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Humanity and Justice: An Analytical Study of the Philosophical Interpretation from the Perspective of Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas

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Abstract: A significant and complex concern in modern civilization is the matter of fairness in human existence. Social inequality, discrimination, and gaps in access to essential rights—such as education, economic opportunity, and healthcare—demonstrate that justice frequently exists as an abstract ideal lacking equitable application. This study analysed the notions of humanity and justice in Islam, utilizing the interpretive framework of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, concentrating on: (1) the definition of justice, (2) the individual as the subject of justice, (3) individual freedom as the fundamental principle of justice, and (4) equality as an essential prerequisite for justice. This study employs a qualitative research design, utilizing a descriptive-analytical method alongside a philosophical exegesis approach to understand Qur'anic passages through philosophical theory. The results demonstrate that people, as moral agents, are essential to attain justice. Justice, a fundamental Islamic value, derives from divine revelation and represents balance, harmony, and the appropriate distribution of all entities to their due positions. Justice is attained when individuals, as its agents, deliberately and voluntarily recognize and submit to Allah as the Creator, execute their duties, and justly respect the dignity of others. Al-Attas emphasizes the human function as vicegerents *(khalīfah)* on earth, tasked with the need to maintain justice in accordance with human nature *(fiṭrah).* Moreover, ethics and an individual's relationship with God are fundamental pillars for cultivating justice in society and the state.
Keywords: ***Al-Attas, Justice, Humanity, Philosophical Exegesis***

Abstrak: Salah satu tantangan paling kompleks yang terjadi saat ini adalah masalah keadilan dalam kehidupan manusia. Ketimpangan sosial, diskriminasi, dan ketidakmerataan akses terhadap hak-hak dasar seperti pendidikan, ekonomi, dan kesehatan menjadi bukti nyata bahwa keadilan hanya menjadi konsep ideal tanpa implementasi yang merata. Oleh karena itu, tulisan ini membahas konsep manusia dan keadilan dalam Islam melalui perspektif penafsiran Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas dengan fokus pada: 1) definisi keadilan, 2) Individu sebagai subjek keadilan, 3) kebebasan individu sebagai landasan utama keadilan, dan 4) persamaan (*equality*) sebagai syarat utama keadilan. Penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian kualitatif, metode analisis-deskriptif dengan pendekatan tafsir falsafi, yaitu menafsirkan ayat al-Qur'an menggunakan teori filsafat. Adapun hasil penelitian ini yaitu; Manusia merupakan individu yang berperan penting dalam penegak keadilan. Keadilan merupakan prinsip mendasar dalam Islam yang berasal dari wahyu Ilahi dan mencakup keseimbangan, keharmonisan, serta penempatan segala sesuatu pada tempat yang benar. Sesuatu dapat dikatakan Adil jika telah memastikan sikap adil dari individu sebagai pelaku keadilan, dengan bebas dan sadar mengakui serta tunduk kepada Allah sebagai Sang Pencipta, menjalankan kewajibannya, serta berlaku sama dalam memuliakan manusia lainnya. Al-Attas menekankan bahwa manusia sebagai

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khalifah di bumi bertanggung jawab dalam adil berdasarkan fitrah manusia. Akhlak dan hubungan dengan Tuhan menjadi dasar penting dalam menegakkan keadilan di masyarakat dan negara.
Kata kunci: ***Al-Attas, Keadilan, Manusia, Tafsir Falsafi***

Introduction

The Value-Added Tax (VAT) is scheduled to grow to 12% from its current rate of 8% by January 2025. Concurrently, the government has proposed that students attending universities obtain online loans to obtain the funds necessary to pay for their tuition. Indonesia has had a lot of public talk regarding these two concerns. The value-added tax (VAT) increase, which appears to be insignificant at 2%, presents a significant obstacle, particularly for those with lower-middle incomes.[1] There has been a lot of criticism toward the rise in tuition costs for university students and the value-added tax. Concerns have been expressed in response to the statement made by Muhadjir Effendy, who serves as the Coordinating Minister for Human Development and Cultural Affairs. This speech is seen to include the introduction of new issues. Students, who are considered the nation's future may be forced to accept debt early in their lives. This imposes a significant burden on students.[2] The two instances of social inequality discussed here are not devoid of underlying causes. These imbalances are frequently the consequence of minor acts of injustice that, over time, grow into more widespread inequities, ultimately leading to systemic unfairness.

