

## **INTRODUCING ScienceOn1, *TAWHIDIC*-BASED SCIENCE: PERINTIS'S TAKE ON THE ISLAMISATION OF PRESENT-DAY KNOWLEDGE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The article deals with the idea of islamisation, its brief history and progress. The idea of islamisation and the islamisation of present-day knowledge are often misunderstood. Knowledge is not neutral, thus it comes with the worldview of one who propagates it. ScienceOn1, *tawhidic* (oneness of God)-based science as *Persatuan Saintis Muslim Malaysia* (Malaysian Muslim Scientist Organisation), PERINTIS' stake on the islamisation of present-day knowledge proposes measures to actualise the idea.

*Keywords: islamisation, knowledge, islamisation of present-day knowledge, worldview*

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The progress in science and technology plays a significant role in the development of a nation, Muslim and Non-Muslim alike. As science and technology is generally accepted as the product of the west, their philosophy, principles, and concepts, that underlie it are alien to Muslim beliefs. Hence, a dilemma arises whether to wholly embrace or to venture into it with caution. Being Muslims, our engagement with science and technology dated far back into the middle of the seventh century as the Umayyads in Syria began encountering with manuscripts on natural sciences in Greek and Syriac language. Within a century of the 'Abassid's rule, which began in 750 A.C. almost all had been translated into Arabic. Henceforth, the appropriation, enrichment and development of sciences began in earnest and moulded into the worldview of Islam. In more specific terms, the "materials" of the various sciences procured by the Muslims from diverse sources during the first three centuries of Islamic history, were gradually integrated and absorbed into the unitary perspective of Islam [1].

As of today, the Muslim intellectual and scientific heritage remains obscure despite the fact it once set to revolutionize the intellectual tradition of the west on the Andalusian plain. In addition, the Western science and technology assumes the role once played by the former. Realising the crucial role of science and technology, the Muslims today have to tread on the footsteps of the early Muslim scholars and scientists and notably al-Ghazali in his effort at the 'islamisation' of the Greek philosophical treatises. In support of the idea, ScienceOn1 can be considered as an attempt by *Persatuan Saintis Muslim Malaysia*, PERINTIS (Malaysian Muslim Scientist Organization), at venturing into the Muslims once trodden field that is 'islamisation'. Specifically, we hope to bring science and technology into the purview of *tawhidic* worldview.

## 2.0 A BRIEF HISTORY OF ISLAMISATION

The idea of islamisation is in fact a revolutionary thought of the modern day. Since the middle of the twentieth century, the Muslims are not able to treat present-day knowledge with justice. Although articles, books, academic papers have been published and debated, however many fail to grasp the intended purpose of islamisation. Confusion has led to losing its real meaning simply because of lack of caution and careful explanation. As a result, its failure is often associated with the idea itself. A number of Muslim contemporary scholars have attempted to highlight the problem of contemporary knowledge but they fell short of providing the solution.

Sir Muhammad Iqbal, for example had long been aware of the weakness and the imbalanced nature of the modern Western civilization. Although he showed concern, he did not provide further explanation and steps for implementation of islamisation [2]. Professor Syed Hussein, on the other hand, opines that one's interpretation of facts of nature is indirectly influenced by his worldview. He agrees that the Muslims are able to absorb and integrate appropriate elements of other sciences provided he or she has the general idea of the worldview of Islam [2]. His significant contribution in islamisation is 'The Encounter of Man and Nature' in *Sufi* perspective dealing with the crisis of epistemology in Western Civilisation [3]. Likewise, he too does not elaborate islamisation as a conscious, educational and philosophical program. In support of the idea of islamisation, Dr Ja'afar Syeikh Idris debates on the aspects of socio-political of the Muslims but is silent on aspects of thoughts and knowledge. It was only after islamisation has been widely discussed, he proposes among others that knowledge should rest on the solid foundations of Islam, its scope be widened, discover new facts and see old ones in the Islamic worldview [4].

