

ISLAMIC STUDIES: A TRANSDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Integration of religious sciences ('ulum al-din) in the traditional sense, Islamic thought (fikir al-Islami) produced by Muslim scholars and leaders, and Islamic studies (dirasat Islamiyah) in a wider sense, includes the study of Islamic practice reflected in a variety of Islamic cultures subsumed under an Islamic civilization. As such, integration between revealed and acquired knowledge becomes important. This integration can occur not only because of a synergy between the treasures contained in classical Islamic sciences (turath) and contemporary scholarly discourse, but also because of the scientific enrichment afforded by the development of the transdisciplinary approach. Such approach uses specially constructed methodology from as many disciplines as needed to solve complex problems faced by the world and its inhabitants today such as climate change, financial crisis, natural disasters, political upheavals, ideological violence, and disenfranchised majority or minority. Ali Shariati's concept of rausyanfikir (enlightened thinker) is especially relevant for the this methodology, as such thinkers do not only 'discover things' or 'present facts', but also 'find truth' and 'create history'. Using existing literature, this paper examines the transdisciplinary approach, shows its relevance for Islamic studies, and highlights the concept of cosmopolitan Islam and 'enlightened' Muslim intellectuals.

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Introduction

That the Islamic civilization has once experienced a golden age is a historical fact few people will deny.¹ That the same civilization then fell into stagnation, even backwardness, such that it was colonized by other civilizations, is also a fact that has become common

¹ Read, among others, M. Basheer Ahmed, Syed Ahsani and Dilwanaz Siddiqui (eds), *Muslim Contributions to World Civilizations* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2005).

knowledge.² That the Muslim community has struggled to revive the civilization has also been discussed by many experts. What perhaps becomes necessary to discuss is the reason for the rise and decline of the Islamic civilization,³ as well as what efforts must be pursued for its revival.

An analysis of the rise and decline of any civilization must take into account the state of the modern economy. The economy which develops in this modern age is one based on knowledge, as exemplified in the terminology ‘knowledge-based economy’ popular in the late twentieth century and even more so in the early twenty first century.⁴ Knowledge, represented dominantly by science and technology, seems to have diverged into two different, if not opposite, paths. One, the path of hyperspecialization,⁵ while the other, the path of integration and even unity.⁶ The latter path of integration of unity seems to be pursued by many traditional and modern Muslim experts interested in the revival of Islamic civilization. An example is Fazlur Rahman, who traced the Muslim epistemological crisis in his book ‘Islam and Modernity’, to the emergence and spread of the idea of *al-‘ulum al-syar’iyyah* - sharia knowledge - or more popularly known as *al-‘ulum al-naqliyah* – revealed knowledge, with *al-‘ulum al-‘aqliyah* – rational-intellectual knowledge. One of the first Muslim scholars to distinguish between these knowledge types was Ibn Sina in his book *Fi Aqsam al-‘Ulum al-‘Aqliyyah* (On the Division of Intellectual-Rational Knowledge).

Ibn Sina’s distinction was important because of the background which caused it and the impact it made to the Muslim world. The background was the intellectual battle between Ibn Sina (d. 1035) and al-Ghazali (d. 1111) on the relative advantage of both knowledge types.⁷ The battle between these two giant Muslim scholars filtered down to their scholarly followers, leaving a rocky epistemological relationship. al-Ghazali seemed to have successfully attacked and exposed the weakness of philosophy and science, and showed the superiority of revealed knowledge and mental-spiritual guidance based on esoteric-spiritual knowledge. His book, *Tahafut al-Falasifah*, marked an important shift in Islamic epistemology. He proposed a theology of ‘occasionalism’, in which every event (cause-effect) and interaction is not a product of natural material integration, but a product of God’s direct will. Rejecting strongly the thoughts of Aristotle and Plato, the book intended audience was mainly the free-thinker Muslim philosophers who lived from the eighth to eleventh century, among them al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, both intellectually influenced by Ancient Greek philosophies.

