

THE CONCEPT OF ISLAMIZATION OF SCIENCE: A STUDY OF THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF SYED MUHAMMAD NAQUIB AL-ATTAS

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Abstract: This study critically examines Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas's concept of Islamization of knowledge, highlighting its original contribution to the reform of contemporary Islamic education. Unlike prior descriptive studies, this research identifies a conceptual gap in the discourse and offers a critical synthesis of al-Attas's thought. It employs library research using a conceptual-hermeneutic analytical approach to his primary texts. The findings show that al-Attas's Islamization is not merely a critique of the West, but an integrative project placing revelation as the epistemic foundation, *adab* as the basis of education, and *tawhid* as its ontological framework. The study also reveals that his concept can be practically applied to address current challenges such as secularism, identity crisis, and the science-religion dichotomy in Islamic education. By contextualizing al-Attas's principles in light of today's educational issues, this study offers both theoretical and practical contributions for revitalizing Islamic curricula grounded in *tawhid* and epistemic integrity.

Keywords : Knowledge, Naquib al-Attas, Islamization

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji secara kritis konsep Islamisasi ilmu menurut Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas dengan menyoroti kontribusi orisinalnya terhadap pembaharuan pendidikan Islam kontemporer. Berbeda dengan studi sebelumnya yang lebih bersifat deskriptif, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi celah konseptual dalam diskursus Islamisasi dan menawarkan sintesis kritis atas pemikiran al-Attas. Metode yang digunakan adalah studi pustaka dengan pendekatan analisis konseptual-hermeneutik terhadap karya-karya primer al-Attas. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa gagasan Islamisasi al-Attas tidak semata penolakan terhadap Barat, melainkan proyek integratif yang menempatkan wahyu sebagai sumber epistemik utama, *adab* sebagai fondasi pendidikan, dan *tauhid* sebagai kerangka ontologis. Studi ini juga menemukan bahwa konsep Islamisasi dapat diimplementasikan secara relevan untuk menjawab tantangan sekularisasi, krisis identitas, serta dikotomi ilmu dalam sistem pendidikan Islam saat ini. Dengan mengontekstualisasikan prinsip-prinsip al-Attas dalam isu-isu pendidikan masa kini, studi ini memberikan tawaran teoritis dan praktis untuk revitalisasi kurikulum Islam berbasis nilai *tauhid* dan integritas keilmuan.

Kata Kunci: Ilmu Pengetahuan, Naquib al-Attas, Islamisasi

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INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, we witness a notable shift wherein Western civilization has emerged as the central reference point for global progress. Its technological advancements appear boundless, reaching across all facets of life.⁷³¹ However, this wave of development is not matched by corresponding growth in educational or moral values. Instead, Western powers, particularly the dominant states and their allies, often impose political systems and ideological frameworks such as socialism, communism, capitalism, or even religious ideologies on smaller nations, particularly those rich in oil. These ideologies are not introduced neutrally but are utilized as instruments of influence and control. Education, within this context, is seen as the primary vehicle through which these ideologies are disseminated and legitimized.⁷³²

Education plays a fundamental role in shaping a dignified and advanced civilization. When viewed from its formal object, education serves as a platform for cultivating and enhancing human potential. In the context of societal and educational advancement, the development of human capacity becomes a central focus, as it holds the key to transformation. Recent perspectives emphasize that the strength of human resources is now seen as surpassing the significance of natural wealth in driving civilizational progress. This is evident in many nations that, despite having limited natural resources, manage to achieve substantial development due to their strong human capital. Conversely, countries endowed with abundant natural assets like Indonesia often lag behind due to underdeveloped human resources.

Education in various parts of the world, even in Indonesia, is only interpreted as the Transfer of Knowledge, moral values are no longer a serious concern, this has resulted in the birth of immoral robots.⁷³³ The disappearance of the figure of the Prophet Muhammad SAW as a public figure has brought the moral decay of humanity to its climax.⁷³⁴

In this case, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas commented that the experience of the collapse and disunity of Islamic forces and society made Islamic society, especially its reformist figures, revisit Ibn Khaldun's concepts of the Ummah and State in Islam so that efforts were made to rebuild the concepts.⁷³⁵ Thus, attention to the concepts of individuals and the role they play in realizing and fostering the Islamic community and state and fostering the Islamic community and state has been completely neglected. However, how can an Islamic community and state be built and established while the individual Muslim community, which is its cell, is in a state of confusion and does not understand anything about Islam and its teachings?⁷³⁶

The rapid development of science has given birth to various technologies, often the human factor is ignored, where it is no longer technology that develops along with the development and needs of humans, but humans who should adapt to technology, today, science is even on the verge of progress that affects the reproduction and creation of humans themselves, so science not only causes symptoms of dehumanization. It is at this stage that moral problems emerge to the surface, if in the problem of contemplation moral problems are

⁷³¹ Mohammad Zamroni, *Filsafat Komunikasi: Pengantar Ontologis, Epistemologis, Dan Aksiologis* (IRCiSoD, 2022).

⁷³² La Adu, Bahaking Rama, and Muhammad Yahdi, "Islamisasi Ilmu Pengetahuan," *CBJIS: Cross-Border Journal of Islamic Studies* 5, no. 1 (May 19, 2023): 21–33, <https://doi.org/10.37567/cbjis.v5i1.2108>.

⁷³³ M. Afiquil Adib, "Syekh Nawawi Al-Bantani: Kajian Pemikiran Pendidikan Islam Dan Relevansinya Di Abad-21," *Al Qalam: Jurnal Ilmiah Keagamaan Dan Kemasyarakatan* 16, no. 2 (2022): 444–66.

⁷³⁴ Muhammad Zeni Rochmatullah Ilyas, *Pendekatan Studi Islam* (Jejak Pustaka, 2022).

⁷³⁵ Puspita Ayu Lestari and Ria Fauziah Salma, "Konsep Pembelajaran Fakultas Kesehatan Universitas Darussalam Gontor: Implementasi Konsep Islamisasi Syed Muhammad Naquib Al Attas," *Prosiding Konferensi Integrasi Interkoneksi Islam Dan Sains* 2 (2020): 483–92.

⁷³⁶ Elit Ave Hidayatullah and Syamsuddin Arif, "Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas' Exposition on the Concept of Ethics," *Afkar: Jurnal Akidah & Pemikiran Islam* 24, no. 1 (2022): 409–46.

related to the metaphysics of science, then at the stage of practice moral problems are related to how to use scientific knowledge, or philosophically it can be said, in the concept development stage there are moral problems that are reviewed from the perspective of scientific ontology, while in the concept application stage there are moral problems that are reviewed from the perspective of scientific axiology.⁷³⁷

The hegemony of the West over Western technology over countries around the world has had a huge influence on the style, pattern and outlook of people's lives. They seem to unconsciously follow the thought patterns of Western science, so that their ways of thinking, their views and their perceptions of science and related matters that are its implications become Westernized. In its historical context, modern Western saints were built on the basis of the spirit of freedom and opposition to Christian doctrine, so that they tried to display a mindset that was contrary to the tradition of religious thought, (Christianity) as an antithesis. The most striking mission inserted into modern Western science is secularization, the concept of secularization is socialized and propagated in such a way among scientists, students, pupils, other groups of scientists, and society in general, to obtain scientific justifications. In the end, the concept of secularization of science became public opinion at the global level.⁷³⁸

Islam strongly emphasizes the importance of lifelong learning as a fundamental part of understanding and pursuing education,⁷³⁹ One of the core concepts that encapsulates the essence of Islamic education is ta'dīb, a term derived from adab, which holds profound significance. According to Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, adab is not merely about manners or etiquette, but rather reflects the comprehensive discipline of the body, mind, and spirit.⁷⁴⁰ It implies the recognition and placement of everything knowledge, action, and existence according to their rightful hierarchy and purpose.⁷⁴¹ Through adab, justice and wisdom are manifested, encompassing both the material and spiritual dimensions of life. It involves mental and spiritual discipline, correct conduct, and the cultivation of honor. The integration of adab with both knowledge and action reflects a holistic educational framework, where these three elements ethics, intellect, and practice form an inseparable unity. Therefore, education in Islam is essentially ta'dīb, as it harmoniously fuses the pursuit of knowledge with righteous action and moral refinement.⁷⁴²

In Islamic thought, science is not regarded as a pathway to absolute truth. The term al-'ilm is considered more accurate to represent knowledge, as it encompasses two foundational aspects. First, the ultimate source of knowledge is divine revelation particularly the Qur'an which is believed to convey absolute truth. Second, various systematic and logical methodologies used to pursue knowledge are all seen as valid and complementary, each offering partial insights into a broader reality. These dimensions highlight that al-'ilm is rooted in a theological foundation that transcends empirical limitations. Unlike Western conceptions of science, which often rely solely on human reasoning and sensory experience, al-'ilm is anchored in the belief in God as the ultimate source of all knowledge and the sovereign over all creation.⁷⁴³

⁷³⁷ Adian Husaini, *Filsafat Ilmu: Perspektif Barat & Islam* (Gema Insani, 2020).

