Excerpts: His Highness the Aga Khan on thinking independently and the search for new knowledge -- the spirit of adventure

"An institution dedicated to proceeding beyond known limits must be committed to independent thinking. In a university scholars engage both orthodox and unorthodox ideas, seeking truth and understanding wherever they may be found."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 1994 Aga Khan University Convocation Ceremony, 10th Anniversary Address (Karachi, Pakistan)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/4793/

"What students know is ... no longer the most important measure of an education. The true test is the ability of students and graduates to engage with what they do not know and to work out a solution. They must also be able to reach conclusions that constitute the basis for informed judgements. The ability to make judgements that are grounded in solid information and employ careful analysis, should be one of the most important goals for any educational endeavour."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s vision for the Aga Khan Academies: ‘What does it mean to be an educated person?’ (Aiglemont)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/6525/

"New forms of knowledge are resisted because they change society ..."
"Professional standards and assumptions can provide a form of intolerance, pride and myopia as intractable as the rigidities of traditional societies."

"For too long some of our schools have taught too many subjects as subsets of dogmatic commitments.... Too often, education made our students less flexible -- confident to the point of arrogance that they now had all the answers -- rather than more flexible, humble in their life-long openness to new questions and new responses. An important goal of quality education is to equip each generation to participate effectively in what has been called 'the great conversation' of our times. This means, on one hand, being unafraid of controversy. But it also means being sensitive to the values and outlooks of others."

"A wise observer once said, it's not so much what we don't know that hurts us, but also all those things that we are sure we know -- but which are just not so.... [The Aga Khan] Academies curriculum seeks to instill a habit of intellectual humility which constantly opens young minds to what it is that they do not know, and which sends them on a wide and rigorous
search for new knowledge. In my view, the most important thing a student can learn in any educational institution is the ability to keep on learning. [To educate future leaders we] must rise above the antiquated approaches of earlier days and instead infuse our students with what I would call three 'A's' of modern learning -- the spirit of anticipation, the spirit of adaptation and the spirit of adventure."

His Highness the Aga Khan's 2007 Aga Khan Academy, Mombasa, Residential Campus Foundation Stone Ceremony address (Mombasa, Kenya)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/8188/

"No one establishes the order of God the Glorified except one who does not flatter, is not a conformist, and is not subordinate to objects of desire."

Hazrat Ali
Living and Dying with Grace ? Counsels of Hadrat Ali ? pp 77 (Emphasis added)

"The search for solutions is a voyage of discovery on which we must neither fail to gain from experience nor fear to explore further."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 1983 Aga Khan Award For Architecture Prize Ceremony address (Istanbul, Turkey)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/2987/

"In everything we do we must look to the future, seeking always to think creatively, to innovate and to improve."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 1983 address on the Acceptance of the Charter of the Aga Khan University (Karachi, Pakistan)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/2817/
"Throughout my journeys I have been deeply pained to see the lack of initiative which my brother Muslims have shown in educational matters. In some circles there may have been a fear that modern education would tend to lessen the sharpness and deepness of our Faith. I am afraid that I must reject this with vehemence.... I am afraid that the torch of intellectual discovery, the attraction of the unknown, the desire for intellectual self-perfection have left us."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 1963 Presidential Address at the First Anniversary of Mindanao University (Manilla, Philippines)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/1364/

"Throughout history, when the great empires broke up, whether it be the fall of the Roman or Byzantine empires, or of the Caliphate, you will find that the youth had lost its dynamism, its personality and its imagination."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 1960 Prince Aly Khan Library, Karachi University, Foundation Stone Ceremony address (Karachi, Pakistan)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/1202/

"[The Aga Khan] university must also express intellectual restlessness -- the imperative not merely to apply knowledge, or to confine research to that which is immediately useful. It must embody the fact that knowledge is constantly changing, must ever be challenged and extended. This conviction, this buoyant but disciplined impatience, is what makes modern science a metaphor for modern civilisation. Concerned as they are about practical problems of health, faculty must also be encouraged and assisted to work on the frontiers of scientific and medical knowledge. Uncompromising excellence is also an ethical principle. In working on the leading edge of knowledge, here and in the far reaches of the [Aga Khan] health network, the university participates in the great world of scientific thought; it will help throw off the bonds of dependency, the habits of learning only what is already known, that have stunted progress in the
"[T]he key to intellectual progress will not lie in any single body of instruction, but in a spirit of openness to new expression and fresh insights.... The fundamental reason for the pre-eminence of Islamic civilisations lay neither in accidents of history nor in acts of war, but rather in their ability to discover new knowledge, to make it their own, and to build constructively upon it.... [We must] constantly review and revise and renew what we think we know."

"If ignoring the past was a problem on one side, then the opposite danger was an exaggerated submission to the past, so that some creations and creators became prisoners of dogma or nostalgia. There is a danger, in every area of life, everywhere in the world, that people will respond to the hastening pace of change with an irrational fear of modernism, and will want to embrace uncritically that which has gone before. The Islamic world has sometimes been vulnerable to this temptation -- and the rich potential for a new 'Islamic modernism' has sometimes been under-estimated."
"The past cannot be repeated. By copying it, it proves that one cannot do better. By repeating the past, by designing the same thing is not the solution. Modernity cannot be denied. How do we merge the two? That is continuity."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2004 Times of India Interview (New Delhi, India)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/hwblog/7094/

"People oppose what they are ignorant about."

Hazrat Ali
Living and Dying with Grace: Counsels of Hadrat Ali pp 32

See also: His Highness the Aga Khan on ideas and innovation: on nurturing, respecting, harnessing them from whomever they come

See also: His Highness the Aga Khan on embracing controversy in the search for new knowledge, truth and creative solutions

See also: His Highness the Aga Khan on dogma, myopia & asphyxiating policies vs research, innovation, creativity & pragmatism
See also: His Highness the Aga Khan on the essence of the Enabling Environment: enabling and assisting individual creativity


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