Notably, Prof Dr Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas defines with clarity the concept, process of islamisation and those aspects that relate to worldview, knowledge and the concept of university. As early as in the 1960s, he debates the idea of islamisation in his well-known study of history of the arrival of Islam and her influence in the Malay culture. Again in 1969, the idea of islamisation is highlighted in 'Preliminary Statement on the General Theory of the Islamisation of the Malay Indonesian Archipelago'. He asserts that the islamisation process has completely altered the Malays worldview on truth and existence academically and scientifically. On the occasion of his conferment of professorship of Malay language and literature, he lectures on the role of Islam in building Malay culture and civilization. During the First World Conference of Islamic Education in 1977 at Makkah, he elaborates on the characteristics of knowledge as being shaped by the worldview of any/certain civilization. He clarifies the concept of islamisation of the present-day knowledge, problems of knowledge, purpose and meaning of knowledge, the meaning of education as well as the concept of Islamic university. In 'Islam and Secularism' he elaborates on background history of the thought and western Christian civilization, the meaning of secular, secularization and secularism, the concept of *Din*, fundamentals of Islamic character, the problems of Ummah and islamisation of knowledge. Finally, in 1980 during the Second World Conference of Islamic Education at Islamabad, he espouses on educational system and the characteristic of Arabic language as being scientific [1].

It was al-Faruqi, who asserts that the 'malaise of the Ummah' lies in education [5]. He proposes 'to recast the whole legacy of human knowledge from the standpoint of Islam' [3].

### 3.0 NATURE AND PURPOSE OF ISLAMISATION

Islamisation is in fact an effort to bring about true actualization of *'ubudiyah*, total submission to Allah S.W.T. Islamisation involves a two way process, which are the liberation of and the devolution to one's *fitrah*, natural tendency. The Prophet P.B.U.H. set a precedent with respect to these two aspects in his engagement with and transformation of the Arabs of the *jahili*, pagan society. Islamisation first liberates the mind and then thought through islamisation of language. At the time of the Prophet P.B.U.H. the process was executed through the language of the Qur'an, which redefines the meaning of for example *karim*, *kufir*, and *illah*. In fact, the first five *ayah*, verses of the Qur'an from *Surah*, Chapter *al-'Alaq* (the Clot),

- i) Proclaim! (or Read) in the name of your Lord and Cherisher, who created
- ii) Created man, out of a leech-like clot.
- iii) Proclaim! And your Lord is Most Bountiful,
- iv) He Who taught (the use of) the Pen,
- v) Taught man that which he knew not.[6]

had transformed the worldview of the Arab society with respect to their theological, metaphysical and epistemological dimensions. In sum, islamisation is the liberation of man

- i) first from magical, mythological, animistic and national, cultural tradition opposed to Islam
- ii) and then from secular control over his reason and language [7]
- iii) and also from subservience to his physical demands which incline towards the secular and injustice to his true self or soul for man as physical being inclines towards forgetfulness of his true nature, becoming ignorant of his true purpose and unjust to it [4].

### 4.0 ISLAMISATION OF PRESENT-DAY KNOWLEDGE

The main challenge in the area of islamisation is that of knowledge itself. Knowledge has lost its true objective and become the source of confusion and doubts. The content of education is no longer the true knowledge in fact it is knowledge masqueraded along with confused and harmful values. The concept of western knowledge is a problem, void of direction and true meaning since 'the present-day or the modern knowledge is founded on, interpreted and projected through the worldview, intellectual vision and psychological perception of the Western culture and civilisation' [4]. The essential spirit of this culture and civilisation are characterised inter-relatedly by

- i) reliance upon the powers of human reason alone to guide man through life
- ii) adherence to the validity of the dualistic vision of reality and truth
- iii) affirmation of evanescent aspect of existence projecting a secular worldview
- iv) espousal of doctrine of humanism
- v) emulation of the allegedly universal reality of drama and tragedy in the spiritual, or transcendental, or inner life of man, making drama and tragedy real and dominant elements in human nature and existence [4]

In short, the present-day knowledge is understood and elaborated according to western worldview, which is supported by elements of secularism, dualism, humanism and tragedy.

## 5.0 PROSESS OF IMPLEMENTATION AT THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION LEVEL

At the educational institution level, Islamisation is implemented via organization of hierarchy of knowledge scheme which includes the reality and existence according to the hierarchy comprising the Creator, the Messengers, man, animals et cetera. Neglecting this aspect will result in chaos and disorder. The challenge, which confronts education, is to determine the exact and true position for every field of knowledge and skill. The consideration should include

- i) that man is of *ruh*, spirit and body
- ii) the position of *naqli* (revealed) knowledge with respect to *aqli* (acquired) knowledge
- iii) the obligation between *fard 'ayn*, obligation towards the Self and *fard kifayah*, obligation towards the Society bearing in mind the dynamic nature of *fard 'ayn* as 'it increases according to the spiritual and intellectual abilities as well as social and professional responsibilities of a person' and the integrative nature of the two [4].