⁷³⁸ Husaini.

⁷³⁹ Sitti Romlah and Rusdi Rusdi, "Pendidikan Agama Islam Sebagai Pilar Pembentukan Moral Dan Etika," *Al-Ibrah: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Keilmuan Islam* 8, no. 1 (2023): 67–85.

⁷⁴⁰ Savira Rahmania and M. Yunus Abu Bakar, "Studi Pemikiran Pendidikan Islam Perspektif Naquib al Attas," *Al Mada: Jurnal Agama Sosial Dan Budaya* 6, no. 2 (2023): 129–44.

⁷⁴¹ Abdul Rosyad, "Terminologi Ta'dib Dalam Perspektif Syed Mohammad Naquib Al-Attas," *Journal of Innovation Research and Knowledge* 1, no. 10 (2022): 1177–86.

⁷⁴² Syahrul Hasibuan, "Spritualitas Pendidikan Islam Menurut Syed Naquif Al-Attas," *Journal of Islamic Education El Madani* 2, no. 2 (2023): 71–84.

⁷⁴³ Andi Rosa, *Tafsir Kontemporer: Metode Dan Orientasi Modern Dari Para Ahli Dalam Menafsirkan Ayat Al-Qur'an* (DepdikbudBantenPress, 2024).

The method of developing Islamic educational science can use scientific research methods, philosophical research methods, and can also use mystical research methods (Sufism).⁷⁴⁴ This depends on what the object of research is. It seems that Islamic education science cannot only contain Islamic education science, but in certain parts it requires philosophical theories, so that in its development it uses philosophical research methods. Sometimes it also uses theories that are non-empirical or not reachable by logic. So it is necessary to use mystical-Sufi research methods.⁷⁴⁵

The emergence of the concept of the "Islamization of Knowledge" in the modern era, introduced by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, served as a sharp critique of earlier Muslim scholars who, in his view, had inadvertently fallen into the trap of secularization. Al-Attas argued that the most pressing issue facing the Muslim world today is not ignorance, but rather the widespread acceptance of knowledge shaped and disseminated by Western civilization. He believed that this form of knowledge, though widespread, is fundamentally flawed due to its detachment from Islamic metaphysical foundations. This perspective echoes the concerns of Isma'il Al-Faruqi, who observed that the prevailing education system has been reduced to a distorted caricature, which lies at the heart of the intellectual and spiritual crisis confronting the Muslim ummah.⁷⁴⁶

In the contemporary era, the dominance of Western civilization across various dimensions of life especially in the realm of knowledge has shaped a global epistemological landscape that often neglects the spiritual and transcendental dimensions of human existence. Western modernity, born out of processes of secularization and the desacralization of knowledge, has rendered science an autonomous entity, detached from divine values. This has raised serious concerns among Muslim thinkers regarding the direction of knowledge development and its impact on Islamic education. Amidst this crisis of meaning and identity, there is an urgent need to reconstruct a paradigm of knowledge grounded in the Islamic worldview one that upholds not only rationality but also recognizes revelation as the primary source of knowledge.⁷⁴⁷

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas is among the most prominent contemporary Muslim intellectuals who critically addresses the hegemony of secular Western epistemology. In his numerous writings, al-Attas formulates the concept of Islamization of knowledge as a systematic effort to purify science from foreign elements incompatible with Islamic teachings. He argues that the central problem facing Muslims is not ignorance per se, but rather a misapplication of knowledge that has been distorted by Western perspectives. His ideas are not only theoretically significant but also provide a strong philosophical foundation for constructing an Islamic education system rooted in the values of tawḥīd, adab, and epistemic justice. Therefore, his conceptual framework becomes vital to examine in light of the ongoing educational crisis that still reflects the dichotomy between religious and secular knowledge.⁷⁴⁸

⁷⁴⁴ Adiyono Adiyono, Syamsun Ni'am, and Akhyak Akhyak, "Methodology of Islamic Studies: Islam as Religion (A Perspective Epistemology, Paradigm, and Methodology)," *Analisis: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 24, no. 1 (June 30, 2024): 169–200, <https://doi.org/10.24042/ajsk.v24i1.22636>.

⁷⁴⁵ Abdul Halik, "Ilmu Pendidikan Islam: Perspektif Ontologi, Epistemologi, Aksiologi," *Istiqra: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pemikiran Islam* 7, no. 2 (2020).

⁷⁴⁶ Ahmad Yazid Hayatul Maky and Khojir Khojir, "Nilai Pendidikan Islam Dalam Perspektif Islamisasi Dan Integrasi Ilmu (Ismail Raji Al Faruqi, Syed Muhammad Naquib Al Attas, Amin Abdullah)," *Cross-Border* 4, no. 2 (2021): 732–50.

⁷⁴⁷ Nirhamna Hanif Fadillah, Amir Reza Kusuma, and Najib Rahman Rajab al-Lakhm, "The Concept of Science in Islamic Tradition: Analytical Studies of Syed Naquib Al-Attas on Knowledge," *Tasfiah: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 7, no. 1 (March 10, 2023): 25–62, <https://doi.org/10.21111/tasfiah.v7i1.8456>.

⁷⁴⁸ Jarman Arroisi, Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, and Winda Roini, "The Relevance of Contemporary Epistemology on Existing Knowledge: A Critical Analysis of Western Scientific Worldview According to al-Attas Perspective," *Afkar: Jurnal Akidah Dan Pemikiran Islam* 25, no. 2 (December 28, 2023): 225–56, <https://doi.org/10.22452/afkar.vol25no2.7>.

Several previous studies have explored al-Attas's thought from different angles. For instance, Hidayatullah and Arif (2022) examined the ethical dimension in his philosophy,⁷⁴⁹ while Puspitasari and Yuliana (2022) focused on the relevance of his Islamization concept in modern Islamic education.⁷⁵⁰ However, most of these studies remain descriptive in nature and lack critical engagement with how al-Attas's concept can be operationalized to address current epistemological and pedagogical challenges. Moreover, few attempts have been made to methodologically examine al-Attas's Islamization framework using a hermeneutic-conceptual approach based on his primary texts. Thus, there is a clear need for a study that not only explicates but also critically interprets and contextualizes his ideas.

The urgency of this study lies in the necessity to reconstruct an Islamic epistemology capable of responding to the globalization of science and education. Contemporary Islamic education faces institutional realities that often reproduce Western epistemic structures without critical filtration. This condition leads to a disjunction between the substance of knowledge and the ethical-spiritual orientation central to Islam. As such, integrating the paradigm of Islamization into educational discourse is not merely a theoretical project but a strategic imperative for civilizational renewal. This study aims to critically analyze the concept of Islamization of knowledge in the thought of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas and to evaluate its relevance to contemporary Islamic educational design based on integrated knowledge and divine values.

In line with this aim, the main research question of this study is as follows: How can al-Attas's concept of Islamization of knowledge be positioned as an epistemological solution to the contemporary crisis of knowledge and Islamic education? To address this, the study adopts a qualitative approach in the form of library research with a hermeneutic-analytical method, aiming to explore the conceptual and practical dimensions of al-Attas's ideas within the framework of Islamic education. It is expected that this research will contribute both theoretically to the discourse on Islamization of knowledge and practically to the development of Islamic curricula rooted in *tawhīd* and the integrity of knowledge.

METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative methodology rooted in conceptual and philosophical analysis, specifically through library research. The selection of this method is based on the nature of the research problem, which concerns the theoretical exploration of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas's framework on the Islamization of knowledge. The philosophical orientation adopted in this study is hermeneutic-interpretative, which allows for a contextual and in-depth understanding of the author's texts, taking into account both the internal coherence of al-Attas's thought and its broader epistemological implications for Islamic education. Primary data were obtained from original works authored by al-Attas, such as *Islam and Secularism* and *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam*, as well as secondary sources including peer-reviewed journal articles, theses, and philosophical commentaries relevant to the subject matter. The inclusion criteria focused on textual sources that are (1) authored by or directly interpret the works of al-Attas, (2) published in academic forums or by reputable institutions, and (3) thematically relevant to Islamic epistemology, education, or philosophical methodology. Sources were excluded if they lacked scholarly rigor, were not peer-reviewed, or failed to engage substantively with al-Attas's framework. The analytical procedure involved multi-stage thematic coding, starting with open coding to identify

⁷⁴⁹ Elit Ave Hidayatullah and Syamsuddin Arif, "Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas' Exposition on the Concept of Ethics," *Afkar: Jurnal Akidah Dan Pemikiran Islam* 24, no. 1 (June 30, 2022): 409–46, <https://doi.org/10.22452/afkar.vol24no1.12>.