² M. Umer Chapra, *Muslim Civilization: The Causes of Decline and the Need for Reform* (London: Islamic Foundation, 2010).

³ Yusuf al-Qardhawi, *Islamic Awakening: Between Rejection and Extremism* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2007).

⁴ See Peter Drucker. *The Age of Discontinuity: Guidelines to Our Changing Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969); and Keith Smith. ‘What is Knowledge Economy? Knowledge Intensity and Distributed Knowledge.’ *Discussion Papers* (Maastricht: Institute of New Technology, United Nations University, 2002).

⁵ Thomas W. Malone, Robert J. Laubacher, and Tammy Johns. ‘The Big Idea: the Age of Hyperspecialization.’ *Harvard Business Review*, July-August 2011; and Mark Shaffer et. al. *Hyperspecialization White Paper* (INCPAS Board Task Force, Indiana CPA Society, 2012).

⁶ See Dieter Wolf. *The Unity of Knowledge: An Interdisciplinary Project* [www.dieterwolf.net/pdf/Unity_of_Knowledge.1.pdf]; and David A. Edwards and Stephen Wilcox. *Unity, Disunity and Pluralism in Science* (1980).

⁷ This battle is represented by the book of al-Ghazali, *Tahafut al-Falasifah*, which attacked the philosophers, and the book of Ibn Rusyd, *Tahafut al Tahafut*, which defended the philosophers.

Al-Ghazali's idea in the book was countered in the next century by Ibn Rushd in his book titled *Tahafut al-Tahafut*. Ibn Rushd deemed al-Ghazali to have supported the separation of knowledge into disciplines, in which physics, mathematics, logics, and natural science were classified as philosophy. As such, the procedure and product of all these disciplines must be doubted, and even rejected. At the very least, they must be separated and distinguished from religious knowledge based on revelation (*wahy*). However, a deeper study into al-Ghazali's idea showed that he actually held a holistic understanding of Islamic epistemology, such that he could be deemed as a figure who can unite the legal experts (*fuqaha*'), the speculative theologians (*mutakallimun*), and the spiritual seekers (*sufi*). He managed to integrate their epistemologies, as can be seen in his book *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*. However, his book title was criticized for having emphasized 'religious' knowledge, to the detriment of 'non-religious' knowledge, such that a separation between these knowledge was perceived, leading to a dichotomy and even 'confrontation' of knowledge.

The variety of intellectual schools of thought in Islam, with their distinct epistemologies, is a double-edged sword of blessing and curse. They are a blessing if they lead to a unity, reflecting the unity of God (*tauhid*). However, they are a curse if they lead to sectarian conflict and disciplinary conflict, such that truth-claims are made and others are considered deviant. Ibn Khaldun has observed that the development of knowledge in Muslim societies was closely related to the prevailing economic and political power and that it tends to reside in the same groups and cities.⁸ Integration of religious sciences (*'ulum al-din*) in the traditional sense, Islamic thought (*fikr al-Islami*) produced by Muslim scholars and leaders, and Islamic studies (*dirasat Islamiyah*) in a wider sense, includes the study of Islamic practice reflected in a variety of Islamic cultures subsumed under an Islamic civilization. Another type of integration is among the multiple types of rationality which has developed among Muslim scholars: *bayani*, *burhani*, and *'irfani*. *Bayani* rationality is commonly used by the *fiqh* scholars, *burhani* among the philosopher and scientist, while *'irfani* among the *tasawuf* practitioners.⁹ The most current type of integration is between natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. The division of knowledge into these three types is a result of modern development which has impacted greatly the division of knowledge in modern universities. Technological development after the industrial revolution, which has only sped up in this post-industrialized era, caused natural sciences and technology to gain more prominence. Some social scientists even adopted and applied methods developed in natural sciences, with the hope of increasing certainty and influence.

