

**Making Beauty into Reality: Promoting Integrated Knowledge in a More
Fragmented Modern Life through Textbook Writing Project**

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Abstract

On October 10, 2017, IAIN Surakarta International Office (ISIO), in which I am in charge off as the head of it, conducted International Symposium on “Towards World Class University: Building A University Forum.” The International Symposium was attended, among others, by the Representatives of International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) East and Southeast Asia Office, i.e. Prof. Dr. Dato Wira Jamil Othman, Prof. Dr. Torla Hasan, and Ustadz Habib Chirzin. In that occasion, it was also signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between IIIT and our institution, IAIN (State Institute of Islamic Studies) Surakarta, Central Java, Indonesia, concerning fruitful collaborative academic matters between the two parties. In early July this year, we plan to follow-up that MoU, by holding a Focused Group Discussion (FGD) on International Cooperation, in which, among others, we intend to design the concept and the map of textbook writing for the integration of knowledge. We contend that textbook writing for the integration of knowledge is of high significance for disseminating, using the terms of Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman, “the Qur’anic worldview” as the “springboard for cultural reform” in any walks and spheres of modern life. Therefore, I hope I have the chance to present this point in your esteemed two-day International Conference on the Life and Contribution of Ismail Raji al-Faruqi.

Keywords: Qur’anic worldview, springboard, cultural reform, spheres of life, textbook writing.

A. Introduction

As indicated by the Qur'an (chapter 2: 38), the merciful God has in fact guided human beings as His vice-gerents on earth (*khalifah fi al-ardl*) through the revelation of the Qur'an. The verses of the Qur'an, then, although revealed at a distant time in the past, still can serve as the guidance for human beings in this modern life. Unfortunately, modern human beings have, consciously or unconsciously, frequently abandoned and even neglected the values and principles encapsulated in the Qur'an, so that they go astray and, consequently, their life is full of misery. Or, actually, they refer to the verses of the Qur'an as their guidance, yet with misinterpretation, misrepresentation, and misunderstanding. It is to this point that in his *Crisis in the Muslim Mind*, 'Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman¹ contends that the "crux of the crisis" of modern life in general, and of Muslim life in particular, stems from "distorted" Islamic, Qur'anic, worldview.

Sulayman continues his contention that the Qur'anic worldview that ideally leads Muslims' life into happiness, has ironically led them into sorrow. How can be the Qur'anic worldview distorted? The distortion upon Qur'anic worldview springs from the misinterpretation of Qur'anic messages. The Qur'anic messages that actually convey "positive, dynamic perspective that fostered the realization and affirmation of the self in its various individual and communal aspects", switch to a weak, passive, and self-negation

¹ Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman, *Crisis in the Muslim Mind*, USA & Malaysia: IIIT, 2016, p. 27.

standpoint.² This in-active distorted Qur'anic worldview has led then to “the problem of duality”³, i.e. the conflict between revelation and reason.⁴ The Qur'anic verses (*al-masthur*) seem to contradict to the “verses” of the realities (*al-mandhur*).⁵

In turn, this illusory conflict between revelation and reason results in the neglecting of humanitarian, non-syari'ah sciences, because these non-syari'ah sciences are perceived as incompatible and irrelevant to the syari'ah sciences.⁶ That explains why the gulf of syari'ah and non-syari'ah sciences becomes wider, and modern life becomes fragmented between sacred and profane sciences. It is to this juncture that cultural reform must be made, among others with the curricula reform and textbook writing projects, to bridge the gap between revelation and reason, so that knowledge becomes integrated, and the beauty and symmetry of *Tauhidi* viewpoint will be applied in harmony with the “one” integrated knowledge in modern Muslim life.

B. The Beauty of the *Tauhidi* (Oneness) Viewpoint: Principles Embodied in the Qur'anic Worldview

Islam propagates the “oneness” not only in the vertical-theological level, but in the horizontal-humanitarian level as well. We know that all of our

² Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman, *The Qur'anic Worldview, A Springboard for Cultural Reform*, London & Washington, n.d, p. 5.

³ International Institute of Islamic Thought, East and Southeast Asia Office, “Focus Project I: Writing Teaching Materials (Textbook) for Islamization of Knowledge,” *Brochure*, 2018, n.p.

⁴ Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman, *The Qur'anic Worldview*, p. 15.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 15.

⁶ Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman, *Crisis*, pp. 42-43.

activities, both “sacred” and “profane”, are directed towards One end in sight, as exemplified in *du’a al-iftitah: inna shalati wa nusuki wa mahyaya wa mamati li-llahi rabbi al-‘alamin* (verily, my prayers, rituals, life, and death are for the sake of God almighty, the King of the Universe). Therefore, Muslims’ agenda in all lines of their daily life, both academic and non-academic, must ideally related to One goal. It is in this regard that Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman opines that Qur’anic worldview is ranging from monotheism, divinely-given stewardship, justice and moderation, freedom, responsibility, purposefulness, morality, mutual consultation, law-governed scientific comprehensiveness, globalism, peace, reform and construction, up to beauty.⁷ All is infused with the spirit and the beauty (*jamal*) of the Oneness.

Pertaining to human beings’ activities and their position as the vice-gerent of One God, according to Muhammad Iqbal, they serve as the “partner” of God in realizing the potentials of goodness in this universe.⁸ In addition, in realizing these good potentials, human beings hold “divinely-given stewardship”,⁹ so that it will be ironic when their activities result in undivinely scattered goals. Therefore, it is recommended and demanded for all Muslims to propagate the goodness (*al-amr bi al-ma’ruf*) and realize divinely good manners in every single things (*al-a’mal al-shalihat*), including in academic-scientific matters. These scientific aspects fall into divine goodness

⁷ Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman, *The Qur’anic Worldview*, pp. 73-111.