⁷⁵⁰ Eka Puspitasari and Anaas Tri Ridlo Dina Yuliana, "Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas' Concept of Islamizing Science and Its Relevance to Islamic Education," *Al-Misbah (Jurnal Islamic Studies)* 10, no. 2 (December 7, 2022): 91–108, <https://doi.org/10.26555/almisbah.v10i2.6484>.

recurrent concepts such as *adab*, *ta'dīb*, *tauhid*, and "secularization." These were followed by axial coding to link core categories with supporting philosophical assumptions, and finally selective coding to synthesize themes into broader interpretative frameworks. Textual data were interpreted using hermeneutic reading strategies, which included close reading, contextualization, and comparison between texts across different periods of al-Attas's thought. To ensure the validity and credibility of the findings, two strategies were applied. First, conceptual triangulation was conducted by cross-referencing interpretations with those of other scholars in the field, such as Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud and Syed Arabi Idid, to validate interpretations and identify possible biases. Second, reflexivity was maintained through continual researcher self-awareness regarding interpretive assumptions and potential confirmation bias. This methodological rigor allows for a transparent and theoretically grounded exploration of al-Attas's contributions, ensuring that the findings are both replicable and critically substantiated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas's Views on Exploring the Possibility of Islamization of Knowledge

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas offers one of the most comprehensive critiques of the modern Western epistemological paradigm from an Islamic perspective. For al-Attas, the Islamization of knowledge is not merely a semantic or cultural project but a profound ontological and epistemological correction aimed at restoring the integration between knowledge (*ʿilm*), ethics (*adab*), and metaphysical truth (*ḥaqq*). He argues that the primary crisis afflicting the Muslim ummah is not the absence of knowledge per se, but rather the uncritical assimilation of knowledge developed within a secular Western framework knowledge that has been divorced from its spiritual and moral moorings.⁷⁵¹

The Renaissance, which marked a significant turning point in Western history several centuries ago, played a pivotal role in propelling Western civilization to the height of intellectual and scientific dominance. During this period, Western scholars and scientists made substantial advancements across various scientific disciplines, largely grounded in rationalist approaches (*ʿAqliyyah*). These developments, however, did not occur in a vacuum. They emerged from a cultural and philosophical climate deeply rooted in secularism, utilitarianism, materialism, and hedonism. Consequently, the scientific worldview produced within this context inevitably carried the imprint of those ideologies, shaping not only the methods of inquiry but also the underlying assumptions, interpretations, and definitions of what constitutes knowledge itself.

As Richard Tarnas explains, every act of perception is mediated by a "Lens" shaped by one's personal values, experiences, traumas, limitations, and aspirations. This metaphorical lens colors how individuals whether from the West or the Muslim world understand and interact with knowledge. While Muslim scholars are not immune to such influences, this should not justify falling into the traps of extreme subjectivism or relativism. Within the Islamic epistemological framework, it is firmly believed that knowledge originates from God the ultimate, all-knowing source who transcends human error and confusion. Divine knowledge, unlike human perception, is inherently objective, as it is not confined by the constructs of imagination, culture, or temporal limitations. Therefore, true knowledge, as perceived in Islam, is universal in nature it transcends national, ethnic, and gender-based boundaries and maintains its validity regardless of human diversity.⁷⁵²

⁷⁵¹ Zainuddin Zainuddin et al., "Epistemological Synthesis of Al-Attas and Al-Faruqi: Islamization of Knowledge, Adab, and Contemporary Decolonization of Knowledge," *ISEDU : Islamic Education Journal* 3, no. 1 (May 8, 2025): 18–31.

⁷⁵² Adu, Rama, and Yahdi, "Islamisasi Ilmu Pengetahuan."

Secularization that involves three integrated components, namely not recognizing the existence of transcendent elements in the universe, separating religion from the political world and values that are not absolute or relative. These three components are seen from the perspective of Islam not only contradict human nature, but have also severed science from its foundation and shifted it from its true purpose. Therefore, the concept of Western science creates a crisis rather than giving birth to harmony, goodness and justice. The crisis can be diagnosed at least from two sides. The first side is perfectly attached to its human subjects which is characterized by symptoms of disorientation and alienation, and on the other side, to the modern civilization that it itself builds which is marked by exploitation and dysfunctionalization.⁷⁵³

Al-Attas firmly asserts that the most pressing crisis faced by the modern world is not ignorance, as often presumed, but rather the pervasive influence of knowledge shaped and disseminated by Western civilization. He emphasizes that the real challenge lies in the nature of this knowledge itself knowledge that, while widely accepted and institutionalized, has deviated from its true purpose due to distorted and unjust interpretations. According to Al-Attas, such knowledge has strayed from its ontological and ethical foundations, leading not to harmony or justice, but instead to widespread confusion, moral disarray, and existential uncertainty. Despite its claims to rationality and objectivity, Western knowledge, in his view, often culminates in skepticism and intellectual disorientation, lacking the spiritual and metaphysical grounding necessary for genuine human flourishing.⁷⁵⁴

This Western understanding of science and outlook on life (hereinafter referred to as Worldview) spread to Islamic countries after the colonization where many Islamic countries were colonized by the West such as England and France, the West carried out Westernization of science through the education they established in their colonial countries. The education they established was also supported by the Western worldview which began to influence their views. This resulted in errors, and Muslim people lost their manners.⁷⁵⁵

According to Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, the process of Westernizing science stems from a deep-rooted confusion and an overreliance on skepticism. He argues that this Westernization has elevated doubt from a mere psychological state to a methodological principle within the scientific enterprise. In doing so, skepticism has been institutionalized as a valid and dominant epistemological tool in the construction of modern scientific knowledge.⁷⁵⁶ However, al-Attas does not categorically reject the role of doubt or skepticism. On the contrary, he acknowledges as also articulated by the classical Muslim thinker al-Ghazali that a certain degree of doubt is a necessary precursor to genuine belief. Healthy skepticism, in this light, serves as a catalyst for intellectual inquiry and critical reflection.

Nonetheless, what al-Attas firmly opposes is the form of skepticism embraced by Western scientific paradigms skepticism that dismisses or marginalizes metaphysical, moral, and cultural dimensions of knowledge. He views this kind of skepticism as reductionist, stripping knowledge of its holistic and integrative character. Rather than leading to clarity and wisdom, such skepticism often results in alienation, moral relativism, and epistemic disorientation. In al-Attas' perspective, science must be grounded not only in reason and empirical observation but also in a framework that honors the spiritual and ethical values embedded in a civilization's worldview. Therefore, while constructive doubt is indispensable

⁷⁵³ Yudril Basith, "Gagasan Islamisasi Ilmu Pengetahuan Sebagai Pondasi Pendidikan Islam Menurut Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas," *Turats* 17, no. 1 (2024): 19–29.

⁷⁵⁴ Sugeng Wanto and Muhammad Sofian Hidayat, "Islamization of Western Social Contract Theory from the Perspective of Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas," *Jurnal Ushuluddin* 31, no. 2 (December 31, 2023): 220–40, <https://doi.org/10.24014/jush.v31i2.22896>.

⁷⁵⁵ Muh Bahrul Afif, "Epistemologi Islamisasi Ilmu Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas," *J-Alif: Jurnal Penelitian Hukum Ekonomi Syariah Dan Budaya Islam* 7, no. 2 (2023): 107–22.

⁷⁵⁶ Wanto and Hidayat, "Islamization of Western Social Contract Theory from the Perspective of Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas."

for the pursuit of truth, it must not come at the expense of meaning, morality, and the sacred. Even more amazingly, after scientific researchers had the ability to create new life forms through genetic engineering, in April 1987 the United States Copyright Office announced that living organisms - including animals - could be patented. There was indeed debate over this decision, but many scientists supported the decision. If humans had indeed been able to create a new living organism, then where was the role of the creator? This also raised other important questions that were beyond the scope of science.

Muslim scientists are trying to explore the treasury of knowledge that has long been proclaimed, including the Muslim scholar Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas as a "Mega Project" this idea contains very important goals that will be achieved.⁷⁵⁷

The goals to be achieved by realizing the idea of Islamization of knowledge include:

1. Issues contemporary scientific interpretations based on secular ideologies, meanings and expressions that contradict Islamic teachings.
2. Making Islam an alternative to Western epistemology
3. Developing true knowledge to build the thoughts and spirituality of a Muslim person that can increase his faith and devotion to Allah SWT.
4. Islamization of knowledge will give birth to security, goodness, justice and strength of faith.
5. Eliminate the concept of the dichotomy of knowledge which results in the separation between religious knowledge and general knowledge, because in essence knowledge originates from the one and only God, namely Allah SWT.