The Industrial Revolution and Scientific Disciplines

Many higher education studies have discovered that the concept of 'discipline' is not something that is set in stone.¹⁰ Scientific disciplines are so different from each other such that it is difficult to come up with a definition that can cover most, much more all of them. Etymologically, the term 'discipline' originates from the Latin word '*discipulus*' which means

⁸ For further discussion, see Osman Bakar, Eric Winkel and Airulamri Amran (eds). *Contemporary Higher Education Needs in Muslim Countries: Defining the Role of Islam in 21st Century Higher Education* (Kuala Lumpur: IAIS Malaysia & IKIP International College, 2011).

⁹ For further elaboration, see the works of Muhammad 'Abid al-Jabiri, especially his book *Bunyat al-'Aql al-'Arabi* (Beirut: Markaz al-Tsaqafi, 1991).

¹⁰ Tony Becher and Paul R. Trowler. *Academic Tribe and Territories* (Buckingham: The Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press, 2001), p. 41.

student, and *disciplina*, which means teaching (noun).¹¹ Related to these words is the word *disciple*, as used in the phrase *disciples of Jesus*. Bryan Turner also pointed out the meaning of the word for the Christian church, which refers to an order which must be maintained, in addition of the meaning of the word in the medical context, which means rules to be followed by doctors and nurses and obeyed by patients.¹² Michel Foucault defined discipline as a power and political practice to ensure a ‘domesticated’ society.¹³ Society is ‘disciplined’ for the purpose economic exploitation and political obedience. Foucault considered academic discipline as contributing significantly to societal ‘discipline’. In such society, ‘disciplined’ individuals now accept external rationalities and values as their own, and as such they no longer need to be oppressed openly. To Foucault, ‘disciplinization’ is a process intended to limit individual freedom and constrain idea,¹⁴ and as such ‘discipline’ must be viewed as an important obstruction to freedom of thought.

Historically, discipline as a word and concept as seen today was developed in European civilization. In the early eighteenth century, the European continent was still dominated by agricultural society. Most people worked in farms, where traditional values dominated and change occurred slowly. At the end of the century, a number of tools were invented which changed European lives. Steam engine was invented in 1770 which multiplied the human physical strength ten and even a hundred times. The invention of the engine quickly led to the invention of the first automobile by Daimler and Benz in 1889. Machines quickly took over human in a variety of work as they are faster and thus more profitable. It was the start of industrial revolution in Europe, which not only changed the methods of production, but also the types of products to fulfill human needs. The increase in product types in turn led to division of labor in factories and their management. Knowledge and skills needed to facilitate this division became separated and divided, becoming more specialized, creating a phenomenon of hyperspecialization, especially in today’s twenty first century, where knowledge and information technology activities are common.

A number of criteria and characteristics can be discerned when classifying a particular scientific area as a discipline, one example being as follows (1) a discipline has a particular object of study (such as law, society, politics), even though this object may also be studied by other disciplines; (2) a discipline has a set of specific tools, not possessed by other disciplines, to study its objects; (3) a discipline has theories and concepts which can organize its specialist knowledge accumulatively and effectively; (4) a discipline uses special terminologies or technical terms tailored to their study objects; (5) a discipline develop specific methods according to specific research requirement; and most importantly (6) a discipline is manifested institutionally as college subjects, related study programs, and professional associations.¹⁵ Only through institutionalization a scientific discipline can reproduce itself from one

¹¹ For example, Bryan S. Turner, ‘Discipline’ in *Theory, Culture and Society*, 23 (2006), p.183-6; Joe Moran. *Interdisciplinarity: The New Critical Idiom* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 2; Julie Thompson Klein, ‘A Platform for a Shared Discourse for Interdisciplinary Education.’ *Journal of Social Science Education*, 5: 2 (2006), p. 10-18; and J. M. Balkin. ‘Interdisciplinarity as Colonization’, *Washington and Law Review*, 949, 1996.

¹² Bryan S. Turner, ‘Discipline’, *Theory, Culture and Society*, 23 (2001), p. 183.