As islamisation or dewesternization deals with problem of secularization, al-Attas proposes that first we isolate the key elements, western cultural influence from every discipline of knowledge especially human sciences. As for facts and theories of natural science, they must be interpreted in accordance with Islam by introducing Islamic concepts and principles in the thought and physical actions. Al-Attas proposes that these elements and concepts should replace those alien concepts.

- i) the concept of religion (*din*)
- ii) the concept of man (*insan*)
- iii) the concept of knowledge (*'ilm* and *ma'rifah*)
- iv) the concept of wisdom (*al-hikmah*)
- v) the concept of justice (*'adl*)
- vi) the concept of right action (*amal* and *adab*)
- vii) the concept of the university (*kuliyah-jami'ah*) [1]

Al-Faruqi opts for replacement of Western and Modern influences in metaphysics and sciences through mastery of modern discipline, mastery of Islamic legacy and creative synthesis between the two, which some find problematic. The problem lies in the fact that 'disciplines are not divided into water tight compartments and they arose out within the matrix of a particular worldview and organised hierarchically subordinated to that worldview' [3]. Mastery of Islamic legacy and command of modern science is sufficiently equipped for anyone to embark on Islamisation as viewed by Abu Sulayman.

### 5.1 Science On1's Proposed Practical Implementation

Many groups have attempted to translate the idea of islamisation of knowledge into practical action. For one, in the early eighties the effort at Islamisation in school was seen practiced in *Maktab Rendah Sains MARA Seremban* (Seremban MARA Junior Science College). The effort is indirectly cited in the paper '*Islamisasi Pendidikan di Sekolah: Prospek Dan Masalah*' (Islamisation of Education in School: Prospect And Problem) presented during National Seminar on Islamisation of Education: Meeting The Challenge which was held at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) in July 1999 [8]. Next, the idea of islamisation is highlighted in '*Dinamika Kurikulum SRI-SMI: Antara Ideal Dan Realiti*' (Dynamics of Curriculum SRI-SMI : Between Ideal And Reality) [9] and is then proposed in '*Model Baru Dan Komponen Utama Dalam Kurikulum Al-Amin*' (New Model and Main

Component in Al-Amin's Curriculum) [10]. Finally, *Projek MERKURI* (MERKURI Project) clearly states the objectives of islamisation of *Kurikulum Baru Sekolah Rendah*, KBSR (New Curriculum of Primary School) and *Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah*, KBSM (Integrated Curriculum of Secondary School), which are to be attained by schools under *Pusat Pendidikan Al-Amin* (Al-Amin Education Centre) [11]. By early 2002, the MERKURI Project committee successfully documented relevant parts of KBSR and KBSM curriculum in the light of Islamic perspective and were transmitted in respective classes. However, the attempt was met with challenges among other time constraints, change of syllabus and change in medium of instruction. It was then agreed that islamisation of curriculum is to be at the discretion of teachers. All these spirits are supporting the idea of islamisation as proposed by al-Faruqi.

Upon realizing that islamisation has its own philosophical, theological and metaphysical dimensions as examined by Al-Attas, a concerted effort and a well laid out plan of execution is needed from all levels. As a starting point, PERINTIS will support the idea of islamisation of present-day knowledge in schools via ScienceOn1 project by organising the followings :

- i) At the philosophical level: Synthesising, integrating and converging of ideas of islamisation and islamisation of present-day knowledge
- ii) At the translational level: Training of writers, instructors or teachers on the idea of islamisation and islamisation of present-day knowledge and what they entail.
- iii) At the implementational level: Educating the instructors or teachers on the use of teaching manuals on the islamisation of present-day knowledge

These measures are to ensure all the interested parties will consolidate ideas and efforts in empowering and translating the idea of islamisation of present-day knowledge.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

Islamisation of present-day knowledge is a process of description of facts, establishment and expression of meanings (at the individual and societal level) grounded on Islamic metaphysical sources. It is not merely transporting knowledge and Islamic principles within the framework of contemporary knowledge. Therefore, it calls for high knowledge ability that is in depth mastery of Islam as religion, culture and civilization. A re-look at the practices undertaken by various groups at translating the idea of islamisation of present-day knowledge is crucial. It is to avoid failure and in its stead to bear fruitful results. It should be emphasised that, the task before Muslim intelligentsia, then, is to develop, using the epistemology of Islam, alternative paradigms of knowledge for both natural and social sciences and mould disciplines most relevant to the needs of contemporary societies [11].

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