Central to al-Attas's critique is the view that secularism, as embedded in modern Western science, has institutionalized a form of skepticism that rejects metaphysics and divine revelation as valid sources of knowledge. Drawing upon classical Islamic thinkers like al-Ghazali, who viewed *shakk* (doubt) as a preliminary stage toward *yaqīn* (certainty), al-Attas distinguishes between constructive doubt that leads to epistemic humility and the Cartesian skepticism that underlies much of modern scientific discourse. He contends that the latter cultivates a worldview that marginalizes the unseen (*al-ghayb*) and exalts empirical and rational inquiry to the exclusion of spiritual intuition (*kashf*) and divine revelation.⁷⁵⁸

Rather than opposing science outright, al-Attas proposes a reorientation of its metaphysical premises. He emphasizes that knowledge in Islam is not value-neutral; it is bound by ethical and ontological truths rooted in *tawhīd* the belief in the unity and sovereignty of God. In this framework, *adab* plays a pivotal role. It is not merely a matter of etiquette but refers to the proper ordering of the self (*nafs*) and the placement of knowledge, actions, and beings in their rightful places. Al-Attas argues that the loss of *adab* both individually and collectively is symptomatic of the epistemic confusion that plagues the modern Muslim mind. Thus, the process of Islamization begins with the recovery of *adab* through the educational philosophy of *ta'dīb*, which seeks to cultivate an integrated self whose faculties are harmonized under divine guidance.

Al-Attas also insists that language is central to epistemological reform. He critiques the semantic distortions caused by translating key Islamic concepts into secular languages, which often lack metaphysical depth. For example, the Qur'anic term *ilm* is reduced to "knowledge" in English, stripping it of its spiritual orientation and ethical charge. Therefore, he proposes the Islamization of language as a necessary precursor to the Islamization of thought. This includes the recovery of terms such as *qalb* (heart), *ʿaql* (intellect), and *fitrah* (primordial nature), each of which plays an essential role in constructing a holistic Islamic epistemology.

Methodologically, al-Attas outlines a dual process for Islamizing knowledge. The first involves the critical deconstruction of Western conceptual frameworks, which he refers to as

⁷⁵⁷ Wanto and Hidayat.

⁷⁵⁸ Yongki Sutoyo, "ISLAMIC NATURAL SCIENCE RESEARCH PROGRAM WITH REFERENCE TO AL-ATTAS AND LAKATOS" (doctoral, Universitas Darussalam Gontor, 2023), <https://repo.unida.gontor.ac.id/7727/>.

the "dewesternization of knowledge." This entails identifying and isolating secular, humanistic, and materialistic assumptions embedded in contemporary disciplines. The second is the constructive integration of Islamic key concepts *din* (religion), *‘ilm*, *hikmah* (wisdom), *‘adl* (justice), and *‘amal* (right action) into these disciplines in order to reorient them toward truth as defined by Islamic metaphysics. Importantly, this process is not additive but transformative: the goal is not to ‘Islamize’ Western knowledge superficially, but to reconstruct it from within a *tawhīdic* worldview.⁷⁵⁹

Furthermore, al-Attas diverges from other Islamization theorists such as Ismail Raji al-Faruqi by prioritizing metaphysical rectification over sociological analysis. While both share concerns about secularization, al-Attas views the corruption of meaning not institutional structures as the core problem. Thus, the Islamization project, in his view, must begin with reforming the mind and soul of the knower, not merely the curriculum. This emphasis places his thought within a broader trajectory of classical Islamic philosophy, while simultaneously engaging modernity with a uniquely principled critique.

In conclusion, al-Attas’s vision of Islamization of knowledge represents a deep philosophical engagement with the crisis of modernity. It seeks not only to critique but to offer a coherent alternative grounded in Islamic metaphysics, ethics, and educational theory. His framework challenges Muslim scholars and educators to rethink the foundations of knowledge, to resist epistemological dependency on secular paradigms, and to return to an intellectual tradition that harmonizes reason, revelation, and spiritual insight.

Naquib al-Attas’s Concept of Islamization of Science

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, in his analysis, acknowledges that Islam shares certain methodological and epistemological similarities with contemporary philosophy and science. For instance, both traditions value rational and empirical approaches to acquiring knowledge. Additionally, they incorporate various cognitive foundations such as realism, idealism, and pragmatism within their frameworks of understanding and interpreting the world. These convergences reflect a mutual recognition of the need for coherence, logic, and experience in the pursuit of knowledge. However, al-Attas also draws a clear line by highlighting the profound differences in the underlying worldviews that shape each tradition.

While the philosophical and scientific outlook in the modern West is often grounded in secular, materialist, or dualistic assumptions, the Islamic worldview presents a holistic and spiritually infused perspective. According to al-Attas, Islam perceives reality and truth not merely through sensory perception or intellectual abstraction, but through the inner vision of the heart *Ru’yat Al-Qalb*. This inner vision allows a person to grasp the essence of existence in a comprehensive and unified manner. The Islamic worldview, therefore, is not limited to observable phenomena but encompasses the metaphysical and transcendent dimensions of being. Al-Attas refers to this as *ru’yat al-Islam lil-wujūd* the Islamic perception of existence which radiates a sense of totality and interconnectedness between the physical, intellectual, and spiritual realms.⁷⁶⁰

Table 1. Differences of between Islamic and Western views

No	Element	Islamic Worldview	Western Worldview
1	Principle	Tawhid	Dichotomous
2	Principle	Revelation, Hadith, reason, experience and intuition	Ratio, speculation, philosophy

⁷⁵⁹ Aulia Rakhmat, "Religion and Reason in Contemporary Islamic Ethics: A Comparative Study of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas and Taha Abderrahmane Thought," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 13, no. 2 (December 6, 2023): 134–51, <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.132.09>.

⁷⁶⁰ Wanto and Hidayat, "Islamization of Western Social Contract Theory from the Perspective of Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas."

3	Characteristic	Authenticity and Review	Rationality, open and ever changing
4	The Meaning of Reality and Truth	Based on metaphysical studies	Social, cultural, empirical views
5	Object of Study	Visible and invisible	Community Values

The comparison between Islamic and Western worldviews reveals fundamental, irreconcilable differences that stem from distinct philosophical and theological foundations. Unlike the Western perspective, which often operates within dichotomous frameworks such as objective versus subjective, historical versus normative, or textual versus contextual, the Islamic worldview rejects such binary classifications. Instead, it embraces a holistic and integrative approach known as the tauhidi method. This method emphasizes the unity of knowledge by synthesizing empirical observation, rational inquiry, deductive reasoning, and inductive analysis mirroring the diverse methodologies employed by classical Muslim scholars in their pursuit of truth.⁷⁶¹

In Islam, reality and truth are not limited to the observable physical world or to human experience within social, historical, and political contexts, as emphasized in secular Western thought. Rather, Islam extends the scope of understanding beyond the material to include metaphysical dimensions. This broader epistemological vision incorporates both the empirical and the non-empirical, recognizing that ultimate reality must be understood in relation to the unseen and the eternal. Central to this view is the belief in the afterlife, which is not treated as a separate or optional concept, but as an inseparable and defining element of existence. The worldly and the hereafter are deeply interwoven, and true understanding must account for both dimensions.

The Islamic worldview is firmly anchored in divine revelation, with reason and intuition serving as complementary tools in comprehending that revelation. The theological framework, ethical principles, and ritual practices of Islam are not human constructs but are rooted in truths conveyed through the Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), forming a complete and divinely guided system of knowledge and living.⁷⁶²

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas asserts that the primary solution to the epistemological and spiritual crises facing the Muslim world lies in the Islamization of science. He argues that, in its original form, all knowledge was inherently Islamic integrated with divine principles and moral foundations.⁷⁶³ However, over time, the nature and orientation of knowledge underwent significant shifts, especially with the rise of secularism in Europe. This secularization, which initially emerged in the West as a rejection of religious and metaphysical authority, was eventually transmitted into the Muslim world through colonial and intellectual influence. Al-Attas adopts the definition of secularization proposed by Dutch theologian Cornelius Van Peursen, who described it as the emancipation of the human mind and language from religious and metaphysical control. For al-Attas, this is crucial because thought and language serve as the primary vessels through which reality is understood and communicated. Once secularism reshapes a person's thought patterns, it inevitably transforms their worldview leading them to perceive themselves as autonomous beings with no higher

⁷⁶¹ Ainor Syuhadah binti Khalid and Intan Delsa Putri, "Analisis Konsep Integrasi Ilmu Dalam Islam," *Wardah* 21, no. 1 (2020): 35–49.

⁷⁶² Nur Saniah Br Munthe, "Implementasi Konsep Integrasi Ilmu Dalam Upaya Pencapaian Tujuan Pembelajaran PAI Di MTs Negeri 3 Labuhanbatu Utara" (PhD Thesis, Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara Medan, 2022), <http://repository.uinsu.ac.id/20382/>.