⁸ Muhammad Iqbal, *Pesan dari Timur (Payam-I Masyriq)*, translated by Abdul Hadi W.M., Bandung: Pustaka, 1985, p. 166.

⁹ Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman, *The Qur’anic Worldview*, pp. 76-77.

when they are structured accordingly with the guidance of the beauty of the Oneness. It is in this light that the curricular reform and the project of writing textbooks find its significance and relevance.

C. Making Beauty (*Jamal*) into Reality: Curricula Reform and Writing Textbook Project

All the myriad things in this universe display the beauty (*jamal*) of One God. And as the vice-gerent of God in this universe, human kinds must ideally also exemplify the beauty of God in their activities, as indicated by the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) to “imitate the character of God” (*takhallaqu bi akhlaqi-llah*). Therefore, education and academic activities should ideally as well reflect that point. At this juncture, IIIT has paved a way to overcome “dualistic values and standards” that results in “a materialistic view of human nature” in modern life, so that the beauty of the Oneness reflected in the Integration of Knowledge can be proposed.¹⁰

Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman further makes detailed four-step action plan so that the beauty of the Oneness reflected in the Integration of Knowledge can be achieved: 1) on the one hand, free Muslims’ mind from the mental subordination, and, on the other hand, arm them with creative, comprehensive, critical, scientific, and analytical way of thinking; 2) develop a good understanding on the unchanging values and principles of the Qur’anic perspective pertaining to human beings and the world around them; 3) plunge

¹⁰ Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman, *The Qur’anic Worldview*, p. 135.

themselves with a deep understanding of scientific method of studying human nature and the patterns of the material universe; 4) benefit from the Islamic heritage and the scientific achievements of modern Western society to enlarge the horizons of human potential and the universe.¹¹ It is in this framework that IIIT provides a double major consisting of specializations in Islamic studies and sociology. This effort needs support from “thinkers, reformers, and academicians, as well as from institutions of higher education and academic centers.”¹²

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¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid*, p. 136.

map of textbook writing for the integration of knowledge. We contend that textbook writing for the integration of knowledge is of high significance for disseminating, using the terms of Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman, “the Qur’anic worldview” as the “springboard for cultural reform” in any walks and spheres of modern life.

Regarding our institution, State Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN) Surakarta, Central Java, Indonesia, it has four faculties, with 25 departments. The faculties include: the faculty of Syari’ah, the faculty of Tarbiyah, the faculty of Ushuluddin and Da’wah, and the faculty of Islamic Economics and Business. The faculty of Syari’ah consists of 4 departments: Islamic Family Law; Islamic Penal Law; Islamic Economics Law; Management of Zakat and Waqf; and Islamic Economics Law for Master’s Programs. The faculty of Tarbiyah comprises 11 departments: Islamic Education; Arabic Education; Islamic Education for Childhood; Islamic Education for Madrasah Teachers; English Education; English Literature; Arabic Language Studies; History of Islamic Civilization; Indonesian Language Studies; Islamic Education and Arabic Language Studies for Master’s Programs.

The faculty of Ushuluddin and Da’wah consists of 6 departments: Qur’anic Exegesis; Islamic Preaching and Communication; Da’wah Management; Theological Studies; Islamic Counseling; Tashawuf and Psychotherapy. The faculty of Islamic Economics and Business includes 3 departments: Management of Islamic Business; Islamic Accounting; and Islamic Banking. These 4 faculties with 25 departments are of high potential

for curricula reforms and textbook writing project in enhancing the Integration of Knowledge that has been set up by International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT).

In a brochure issued by International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) East and Southeast Asia Office, there are four steps to conduct the project of textbook writing for Islamization or Integration of Knowledge:

The first step pertains to the process of textbook preparation, that “start with general epistemology and curriculum reform seminars.”¹³ This step is directed upon building the “awareness of the problem of duality.” When this diagnostic awareness of the problem has been raised, the solution to the problem can then be proposed. Yet, this general seminar does not suffice to overcome the problem, and specific seminars that involve disciplines experts are then of high importance.

Should the specific seminars have been achieved in formulating Integration of Knowledge (IOK) in each discipline, the second step can be arranged. In this level, the “working groups” in each discipline should “produce integrated course outlines.” This outlines will hopefully give birth to a book designed and structured in the following consecutive range: “learning objectives, detailed outlines (headings and sub-headings), key words, the main text, Islamic input, glossary, index, case studies, texts from Islamic sources

¹³ International Institute of Islamic Thought, East and Southeast Asia Office, “Focus Project I: Writing Teaching Materials (Textbook) for Islamization of Knowledge,” *Brochure*, 2018, n.p.

(Qur'an, sunnat, other books), illustrations (pictures and drawings), chapter summary, review (questions, tests, exercises), and assignments.¹⁴

When the detailed outlines of the book have been designed, the next step is the appointment of the editorial board for each book, “consisting of a chief editor, and 1-2 co-editors in addition to chapter authors, advisors, and consultants.”¹⁵ In monitoring the progress of the textbook writing, “regular workshops have to be held for chapter writers and editors to review the written material.”¹⁶

D. Conclusion

Curricula reform and textbook writing is of high significance in promoting the Integration of Knowledge, so that the beauty of the Oneness could be reflected in all walks and spheres of life, including in academic institutions and educational higher learning. Therefore, curricula reforms and textbook writing project that have been set up by International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) must be ideally supported. It is in this framework that our institution has signed MoU with IIIT, East and Southeast Asia Office, with the hope of being able to make beauty (of the Oneness) into reality in academic matters, with the wider scope and horizons by joining the wider network here in this esteemed precious conference in New Delhi, India, by

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

referring to the root of the Integration of Knowledge as the Legacy of Isma'il
Raji' al-Faruqi. []