facing Muslim social science students urgently in need of an Islamic perspective on their disciplines if they were not to become alienated from their Islamic identity and intellectual heritage. With this in mind, the notion of the Islamization of Knowledge struck a chord among Muslim academics and was enthusiastically received in Islamic schools in the West and in Islamic universities in the Muslim world. However, Fārūqī's concept of Islamization and its implementation have not gone uncriticized. Many scholars have warned of a cosmetic Islamization and urged that a comprehensive Islamic philosophical framework should be the foundation for any Islamization of the Western sciences. Others have felt that the starting point should be the reform of the Islamic sciences. I have proposed an alternative approach, the integration of knowledge in Islamic context, as a more open-minded response to Western intellectual modernity.

This alternative approach, faithful to the Islamic tradition, is of value in Islamic countries as well as in helping Muslim minorities in the West. It is also realistic about the new world we are living in. In Muslim minority countries where educational institutions are secular in orientation, there may be a functional need for non-Muslims to know more about the religion and intellectual perspectives of their Muslim friends or neighbours. Students may want to choose a module or more in intellectually integrated Islamic studies for their own enrichment or to supplement their areas of specialization. This is possible and manageable. A module on Islamic economics could be very valuable to people working locally or internationally with Islamic banks or with banks offering Islamic finance. A module in Islamic law could serve those well who may have to work with Muslim clients in the areas of marriage, divorce, and inheritance. A module in Islamic pastoral psychology could be helpful to psychotherapists dealing with Muslim clients who suffer from faith-related problems of guilt and depression. Then, as part of a fuller intellectual

history, Ibn Rushd's contribution to philosophy fills in the picture, and the pioneering contribution of the African sociologist, Ibn Khaldun, needs to be recognized in its own right.

In conclusion, while Fārūqī's proposals have valuably asserted the importance of the Islamic intellectual and social tradition, they have also raised a number of issues which have to be confronted in the modern world. Integration of world knowledge in an Islamic context is an immediate challenge. So is the kind of exposure of non-Muslims to various aspects of Islamic knowledge which they need in moving towards meeting the plural epistemological demands of the modern world.

Bibliography

- AbūSulaymān, A. A. (2007). *Revitalizing higher education in the Muslim world*. London: IIIT.
- Ahmed, A. S. (1986). *Toward Islamic anthropology*. Virginia: IIIT.
- Al-Alwani, T. J. (2005). *Issues in contemporary Islamic thought*. London/Washington: IIIT.
- Alatas, S. F. (2010). Intellectual and structural challenges to academic dependency. In K. Sinha-Kerhoff & S. F. Alatas (Eds.), *Academic dependency in the social sciences: Structural reality and intellectual challenges* (pp. 55–77). New Delhi: Manohar.
- Alatas, N. (1985). *Islam, secularism and the philosophy of the future*. London: Mansell Publishing.
- Daud, W. M. (1991). *The beacon on the crest of a hill*. Kuala Lumpur: IIIT.
- Delgado, J. (2014). Book review, Malkawi, epistemological integration. *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 75–79.
- Elmessiri, A. M. (2006). 'The gate of Ijtihad' in epistemological bias in the physical and social sciences. In A. M. Elmessiri (Ed.), *Epistemological Bias in the Physical and Social Sciences* (pp. 1–76). London/Washington: The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT).
- Fārūqī, I. (1981a). Preface. In I. Fārūqī & A. Naseef (Eds.), *Social and natural sciences Fārūqī* (pp. 5–7). Jeddah: King Abdulaziz University.
- Fārūqī, I. (1981b). Islamizing the social sciences. In I. Fārūqī & A. Naseef (Eds.), *Social and natural sciences* (pp. 8–20). Jeddah: King Abdulaziz University.
- Fārūqī, I. (1982). Islamization of knowledge: General principles and work plan.. IIIT.
- Fletcher, C. D. (2008). *Ismail Al-Fārūqī (1921–1986) and interfaith dialogue*. McGill University.
- Habib, R. (2006). Modernizing vs. westernizing the social sciences: The case of psychology. In A. M. Elmessiri (Ed.), *Epistemological bias in the physical and social sciences* (pp. 126–144). London/Washington: The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT).
- Henzell-Thomas, J. (n.d.). *Towards an expanded glossary of key terms: Introduction and five model entries*. Draft document. IIIT.
- Hussein, A. (2006). Bias in western schools of social thought: Our heritage as the starting point for development. In A. M. Elmessiri (Ed.), *Epistemological bias in the physical and social sciences* (pp. 77–104). London/Washington: The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT).
- Hashim, R., & Rossidy, I. (2006). A comparative analysis of the conceptions of Alatas and al-Fārūqī. In *Islamization of human sciences*.
- Malkawi, F. H. (2014). *Epistemological integration: Essentials of an Islamic methodology*. London: IIIT.
- Mohamed, Y. (1993a). Islamization of knowledge: A comparative analysis of Fārūqī and Rahman. *Muslim Education Quarterly*, 11(1), 27–40.
- Mohamed, Y. (1993b). Islamization: A revivalist response to modernity, in *Muslim educational quarterly*, 10(2), 12–23.
- Mohamed, Y. (1994). Islamization of knowledge: A critique. *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 282–294.

- Mohamed, Y. (2009). Integration of knowledge in Islamic context: Raghīb Isfahani's theory of justice. In K. D. Crow & K. D. Crow (Eds.), *Islam, cultural transformation and the re-emergence of Falsafah* (pp. 55–76). Tehran: Iranian Institute of Philosophy.
- Ragab, I. (2006). The methodology of Islamizing human sciences. In M. Y. Hussain (Ed.), *Islamization of human sciences* (pp. 73–100). Kuala Lumpur: Research Centre, IIUM.
- Rahman, F. (1982). *Islam and modernity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Safi, L. (1993). The quest for Islamic methodology: The Islamization of knowledge project in its second decade. *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 10(1), 23.
- Sardar, Z., & Hensell-Thomas, J. (2017). *Rethinking reform in higher education: From Islamization to integration of knowledge*. London: International Institute of Islamic Thought.
- Yusuf, I. (2014). Ismail al-Fārūqī's contribution to the academic study of religion. *Islamic Studies*, 53(1–2), 99–115.