⁷⁶³ Raihan Fadly, "Islamisasi Ilmu Dalam Pandangan Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas Dan Ziauddin Sardar," *Journal of Education Religion Humanities and Multidisciplinary* 1, no. 1 (2023): 12–22.

reference than the self.⁷⁶⁴ This mindset aligns closely with the philosophy of humanism, which centers the human being as the ultimate authority. Consequently, human actions are driven not by divine guidance, but by subjective will and internal desire marking a profound departure from the Islamic principle of submission to God.⁷⁶⁵

Following the secularization of thought, secular influence also extends to language a development that raises significant concerns. Language, by nature, is a cultural construct shaped by the historical and experiential background of a particular society. Due to the diversity of historical and cultural experiences across nations, languages naturally develop with differing semantic frameworks.⁷⁶⁶ These differences often lead to conceptual gaps, where specific terms or ideas in one language lack direct equivalents in another. A notable example is the difficulty encountered when translating key Arabic terms into English. Arabic, shaped profoundly by the metaphysical depth of the Qur'an, carries spiritual and layered meanings, whereas English especially in its modern usage has evolved into a language that is predominantly technical, mechanical, and often devoid of metaphysical nuance. This divergence creates serious challenges for accurate translation. Terms like *qalb*, *fu'ād*, and *lubb* in Arabic, which refer to distinct aspects and levels of the human heart or inner consciousness, are all flattened into the single English term "Heart". Such semantic reduction not only fails to capture the original depth and distinction of meaning but also risks distorting the conceptual understanding for non-Arabic speakers. In effect, the inadequacy of linguistic equivalence results in the misrepresentation of key Islamic concepts, thereby complicating the transmission and comprehension of Islamic knowledge across languages.

Building on this foundation, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas defines Islamization as a process of liberating the human being from various forms of belief and traditions that contradict Islamic teachings such as magical, mythological, animistic, and culturally nationalistic practices. More importantly, it entails emancipation from the influence of secular worldviews that dominate human thought and language. According to al-Attas, secular ideologies not only distort the intellectual and linguistic frameworks through which humans perceive reality, but also subject individuals to the dominance of their own physical desires, detaching them from their spiritual essence. In this condition, man tends to forget his true purpose, becoming estranged from his innate nature (*Fitrah*) and unjust toward his own soul. Islamization, therefore, is not merely an external correction of knowledge or culture, but a deep inner transformation an effort to return to the primordial purity of the human self as originally created by God. This return to *fiṭrah* represents a more authentic and enduring process than both evolution and devolution, as it seeks to restore the harmony between the physical, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions of human existence.⁷⁶⁷

In the definition of Islamization above, there are two aspects that need to be further expressed. First, at the individual level, the consequence of Islamization is the recognition of the Prophet Muhammad SAW as a leader and role model for both men and women at the collective, social and historical levels. The recognition of the Prophet's SAW. high level will be absorbed and thought about, so that it will not be possible for it to come out of his mouth that "the Prophet Muhammad SAW, is an ordinary human being."⁷⁶⁸

A person who is educated in Islam would not dare to utter words like this. On the contrary, with full humility and self, he will acknowledge the high position of the Prophet which has also been acknowledged by Allah SWT. When that acknowledgement is ingrained,

⁷⁶⁴ Muhammad Adress Prawira Negara, "Islam Dan Demokrasi Dalam Pemikiran Abdul Karim Soroush" (bachelorThesis, FU, 2024), <https://repository.uinjkt.ac.id/dspace/handle/123456789/82317>.

⁷⁶⁵ Fadly, "Islamisasi Ilmu Dalam Pandangan Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas Dan Ziauddin Sardar."

⁷⁶⁶ MIRHRM Ade Tuti Turistiati and Pundra Rengga Andhita, *Komunikasi Antarbudaya: Panduan Komunikasi Efektif Antar Manusia Berbeda Budaya*, vol. 1 (Zahira Media Publisher, 2021).

⁷⁶⁷ Fadly, "Islamisasi Ilmu Dalam Pandangan Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas Dan Ziauddin Sardar."

⁷⁶⁸ Afif, "Epistemologi Islamisasi Ilmu Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas."

then by itself, his person and life Muhammad SAW will become a symbol and realization of the perfection of morality and ethics". Thus he will exemplify that perfection, in his efforts to perfect himself.

The understanding of Islamization at the individual level is closely related to the concept of adab. Sayyidi Naquib believes that the dilemma faced by Muslims has formed a vicious circle that was preceded by the secularization of science.⁷⁶⁹

The second phase in the Islamization of knowledge begins once the initial process of identifying and disengaging from un-Islamic concepts has been completed. This stage involves the active integration of Islamic principles and key values into each branch of contemporary science. More than a procedural shift, this endeavor represents a profound cognitive and spiritual transformation that must occur simultaneously and holistically. There is no temporal separation between the acts of removing secular or alien elements and embedding Islamic ones they are inseparable parts of a unified intellectual effort. As noted by Ismail Fajrie Alatas, this dual process reflects the meaning embedded in the shahāda (Islamic testimony of faith), *Lā ilāha illā Allāh* "There is no god but Allah." The first part, *Lā ilāha* (There is no god), symbolizes the rejection of all false constructs, including epistemological foundations that contradict Islamic thought. The second part, *illā Allāh* (except Allah), affirms the exclusive truth and authority of Allah as the ultimate source of knowledge. These two aspects negation and affirmation occur simultaneously, not sequentially. In the same way, Islamizing science requires the immediate and concurrent deconstruction of incompatible ideas and the construction of knowledge firmly rooted in the Islamic worldview, without allowing any conceptual vacuum in between.⁷⁷⁰

Once the fundamental distinctions between the Islamic and Western worldviews have been thoroughly understood, the process of Islamizing contemporary knowledge can begin in earnest. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas outlines a methodological framework for this endeavor, which consists of two closely interconnected stages,⁷⁷¹ These stages are not meant to be sequential in a linear sense but are interwoven and mutually reinforcing. Together, they form a comprehensive approach to reforming modern knowledge so that it aligns with the metaphysical, ethical, and spiritual foundations of Islam, ultimately restoring the integrity and unity of knowledge under the banner of tawḥīd.:

1. Verification Process, namely recognizing and separating the elements (4 elements mentioned earlier) formed by Western culture and civilization, then separated and isolated from the body of contemporary knowledge especially in the humanities. However, natural sciences, physics, applied sciences must also be considered, especially in the interpretations of facts in the formulation of theories.
2. According to Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, any claim or formulation of knowledge that contradicts the Islamic worldview cannot be regarded as a valid truth. From this perspective, modern scientific disciplines must undergo a thorough and critical examination not only in terms of their methods and empirical foundations but also with regard to the underlying philosophical assumptions, conceptual frameworks, and symbolic structures they employ. Al-Attas emphasizes that aspects such as the historical development of science, the construction of its theories, its ontological and epistemological assumptions about the universe, and its rational approach to processes must all be scrutinized in light of Islamic principles. Furthermore, the ethical implications, value systems embedded within scientific interpretations, and the interrelation between scientific knowledge and societal norms must also be assessed carefully. Only through such a comprehensive and value-conscious evaluation can science be harmonized with the

⁷⁶⁹ Rosyad, "Terminologi Ta'dib Dalam Perspektif Syed Mohammad Naquib Al-Attas."

⁷⁷⁰ Rahmania and Abu Bakar, "Studi Pemikiran Pendidikan Islam Perspektif Naquib al Attas."

⁷⁷¹ Eka Puspitasari, "Konsep Islamisasi Ilmu Pengetahuan Menurut Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas dan Relevansinya dengan Tujuan Pendidikan Islam" (masterThesis, 2022).

Islamic way of life and thereby restored to its rightful place as a means of uncovering truth that aligns with divine guidance.

3. "Incorporating Islamic elements and key concepts into every relevant branch of contemporary science." With that inclusion, it will change the forms, values and conceptual interpretations of the content of knowledge. Furthermore, al-Attas also detailed and several basic concepts of Islam that must be incorporated into every branch of science studied by Muslims are as follows:
 - a. Concept of religion (*Din*)
 - b. Human concept (*Jusan*)
 - c. The concept of knowledge (*'lim and Ma'rifah*)
 - d. The concept of wisdom (*Hikmah*)
 - e. Concept of justice (*Adl*)
 - f. The concept of correct actions (*'Amal as adab*)
 - g. The concept of university (*Kulliyah-Jami'ah*)

Al-Attas rejects the view that Islamization of science can be achieved by putting an Islamic stamp on science. Such an effort will only worsen the situation and is useless because foreign elements or germs are still present in the body of science. It will only produce science that is not Islamic and not secular.⁷⁷²

The concept of Islamization of science, as developed by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, represents a deeply rooted response to the epistemological crisis that arises when modern science is decoupled from metaphysical, ethical, and spiritual foundations. For al-Attas, science when developed within a purely secular, materialist, and humanist framework risks becoming a vehicle of epistemic disorientation rather than truth. His project of Islamization is not merely a critique of scientific content, but an ontological and linguistic reformation aimed at recovering the integrity of knowledge within a tauhidi (unified) worldview.

Al-Attas articulates that the foundation of science in the West was constructed upon a worldview born out of historical antagonism toward religion, particularly Christian theology. This historical rupture gave rise to secularism, which in al-Attas's view is not merely the separation of religion from public life, but the displacement of metaphysics from the foundations of knowledge. This led to what he terms the "confusion of knowledge," in which facts, concepts, and values are divorced from their rightful positions. According to him, modern science's fixation on sensory experience and reason marginalizes the unseen (*al-ghayb*), revelation (*wahy*), and inner vision (*ru'yat al-qalb*), thereby rendering science incomplete.