This sort of inequality is also visible in the judicial system of Indonesia, which tends to favour the wealthy and powerful while marginalizing the less fortunate. The legal disparity that exists in Indonesia has been brought to light by several cases. A notable example of the absence of justice is the case of Mrs Asyani, an older woman who was incarcerated for the alleged theft of lumber despite the lack of evidence supporting her conviction. Compared to this, Gayus Tambunan, a civil official who was found guilty of widespread corruption, exemplifies how nepotism and bribery allowed him to receive a favourable punishment originally.[3] As a result of these occurrences, the legal system is commonly viewed as deficient in neutrality, favouring political power, and frequently exhibiting internal conflicts, which ultimately lead to biased judicial outcomes.[4] The fifth principle of Pancasila, which advocates for social justice for all Indonesians, starkly contrasts the unequal distribution of justice in Indonesia.

The debate on justice is not a term unfamiliar to the general public, nor is it a topic exclusive to Western philosophers. At the very least, discussions on justice have been happening among Muslim academics ever since the time of the Four Caliphs of Guidance. As an example, Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, the first caliph, described justice as the equitable treatment of all individuals,[5] which ensured that there was a balance between

[1] Han Revanda, "Faisal Basri Kritik Kenaikan PPN 12 Persen: Yang Dirugikan Rakyat Kecil," Tempo, 2024, accessed October 23, https://www.tempo.co/ekonomi/faisal-basri-kritik-kenaikan-ppn-12-persen-yang-dirugikan-rakyat-kecil--19922.

[2] Anggi Muliawati, "Dukung Mahasiswa Bayar UKT Pakai Pinjol, Muhadjir: 83 PT Sudah Gunakan", Detik News, 2024, accessed Desember 12, https://news.detik.com/berita/d-7421500/dukung-mahasiswa-bayar-ukt-pakai-pinjol-muhadjir-83-pt-sudah-gunakan.

[3] Novia Isro'atul Mutiah, "Legal Injustice in the Perspective of Pancasila: Various Recent Developments in Indonesia," *Indonesian Journal of Pancasila Dan Global Constitutionalism* 2, no. 1 (2023).

[4] Naomi Jesica, Meta Nadia, and Lusi Septiyati, "The Realization of Social Justice for the Poor Citizens According to Legal Philosophy," *Fiat Justisia* 12, no. 4 (2018). 285 - 297

[5] Masudul Hasan, *Hadrat Abu Bakar*, (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1984), 250.

rights and duties.[6] Although justice can take numerous forms, it is ultimately the individual[7] who serves as the embodiment of justice in various contexts that is ultimately responsible for all of these manifestations.

When people talk about justice and injustice, they frequently do so in the context of interactions between individuals, between individuals and groups,[8] Or between communities.[9] Nevertheless, a more critical factor to consider than these features is the comprehension of how a human might behave justly, whether it be toward themselves, others, or their Creator.

In interpreting the role and function of a just individual, members of the legal community say that a just person can bring rights and duties into harmony with one another. The extent of one's responsibilities determines the scope of one's rights, and the magnitude of one's obligations determines the size of one's entitlements.[10]

This study employs a qualitative analytical-descriptive research methodology with a philosophical interpretative approach *(at-tafsīr al-falsafī)*. A method of Qur'anic interpretation employs a philosophical approach to understand the verses, particularly those related to metaphysical issues, ethics, and the nature of existence.[11] The intellectual interpretation of sacred scriptures substantially advanced due to Greek philosophy, especially the concepts of Aristotle and Plato, which were subsequently integrated into the Islamic tradition by scholars like Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Al-Ghazali.[12] This methodology reconciled faith with reason, allowing interpretations of the Qur'an to transcend literal meanings and reveal deeper, contextual insights.[13] Another theory pertains to Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas's Islamic viewpoint. Al-Attas's theory of the Islamic worldview seeks to direct individuals in comprehending the orientation and purpose of their actions concerning the authentic nature of reality.[14] The collected data include publications written by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas workshy theologians and Qur'anic commentators who adopt a philosophical perspective. This research is significant since it elucidates Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas's interpretation of the Qur'anic verses. Al-Attas's role as an Islamic philosopher