¹³ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison* (London: Penguin, 1991).

¹⁴ David Bridges. ‘The Disciplines and the Discipline of Educational Research’, *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 40: 2 (2006).

¹⁵ Leo Apostle as cited by Sinclair Goodlad, ‘What is an Academic Discipline?’ in Roy Cox (ed). *Cooperation and Choice in Higher Education* (London: University of London Teaching Methods Unit, 1979), p. 11.

generation to the next. As such, a new discipline is usually created by setting up professorial chair in universities dedicated to the discipline.

Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Approach

The world today and its inhabitants today faces complex problems such as climate change, financial crisis, natural disasters, political upheavals, ideological violence, and disenfranchised majority or minority, in addition of poverty, violation of human rights, gender inequity, and extremism. A thorough and holistic understanding to solve these problems can only be achieved using integrative perspectives of many scientific disciplines and thought frameworks, especially using lateral or out-of-the box thinking. As Howard Garner stated, a synthesizing mind¹⁶ is needed, one that can handle interdisciplinary synthesis, as part of a team or multidisciplinary individuals. Lyon and Brew further stated that approaching a particular problem from a variety of disciplines is no longer an exception, but a rule for academics in these modern and post-modern times.¹⁷ In the University of Melbourne, Australia, for example, a number of cross disciplinary subjects with related degrees are offered, in the hope of producing alumni capable to ‘examine critically, synthesize and evaluate knowledge across a broad range of disciplines’.¹⁸ In interdisciplinary subjects, students explore and integrate a variety of perspectives from a number of scientific disciplines and sub-disciplines. This is different from multidisciplinary subjects in which students use a number of perspectives on the same topic without any attempt at integration. Interdisciplinarity involves a synthesis of a variety of perspectives to produce a greater and deeper understanding, a balanced conclusion, an accurate solution, or a creative result which accommodate all these perspectives.

Transdisciplinary Perspective

The word ‘perspective’ has a subjective nature in which the knower uses a specific method to view something. A perspective is thus a viewpoint, belief, or understanding of something, in the short or long term. Transdisciplinarity is often associated with a perspective, instead of merely an approach. This perspective is used as a research strategy which crosses scientific disciplines for a holistic approach to solve problems involving two or more disciplines, such as research on effective information system for bio-medical studies. In Western societies, the use of the perspective can be traced to two different groups. In German-speaking countries, transdisciplinarity refers to the integration of a variety of research and the usage of a special method to relate knowledge and problem solving. When there is no agreement on the main problems of a particular research, the transdisciplinary approach can help discover the most relevant problem and related research question. The first question is about the cause of the current problems and its potential effects in the future (system knowledge). The second is about the values and norms used to formulate the purpose of problem solving (target knowledge). The third is about how a problematic situation can be transformed and improved (transformation knowledge).

¹⁶ Howard Gardner. *Five Minds for the Future* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2006), p. 3.

¹⁷ See A. Lyon. ‘Interdisciplinarity: Giving Up Territory’. *College English*, 54 (6), 1992; and A. Brew. ‘Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Affiliations of Experienced Researchers.’ *Higher Education*, 56 (4). 2008.

¹⁸ See Clinton Golding. *Integrating the Disciplines: Successful Interdisciplinary Subjects* (Melbourne: Centre for the Study of Higher Education, the University of Melbourne, 2009).

Transdisciplinarity grows when scholars interact in an open discussion and dialogue, giving equal weight to as well as relate each other's perspectives. This is difficult because of information overload, and incommensurability between one field to another. To alleviate this problem, scholars not only need master their own field, but also need to mediate and transfer each other's knowledge. As introduced by Jean Piaget and as contained in the Charter of Transdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity is different from interdisciplinarity.¹⁹ The latter does not focus on common problem solving as a research may involve many disciplines, yet the methods used stay within these disciplines. An example is a book on a particular topic which chapters are written by scholars from a variety of disciplines. Different from this, the purpose of transdisciplinary research is to understand and solve complex problems of today's world. This requires cooperation and integration of all available knowledge. In addition, all stakeholders, such as the community being impacted by the problems, and the activists helping the community to alleviate them, are involved in the process of solving the problem.