Al-Attas's response is the Islamization of contemporary sciences, a twofold process involving dewesternization and reconstruction. The first phase entails the critical identification and removal of secular assumptions embedded in scientific disciplines. This is not a wholesale rejection of Western science but a demand for philosophical scrutiny: what metaphysical claims are implied in its methods, terminologies, and aims? The second phase involves integrating key Islamic concepts such as *'ilm* (knowledge), *hikmah* (wisdom), *adab* (discipline), *nafs* (self/soul), and *tauhid* (unity) into the restructured scientific enterprise.

This integrative process mirrors al-Attas's broader educational theory, where *ta'dib* becomes the mode of reordering knowledge and the self. The term *adab*, for him, encompasses not just ethics but the proper positioning of everything in relation to divine truth. Thus, in science, *adab* requires that knowledge be pursued not merely for technological utility but for the realization of justice, harmony, and spiritual refinement. This links al-Attas with classical

⁷⁷² Puspitasari.

Muslim epistemologists such as al-Fārābī and al-Ghazālī, who viewed knowledge as a means of human perfection under divine guidance.

A distinguishing strength of al-Attas's framework lies in his attention to language. He argues that language is not a neutral vessel, but a carrier of worldview. The secularization of language, particularly through translation of Islamic terms into Western epistemic categories, creates "conceptual dislocation." Terms like *qalb*, *fu'ād*, and *lubb* which refer to different levels of human consciousness are all flattened into the English term "heart", which lacks the theological nuances. Al-Attas contends that such semantic reductions distort understanding and ultimately reshape thought. Thus, Islamizing science includes restoring semantic precision to foundational concepts.

Compared to other Islamization theorists, such as Ismail Raji al-Faruqi or Seyyed Hossein Nasr, al-Attas is unique in emphasizing metaphysical reform as the priority. While al-Faruqi centers his program on curriculum reform and integration of Islamic content across modern disciplines, al-Attas begins with the purification of concepts before any pedagogical application. Nasr, on the other hand, emphasizes the sacred cosmology of traditional sciences rooted in perennial philosophy. Al-Attas departs from both by proposing a precise methodological sequence grounded in epistemological and linguistic reconstruction.

Al-Attas outlines three methodological stages: verification, critical evaluation, and integration. Verification involves identifying foreign elements in scientific concepts that contradict the Islamic worldview. Critical evaluation demands assessing their ontological, ethical, and epistemological coherence with *tauhidi* metaphysics. Integration is the creative reformation of these disciplines using authentic Islamic categories. These stages are not linear but iterative, and require deep textual engagement with both classical Islamic sources and modern scientific literature.

Despite its clarity, al-Attas's approach could benefit from practical elaboration. For instance, in disciplines like psychology shaped heavily by secular humanism the Islamization process would begin by questioning its conception of the self (as autonomous and instinct-driven) and replacing it with the *nafs*-based model of the soul. In sociology, secular assumptions about the evolution of society and moral relativism would be challenged by an Islamic view of history, community (*ummah*), and *maqasid al-shari'ah*. These reorientations have significant implications for pedagogy. Muslim universities must not only revise their curricula but transform their epistemic posture: science is not just taught, but rethought.

Finally, al-Attas warns against what he calls "Islamic labeling" of science superficially adding Quranic verses or Arabic terms to Western theories without challenging their conceptual assumptions. This, he argues, results in an incoherent hybridity that is neither secular nor truly Islamic. True Islamization demands transformative depth, not cosmetic symbols. A university, in al-Attas's model, is not merely a site of transmission but of purification and integration of knowledge.

In conclusion, al-Attas's concept of Islamization of science provides a coherent philosophical and methodological alternative to secular paradigms. By grounding science in *tauḥid*, embedding it in *adab*, and restoring its linguistic integrity, al-Attas charts a path toward knowledge that is both spiritually meaningful and epistemologically rigorous. The challenge for scholars today is to move from exposition to implementation translating these conceptual foundations into actual research frameworks, curricula, and academic cultures rooted in the Islamic worldview.

Characteristics of the Islamization of Science by Naqulb al-Attas

For Sayyidi Naquib al-Attas, the destruction of Islamic education is due to the absence of manners which are the main foundation of Islamic education which produces many problems

which then have implications for the very complex problems we face today. According to him:⁷⁷³

1. Confusion and misperception regarding subsequent science
2. Lack of manners from society. The consequences of these two things are
3. One of the concerning consequences highlighted by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas is the rise of leaders who are not only unfit to govern but also lack the moral integrity, intellectual depth, and spiritual maturity that are essential in Islamic leadership. These individuals, devoid of adab and ethical grounding, perpetuate the very conditions of confusion and misperception that plague society. Rather than addressing core issues, they reinforce the status quo by empowering others of similar character to occupy key roles in various sectors. This creates a cycle in which leadership is passed among those who neither uphold the principles of justice and wisdom nor possess the vision to guide the community toward meaningful reform, thus deepening the moral and intellectual crisis within the ummah.

At the individual level, the process of Islamization is inseparable from the restoration and internalization of adab a foundational element of Islamic education since the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The concept of adab encompasses not only manners and ethical conduct but also the proper alignment of knowledge, action, and spiritual discipline. This emphasis is evident in the Qur'anic injunctions and prophetic teachings that command believers to follow the sunnah of the Prophet, thereby integrating his character and practices into their daily lives. The Prophet's companions were explicitly instructed by Allah to emulate his example, signifying that moral refinement, behavioral discipline, and the embodiment of prophetic knowledge are essential components of personal and educational development in Islam.⁷⁷⁴

At the linguistic level, the process of Islamization involves purifying and restoring essential terms that have been distorted through the influence of secular paradigms. This effort seeks to rehabilitate key scientific and philosophical vocabulary so that their meanings align with the Islamic worldview and the historical-cultural context in which those terms originally emerged. Islamization of language is not merely a semantic exercise, but a foundational act that reorients thought itself. Once terminology is returned to its authentic, value-laden meanings rooted in Islamic metaphysics and ethics, the process of re-Islamizing thought becomes more accessible and natural. This is because language particularly the core concepts and key terms it carries plays a decisive role in shaping how individuals conceptualize, understand, and engage with knowledge and reality. Therefore, reclaiming language is a critical step in reconfiguring the intellectual foundations of the Muslim mind.⁷⁷⁵

After defining Islamization, Sayyidi Naquib then tries to apply the concept in a practical level. In Islam and Secularism, Sayyidi Naquib explains that the Islamization of Knowledge in the present day involves two interrelated processes. The first is the separation of key elements and concepts that shape Western culture and civilization from every branch of contemporary science, especially the humanities. He calls this process the Dewesternization of Knowledge. The "foreign" elements that must be separated and eliminated from science in general have five interrelated characteristics:⁷⁷⁶

1. Relying solely on the power of reason to guide humans in navigating life.

⁷⁷³ Wanto and Hidayat, "Islamization of Western Social Contract Theory from the Perspective of Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas."

⁷⁷⁴ Sri Jayanti, "Proses Islamisasi Etnis Cina Di Kecamatan Kluet Selatan" (PhD Thesis, Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, 2024), <https://repository.ar-raniry.ac.id/id/eprint/40028/>.

⁷⁷⁵ Aniq Akhmad Ali Bawafie, Indo Santalia, and Syamsuddin Syamsuddin, "Islamisasi Ilmu Ekonomi Berdasarkan Pemikiran Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas," *EL-FIKR: Jurnal Aqidah Dan Filsafat Islam* 4, no. 2 (2023): 155–66.

⁷⁷⁶ Puspitasari, "Konsep Islamisasi Ilmu Pengetahuan Menurut Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas dan Relevansinya dengan Tujuan Pendidikan Islam."

Talking about rationality in the context of modern Western civilization, of course we cannot forget one of the main figures, a famous French philosopher Rene Descartes. His very popular expression is *cogito ergo sum* (*I think, therefore I am*). Has made ratio the only criterion for measuring truth. Rene Descartes' thinking has inspired rationality movements, especially what is known as the "enlightenment" movement (*Aufklärung*) in France and Germany which involved great Western figures including Immanuel Kant and Hegel. As a result of the strong emphasis on rationality by modern Western society, the emergence of schools of thought that reject non-rational elements such as those found in religion and mysticism tend to be rejected as illusions and hallucinations. Revelations that are basically received through intuition are also not accepted by Western society. Even the Prophet is often considered a Psychopath who suffers from mental disorders, especially epilepsy.

2. Adhering faithfully to the validity of the Dualistic view of Reality and Truth.

A fundamental characteristic of the Western epistemological tradition is its unwavering adherence to a dualistic view of reality and truth. In this framework, reality is often confined to what can be perceived through the senses emphasizing the physical world and human activity as it manifests in historical, social, political, and cultural dimensions. Such a perspective limits the scope of understanding to what is visible, measurable, and temporally bound. Moreover, the Western intellectual paradigm is structured around dichotomies such as objective versus subjective, historical versus normative that segment knowledge into rigid and often conflicting categories.

This dualistic orientation stands in stark contrast to the Islamic worldview, which rejects the fragmentation of truth and reality. Islam approaches the universe through a metaphysical lens that embraces both the seen (*Al-Shahādah*) and the unseen (*Al-Ghayb*), acknowledging the interconnectedness of material and spiritual dimensions. Reality and truth in Islam are unified concepts that cannot be fully grasped without considering both the empirical and the transcendent. Rather than dividing knowledge into competing binaries, Islamic epistemology integrates reason, revelation, and intuition within a coherent and holistic framework that affirms the oneness of existence under the principle of *tawhīd*.

3. Justifying the temporal aspects of being that project a secular worldview.

Modern Western epistemology-secularism is increasingly rolling with the emergence of Hegel's dialectical philosophy influenced by Kant. According to Hegel, knowledge is an ongoing process, where what I know and I know continues to develop: the stage that has been achieved is "denied" or "negated" by a new stage. Not in the sense that the old stage is no longer valid, but the old stage is no longer valid, but the old stage is not true because it is limited, and thus should not be considered the truth. But what is true in denial is maintained". While in Islam in things that are clear and final are not temporal and do not require development and change.

4. Humanism, as a philosophical tradition that dates back to Ancient Greece, asserts that human beings possess the capacity to govern both themselves and the natural world solely through reason. It upholds the belief that human intellect alone is sufficient to formulate ethical and societal rules without relying on any transcendent source, effectively sidelining the role of God in regulating human life. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas views this doctrine as one of the key contributors to the epistemological and spiritual crises within modern Western civilization. He expresses deep concern over the infiltration of Western philosophical thought particularly humanism into the minds of educated Muslim elites, a phenomenon he refers to as the "de-Islamization" of the Muslim intellect, which he deems profoundly damaging. Al-Attas contends that Western science, despite being widely adopted, is neither universal nor neutral; rather, it is inherently shaped by Eurocentric and ethnocentric assumptions. As such, applying this science indiscriminately across all cultures especially Islamic societies with fundamentally different worldviews can be harmful. Science, in his view, is not value-free but carries embedded cultural and

ideological messages that subtly propagate a particular worldview. He emphasizes that knowledge is processed through the rational soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqah*), and its meaning is determined by how the soul relates knowledge to the elements of its worldview. This explains the variation in understanding among individuals despite receiving identical information. To counter the epistemological influence of secular science, al-Attas proposes the Islamization of science, a process that, in his framework, begins with the Islamization of language. Drawing upon the Qur'anic approach, he illustrates how language itself can be reoriented to reflect divine values for example, the term *karīm*, which in pre-Islamic times connoted noble lineage, was redefined in the Qur'an to signify moral excellence based on piety, thus transforming its semantic field in alignment with Islamic ethics

5. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas criticizes the Western intellectual tradition for its tendency to universalize drama and tragedy as core expressions of the human spiritual and inner experience. In this framework, elements of conflict, suffering, and emotional turmoil are not only emphasized in literature and art but are also internalized as fundamental components of human identity and existence. This results in a worldview that often interprets the human condition through lenses of despair, fragmentation, and unresolved psychological tension. From an Islamic standpoint, such a perspective is deeply problematic, as it neglects the purposeful nature of life as guided by divine will. Islam acknowledges hardship but situates it within a meaningful and redemptive context one that encourages moral development, spiritual tranquility, and ultimate accountability in the hereafter. Thus, the Islamic conception of the self is not defined by tragedy, but by its capacity for growth, surrender to God, and alignment with eternal truths

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas's critique of modern Western science emerges from a broader philosophical and metaphysical concern about the fragmentation and desacralization of knowledge. His concept of Islamization of science is not a superficial labeling process, but a deep ontological reorientation grounded in a *tauhidi* epistemology, in which knowledge is understood as both spiritually infused and metaphysically unified. In contrast to the secular scientific worldview, which tends to isolate reason from revelation and subject from object, al-Attas proposes a re-integration of knowledge through the cultivation of *adab*, the restoration of language, and the re-establishment of divine purpose within scientific inquiry.

Al-Attas identifies five key characteristics embedded in secular modern science that must be disengaged for Islamization to occur: (1) the absolutization of reason as the sole source of knowledge, (2) a dualistic ontology that separates matter and spirit, (3) a temporal framework rooted in linear, desecralized progress, (4) the assertion of autonomous humanism that elevates man as independent from divine guidance, and (5) the aesthetic valorization of tragedy, especially in Western arts and humanities. These features are not merely philosophical; they actively shape modern academic disciplines, curricula, and research priorities. For instance, the dominance of reason manifests in the epistemological foundations of psychology, where the soul (*nafs*) is reduced to cognitive and behavioral processes. Similarly, in development studies, secular temporality informs progress models that overlook spiritual development as a valid indicator of societal well-being.

While these points are articulated clearly in al-Attas's corpus, a deeper analytical engagement is needed to trace how these secular traits infiltrate Muslim educational systems and disciplines. Cartesian rationalism, for example, continues to influence Muslim education through a persistent dichotomy between "religious" and "scientific" subjects, often seen in curriculum structures that compartmentalize revelation and empirical inquiry. This dualism leads to epistemological confusion *khalal* which al-Attas views as a root cause of the Muslim intellectual crisis.

In contrast, al-Attas's vision rests upon metaphysical unity, in which knowledge is derived from *qalb* (heart), *'aql* (intellect), and *wahy* (revelation), all oriented toward the

recognition of haqq (truth). Adab, as both a personal virtue and ontological ordering principle, plays a pivotal role in this epistemology. To “know” is to place things in their proper place not merely within a conceptual system, but within a moral-spiritual hierarchy established by God. Hence, Islamization of science entails not only rethinking disciplines but reforming the knower.

Language occupies a central place in al-Attas’s framework. The erosion of meaning in key Islamic concepts e.g., translating *karīm* as simply “generous” rather than “noble in character and divine origin” illustrates how semantic shifts lead to epistemological dislocation. This insight aligns with decolonial scholarship that critiques how Eurocentric languages and categories distort indigenous worldviews. Al-Attas’s proposal to reclaim Islamic terms and epistemes parallels efforts in decolonizing knowledge, where epistemic sovereignty begins with linguistic clarity.

However, unlike some postcolonial theorists, al-Attas avoids relativism. He asserts that knowledge has an objective foundation in *tauhīd*, and thus not all knowledge systems are equally valid. This sets his project apart from thinkers like al-Faruqi, who emphasized Islamization through curricular synthesis, or Nasr, who focused on the cosmological symbolism of traditional sciences. Al-Attas offers a more ontologically rigorous method, beginning with concept purification before disciplinary integration.

The practical application of al-Attas’s ideas requires transforming how disciplines are taught and understood in Muslim institutions. In sociology, for instance, secular humanism informs theories of social change based on materialist and evolutionary assumptions. Islamizing this discipline would require re-framing society as a moral community (*ummah*) oriented toward *ma’nawīyyah* (spiritual purpose). In pedagogy, this could mean reworking teacher education to emphasize the development of *ta’dīb*, not just content delivery. Some contemporary experiments such as the International Institute of Islamic Thought’s (IIIT) curriculum projects attempt similar transformations, though often lacking al-Attas’s metaphysical precision.

A compelling example is the reinterpretation of *karīm* in educational content. When textbooks describe *karīm* merely as generosity, they miss the Quranic depth of the term as an attribute of God and a reflection of divine nobility in humans. A curriculum that reclaims this meaning would not only teach students about vocabulary, but also about their ontological purpose and ethical orientation.

Lastly, al-Attas cautions against the superficial Islamization of science where Islamic terms are appended to secular frameworks without transforming their epistemic structures. For him, true Islamization requires verification, critical evaluation, and integration methodological stages that involve assessing the metaphysical foundations of knowledge, realigning them with *tauhīd*, and embedding Islamic categories into the structure of thought. These processes demand not ideological zeal but intellectual discipline.

In sum, the characteristics of the Islamization of science according to al-Attas provide not just a critique of modernity but a constructive roadmap for epistemic renewal. By integrating *adab*, *tauhīd*, and linguistic precision into scientific and educational discourse, Muslim scholars can move beyond reactionary responses toward a principled, transformative engagement with knowledge itself. To fully realize this vision, further work must be done in contextualizing al-Attas’s framework within global and local academic systems, engaging with contemporary disciplines, and anchoring reforms in both classical tradition and empirical realities.