Cosmopolitan Islam and Enlightened Muslim Intellectual

That the religion of Islam is not only meant for the Arabs or certain group of people, but is meant for the entire mankind, and even the entire universe and its population, seems to be understood by many. Similarly, that the ideal teaching of Islam practiced by Muslims across time and place seems to vary according to their condition is another acknowledged historical reality. Hence, in addition to its universal and permanent nature, Islam is realized in a variety of environment and culture. In this context, it pays to examine the conceptual foundation and theoretical framework which lately have been connected to the historical Islam: 'cosmopolitanism' and 'cultural hybridity'. Cosmopolitanism means the ideology that the entire humanity is part of the same single community based on a common morality. These ideas seem to be in accordance with the phenomenon of globalization. Thus, what is meant by 'cosmopolitan Islam' is an Islam in which all humans are equal following universal principles suitable for all nation, race, and gender. Carol Kersten and several other scholars have concluded that cosmopolitan Islam has existed in the beginning of Islamic civilization, when the Muslim community and culture interact with others such as the Greeks, Persians, and Egyptians.²⁰

Now, such interactions seem to be flourishing again, propelling the emergence of 'new Muslim intellectuals' who have inherited the scientific attitude of early Muslim scholars. These intellectuals seem capable to start and continue the struggle for the revival of Islamic civilization in this modern world. Ali Shariati called them '*rausyanfikir*' (enlightened intellectuals), who not only discover findings or present facts but also find truth and measure things as how they are in accordance to the truth. A *rausyanfikir* also does not adhere to the view that science is value-free and neutral, and that theory is separate from practice, but instead becomes actively involved in solving problems of his or her society. A "fa'il" (doer) of history, not only its "maf'ul" (object or observer), a *rausyanfikir* is close to his or her community to the

¹⁹ See Basarab Nicolescu. *Manifesto of Transdisciplinarity* (New York: State University of New York, 2002). This Charter of Transdisciplinarity can be downloaded from <http://www.inters.org/Freitas-Morin-Nicolescu-Transdisciplinarity>.

²⁰ Carol Kersten, *Cosmopolitans and Heretics: New Muslim Intellectuals and the Study of Islam* (London: Hurst, 2011) and her paper, 'Islam, Cultural Hybridity and Cosmopolitanism: New Muslim Intellectuals and Globalization,' *Journal of International and Global Studies*.

extent of knowing the community's struggles and difficulties, needs and wants, devising concepts and tools to alleviate and fulfill them. Shariati's description or *rausyanfikir* fits intellectuals who engage themselves in transdisciplinary research and practice, facing head-on problems of today's world with all the available arsenals contained in contemporary knowledge.

The Way Forward

The development of knowledge in Western societies after the Renaissance is heavily skewed in favor of positivism. Accepting empirical phenomenon as the main source of truth, Western philosophy of knowledge has been highly sceptical of other sources, such as 'revelation' or 'intuition'. In modern times, oftentimes through colonialism and imperialism, when the Western philosophy of knowledge spread into other societies, such as the ones with Muslim majority population in which revelation or intuition is highly regarded, an imbalance occurs. Muslim societies has never sacrificed the revelatory over the empirical; many of their scholars sophisticatedly divided knowledge into a hierarchy that privileges divine sources of knowledge over non-divine ones. Hence what the transdisciplinary approach elaborated above needs is a utilization of these sources, which in Islamic terms include the *Qur'aniyah* and *kauniyah* manifestations of God's signs (*ayatuLlah*).²¹ These sources can be accessed through the following means: reason (*aql*), *bashr*, sense, *fuad*, revelation (*wahy*) and self (*nafs*). The ability to use all these means to access both sources, however, ultimately depends on God, as can be understood in the following verse of the Qur'an: '*fa-alhamahaa fujuurahaa wataqwaahaa*' (And inspired it (the soul) what is wrong for it and (what is) right for it).²²

The above inspiration is possible because in addition to ontological and epistemological aspects, knowledge has an axiological aspect.²³ Viewed from this aspect, all knowledge, and indeed all religion has the purpose of humankind betterment (*limaslahatil ibad*), not merely for humankind pleasure (or hedonism).²⁴ To achieve this purpose, much ink has been spilt to elaborate the theoretical part of knowledge integration, focusing on the three ontological, epistemological, and axiological aspects. However, the practical part of this endeavor has seldom been discussed. To the author's mind, the achievement of the above purpose may only be made possible if not only knowledge is being integrated, but also the people related to knowledge, such as those who teach or study it. In short, scholars or the men or women of knowledge in the fields of science, arts, and the humanities, must work together in harmony.

²¹ Asep Usman Ismail, a professor at the Jakarta State Islamic University, stated that *ayatuLah* means the signs that signifies the power or might of God. Popularly classified into two type, the *Qur'aniyah* ayat means the explicit signs of God as can be found in the verses of the Qur'an, while the *kauniyah* ayat means the implicit signs of God as can be found in his creations in the universe (sometimes interpreted as natural law).

²² Quran, Chapter Ash-Shams, verse 8. The South Asian scholar, philosopher, and journalist Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi in his book *Tafhim al-Qur'an (The Meaning of the Qur'an)* interpreted this verse as such: "That Allah after giving the human self powers of the body, sense and mind has not left it uninformed in the world, but has instilled into his unconscious by means of a natural inspiration the distinction between good and evil, right and wrong, and the sense of the good to be good and of the evil to be evil."

²³ In Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, axiology "can be thought of as primarily concerned with classifying what things are good, and how good they are."

²⁴ Wikipedia states that hedonism is "a school of thought that argues that pleasure is the primary or most important intrinsic good."

The integration of knowledge and knowledge practitioners do not mean that scholars or scientists need to embrace Islam as their religion, but means that they need to embrace the values of submission to God.²⁵ Ideally, these values can be manifested in collaboration of knowledge endeavors through a transdisciplinary perspective which seeks to solve particular problems of mankind as has been elaborated previously. In even more practical terms, in the Indonesian context (and most post-colonial developing nations) the graduates of higher education from ‘the West’ (eg.: any American, European, or Australian universities) and ‘the East’ (any Middle Eastern universities) need to work together at least in the following three areas: knowledge and culture, research and service, teaching and curriculum. To work in harmony, a hybrid or cosmopolitan culture needs to be developed in the universities.²⁶ Such culture will allow the interaction among the universities *civitas academica* (such as among lecturers or between lecturers and students) who come from a variety of backgrounds: graduates of Western or Middle Eastern universities, graduates of public or religious schools. This interaction again is best fostered through a transdisciplinary perspective in knowledge endeavors.²⁷

For inspiration, perhaps it is instructive to use two examples of ‘hybrid intellectuals’ engaging in ‘transdisciplinary’ knowledge endeavors provided by Carool Kersten.²⁸ One is the Egyptian scholar, Hassan Hanafi, who “is most renowned for his Heritage and Renewal Project, an ambitious and simultaneous critique of both the Islamic and Western intellectual heritages designed to culminate in what can be regarded as a form of Islamic Liberation Theology”. Kersten stated that “Hanafi saw himself as executing what he considered as the third phase of Islamic modernism, initiated by Iqbal’s reconstruction of Islamic thinking. The core of this project consisted in what he called a transposition of the traditional Islamic idiom of the Scriptures and Islamic sciences into a vocabulary that was more in tune with the contemporaneous circumstances in which present-day Muslims find themselves.” Further, “Hanafi employed a threefold division, distinguishing between the dimensions of historical, eidetic and active consciousness; with historical consciousness referring to the specific cultural-historical setting in which the Islamic teachings were received; while eidetic

²⁵ The smallcase ‘islam’ as elaborated by William Chittick in his seminal book ‘Vision of Islam’ may be relevant here.