The Influence of the Islamization of Naquib al-Attas' Science on Education

The influence of the idea of Islamization of science promoted by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas is still very limited, this was also stated by al-Attas in his speech when he was

appointed as chairman of the Al-Ghazali board in 1993.⁷⁷⁷ it is still too early to assess in detail the impact of the Islamization of Science on education by those who work without the financial support of organizations and without the encouragement of the mass media. The limitations of this assessment are all the more felt because Muslims, including and caused by their educated leaders and scholars, are still in a sea of shock and doubt about themselves, "such views have taken root before their consequences have had time to be evaluated. However, despite these limitations, it must be admitted that al-Attas' ideas have provoked many reactions, some of which have resulted in significant developments in contemporary Islamic thought and practice."⁷⁷⁸

In the context of al-Attas, he is very worthy to be considered as a great and original thinker in the contemporary Islamic world, because so far he has rolled out fundamental and established ideas that have been ignored by some people and misunderstood by others. Then he clarified, explained, and connected these ideas with the intellectual environment and cultural dynamics of contemporary Muslims.⁷⁷⁹ He also came with several solutions to various problems related to historical, intellectual and Islamic cultural aspects in the Malay group of islands. It is not surprising that Fazlur Rahman praised al-Attas and called him a "Gentus thinker". Al-Attas's ideas and writings in the discipline of Islamic philosophy which touch various disciplines of religion, education and science are among the best and most creative in the treasury of thought. Contemporary Islam. He was the first person in the contemporary Islamic world to define, conceptualize, and describe the meaning, meaning and content of Islamic education, ideas and methods of the Islamization of contemporary science, the nature and establishment of universities. Islam, as well as the formulation and systematization of Islamic metaphysics and philosophy of science in a very systematic and philosophical form. All of these ideas are something fundamental for reviving the religious sciences, which 900 years ago al-Ghazali tried to achieve.

Al-Attas was once involved in a serious polemic with several influential Dutch orientalists, such as professors GWJ Drewes P. Voorhoeve, and A. Teeuw regarding the study of Islamic history, philology and the history of Malay literature, a polemic that provided a bright spot and new inspiration in the world of research and studies that had previously felt vague. He was the first person to clearly propose a general theory regarding the process of Islamization in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago, a theory that helped give birth to the awareness to reinterpret the history of Islam in Southeast Asia.⁷⁸⁰

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas stands as one of the most original and systematic Muslim thinkers in articulating a comprehensive philosophy of education rooted in Islamic metaphysics and epistemology. His concept of Islamization of science, though primarily philosophical, contains far-reaching implications for the reformation of contemporary Muslim educational systems. Yet, despite the depth and consistency of his intellectual framework, the practical influence of his ideas remains limited. Al-Attas himself warned that the full impact of his project cannot yet be properly measured, citing the absence of institutional support, media visibility, and the internal epistemic disorientation among Muslim scholars as major obstacles.

⁷⁷⁷ Nur Irdina Hakimah NorAzali and Nur Suriya Mohd Nor, "Islamic and Western Higher Education Systems: A Comparative Analysis," *AL-ITQAN: JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC SCIENCES AND COMPARATIVE STUDIES* 5, no. 2 (August 31, 2021): 71–97.

⁷⁷⁸ Sri Syafa'ati and Hidayatul Muamanah, "Konsep Pendidikan Menurut Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas Dan Relevansinya Dengan Sistem Pendidikan Nasional | PALAPA," November 21, 2020.

⁷⁷⁹ Syafa'ati and Muamanah.

⁷⁸⁰ Siti Nor Aisyah Ngadiran, "Kepentingan Penguasaan Ilmu Dan Pemikiran Islam Dalam Kajian Sejarah Islam Di Alam Melayu Menurut Perspektif Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas: The Importance of Understanding Islamic Knowledge and Thought in the Study of Islamic History in the Malay World According to the Perspective of Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas," *International Journal of Humanities Technology and Civilization*, October 30, 2023, 11–20, <https://doi.org/10.15282/ijhtc.v8i2.9830>.

This limitation is inseparable from the broader epistemological crisis in the Muslim world. Postcolonial Muslim societies continue to rely heavily on inherited Western models of education, where knowledge is fragmented, value-neutral, and structured around secular humanist logics. In this context, al-Attas's call for a reintegration of *ʿilm*, *adab*, and *tauḥīd* becomes not only a theoretical critique, but a counter-paradigm to modern educational philosophy. However, evidence of its institutional integration remains scarce. While several Islamic universities adopt al-Attas's terminology such as *ta'dīb*, *nafs*, and *adab* these often appear as rhetorical labels rather than as operative epistemological foundations guiding curricula and pedagogy.

An example of this partial integration can be seen in the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), which initially drew on al-Attas's ideas in shaping its educational mission. Nonetheless, the university has gradually shifted toward more conventional academic structures influenced by neoliberal models of internationalization and accreditation, often sidelining the metaphysical foundations emphasized by al-Attas. Similarly, although various academic conferences and research centers cite his works, few offer structured curricular frameworks or teacher training modules based explicitly on his Islamization methodology.

Moreover, the challenges in operationalizing al-Attas's vision are not purely external. His framework, while rich in metaphysical precision, poses real difficulties when translated into policy, classroom practice, or scientific research. For instance, how might *adab* be assessed or cultivated in contemporary classrooms? What institutional incentives would enable universities to prioritize metaphysical coherence over economic efficiency? These questions remain largely unaddressed, not due to flaws in al-Attas's thought per se, but because of the dominant educational logics that favor metrics, employability, and standardization over spiritual and epistemological depth.

Nonetheless, there are promising developments. The curriculum reform initiatives by organizations such as the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) have attempted to incorporate Islamic epistemology into modern disciplines. However, these efforts often diverge from al-Attas's rigorous ontological framework. Unlike IIIT's pragmatic integrationist model, al-Attas insists that the Islamization of knowledge must begin with the purification of key concepts and categories prior to any disciplinary engagement. In this regard, his project bears closer resemblance to the classical method of *tahqīq* (critical verification) practiced by scholars like al-Ghazali, who sought to reconcile reason and revelation within a metaphysical unity.

Al-Attas's polemics with Western orientalist, particularly Dutch scholars in Southeast Asia, add another historical layer to his influence. His critique of colonial historiography and his reconstruction of Islamization in the Malay world challenge the Eurocentric narrative that Islam came through trade or coercion. Instead, he frames Islamization as a conscious, metaphysical, and civilizational process. Yet, the impact of this reinterpretation on how Islamic history is taught in Southeast Asian institutions remains unclear. While his works are cited in academic contexts, they rarely shape the structure or content of Islamic Studies curricula in the region.

To fully appreciate and activate al-Attas's educational vision, scholars must move beyond citation and engage in structured efforts of curricular design, pedagogical transformation, and policy rethinking. This includes reimagining disciplines such as psychology, where the soul (*nafs*) is reduced to neural activity; or ethics, where value is often framed in relativist or utilitarian terms. Al-Attas's metaphysical approach offers a framework for re-centering such disciplines around *tawḥīd*, *adab*, and *ta'dīb* as ontological anchors.

Yet, this vision must contend with real institutional and philosophical resistance. In many postcolonial settings, higher education is dominated by technocratic and neoliberal goals: employability, market alignment, and research outputs measured by citation indexes. Within such frameworks, the contemplative, integrative, and metaphysical ethos of al-Attas's

project may appear impractical or utopian. However, these very tensions highlight the necessity of maintaining a critical, long-term vision of reform that resists assimilation and remains committed to intellectual decolonization.

In conclusion, the influence of al-Attas's Islamization of science on education lies not in widespread institutional implementation, but in offering a coherent alternative paradigm that continues to challenge Muslim educators, policymakers, and scholars. It is a call to reconstruct knowledge from its roots, to reclaim Islamic concepts in their full semantic and metaphysical weight, and to rebuild educational structures that nurture integrated human beings *insān kāmil* capable of both spiritual realization and intellectual excellence.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas's concept of the Islamization of science as a normative, multidimensional epistemological project grounded in metaphysics, ethics, and the unity of knowledge. Al-Attas challenges the secular fragmentation of science by proposing an integrated framework that links knowledge to *adab*, *tauḥīd*, and the spiritual development of the human self, distinguishing between *ḥuṣūl* (passive acquisition) and *wuṣūl* (meaningful attainment), as well as between *ma'rifah* and instrumental sciences. While his influence is evident in select institutions and scholarly discourses, the broader operationalization of his vision remains constrained by postcolonial educational structures, neoliberal metrics, and epistemological inertia. Though rich in philosophical depth, the practical translation of his ideas into curriculum, pedagogy, and institutional culture is still limited, and requires a strategic effort to move beyond symbolic adoption toward genuine paradigm shift. Critical questions remain: how can *adab* and metaphysical coherence be cultivated in systems shaped by secular standards and performative learning? And can al-Attas's ideas offer actionable solutions to the epistemological, ecological, and moral crises facing global education today? This study affirms that al-Attas's Islamization of science offers not merely a critique of Western knowledge but a constructive alternative that calls for intellectual decolonization and the ethical reorientation of education, inviting Muslim educators and institutions to rethink the purpose and structure of knowledge as a sacred trust aimed at human flourishing.

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