²⁶ In her well-received paper, “Cultural Hybridity: New Muslim Intellectuals and the Study of Islam”, Carool Kersten elaborated several scholars of the Muslim world who have “solid knowledge of the Islamic heritage with an equally intimate familiarity with developments in the Western human sciences” which “has turned them into cultural hybrids... because they work on the interstices of cultural-religious traditions and academic disciplines, occupying their own distinct third space.”

²⁷ Chiara Formichi from the City University of Hong Kong, when reviewing Kersten’s book (which expands the arguments of her paper), “Cosmopolitans and heretics: New Muslim intellectuals and the study of Islam”, stated that “Thus, Madjid, Hanafi, and Arkoun find themselves in the “liminal cultural hybridity” created by their dedication to applying the knowledge they acquired in Western academe (at the University of Chicago and the Sorbonne) to Islamic methodology, epistemology, and philosophy.” Azyumardi Azra from the Jakarta State Islamic University, stated that “Kersten argues that these three intellectuals have a cosmopolitan point of view as a result of the higher education they achieved, the international relations they had, and the intellectual orientation they demonstrated.”

²⁸ The examples can be found in Kersten’s paper and book. However, it is to be noted that these are examples of ‘supermen’ of knowledge in the Muslim world, a status that few can equal. To circumvent such ‘problem of genius’, the author is advocating a collaboration between scholars and scientists in the Muslim world who come from varied backgrounds, as mentioned previously, instead of having them transcend their own fields of expertise, something that most times only geniuses can achieve.

consciousness establishes generalized principles, which then, by means of the active consciousness, unfold into a liberation or emancipation of mankind”.

The other hybrid intellectual engaging in transdisciplinary endeavor is the French scholar, Mohammed Arkoun, who proposed an alternative research agenda for Islamic Studies under the title Applied Islamology. Kersten stated that “Arkoun introduced his programmatic agenda for Applied Islamology... as a double critique of, on one hand, Islamic thinking or Islamic reason which, in Arkoun’s view, was still locked up in the cultural configuration of Islam’s classical age and for which he coined the term ‘logosphere’... On the other hand, the Western academic specialization he refers to as classical Islamology is a discipline with the same text-based orientation as the classical Islamic legacy it studies.” He followed “a *via negativa*: in order to excavate... Islam’s accumulated exhaustive tradition, researchers would have to address what the text-oriented traditions of Islam’s classical age and the classical Islamology have either ignored, neglected, rejected out of hand, or failed to examine critically... envisaged the investigation of the dialectics between language, history, and thought; a cognitive triangle that had been at work from the revelation of the Qur’an, throughout the earliest Islamic history covering the embryonic Muslim community in Medina, and the formation of the Sunni Caliphate and the Shi’I Imamate”. Arkoun insisted that “Islamology is a practical science, consisting of a variety of levels of analysis: linguistic, historical, psychological, sociological, philosophical, and theological. It will take a team effort of an international collective composed of what Arkoun calls scholars-thinkers (*chercheur-penseurs*) to implement such project.” To this end, he introduced the notion of ‘emerging reason’ which continuously assess critically what he called “the three postures of human thought: (1) the religious posture with its theological, ethical, and in the case of Islam, juridical modes of thinking; (2) the scientific-technological modes of thinking dominating present-day globalization discourse; (3) the rationalist or empiricist philosophical postures still in the grip of the postulates of the modernity of the classical age.”

Conclusion

A transdisciplinary approach to Islamic studies will make possible the hybrid or cosmopolitan culture necessary to move Muslim societies forward. Universities in the Muslim world should encourage collaborations between scholars from a variety of backgrounds, which can lead the way to a modern Islamic oikumene.

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