[6] The meaning of balance between rights and obligations is that the Caliph grants the people's rights, and the people show loyalty. Imam Ali, *Nahjul Bulagha': Sermons, Letters and Sayyings of Imam Ali* (Qurn: Ansariyan Publications, 1989). 117-118

[7] Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Risalah Untuk Kaum Muslimin* (Kuala Lumpur, 2001); 38; Ali, *Nahjul Bulagha': Sermons, Letters and Sayyings of Imam Ali*. 162-163, 291 dan 539

[8] An example of significant social inequality in the world, involving hundreds of thousands of people, is the ongoing human rights violations committed by Israel against Palestine. This humanitarian tragedy not only involves the deprivation of others' rights but also includes taking away the right to live and live safely. Lewindy and Alessandro Christian, "Pelanggaran HAM Dalam Konflik Israel Dan Palestina," *Unes Law Review* 6, no. 4 (2024). 10299

[9] Another example is the war that occurred within Indonesian society between the Dayak tribe (the indigenous people of Kalimantan) and the Madurese tribe (migrants from Madura). This conflict arose due to violations of a peace agreement by both tribes. In this war, there were more than 600 casualties. Although many years have passed, the tension between the two tribes remains palpable to this day. Nabilah Putri Intani, "Perang Sampit (Konflik Suku Dayak Dengan Suku Madura) Pada Tahun 2001," *Sosial: Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu-Ilma Sosial*, 2022. 14-15

[10] Mahir Amin, "Konsep Keadilan Dalam Perspektif Filsafat Hukum Islam," *Al-Daulah: Jurnal Hukum Dan Perundangan Islam* 4, no. 02 (2015), https://doi.org/10.15642/ad.2014.4.02.322-343.

[11] Muhammad Husein Ad-Dzahabi, *Tafsir Wa Al-Mufassirun* (Kairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 1976), 8.

[12] Syafieh, "Perkembangan Tafsir Falsafi Dalam Ranah Pemikiran Islam," *Jurnal At-Tibyan* 2, no. 2 (2017): 148.

[13] U Abdurrahman, "Metodologi Tafsir Falsafi Dan Tafsir Sufi," *Adliya'* 9, no. 1 (2015): 252.

[14] Mohammad Muslih et al., "The Problem of Relativism and Its Implication on Contemporary Issue in Islam Based on Al-Attas's Worldview Theory," *Fikri: Jurnal Kajian, Agama, Sosial, Dan Budaya*, 8, no. 1 (2023).

and theologian is emphasized, rendering his interpretations intriguing for study due to their philosophical and theological perspectives on the sacred text. This paper seeks to reveal the distinctive insights derived from his perspective.

A great number of studies explore the idea of justice and people, such as the ones carried out by Muhammad and Hudzaifah, who discussed the concept of justice in the second and fifth principles of Pancasila from an Islamic point of view.[15] Research on justice was also carried out by Latief, who also explored the principles of justice in a secular state, which cannot improve a Muslim's moral standing.[16] In addition, analytical studies have been undertaken on the ideas of al-Attas. For instance, as an example, Sugeng Wanto and Muhammad Sofian have conducted talks on al-Attas's concept of Islamization and the notion of social contracts.[17] However, according to al-Attas's view, no one has ever examined the idea of humankind and how it is connected to the concept of justice. The author of this study intends to demonstrate that al-Attas is not only a contemporary philosopher but also an interpreter who can explain the contents of the verses of the Qur'an with a philosophical evaluation to disclose the concept of Islam that is found in the Qur'an. Based on the research gap above, this research will specifically discussHumanity and Justice: An Analytical Study of the Philosophical Interpretation from the Perspective of Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas.

Result and Discussion

General Overview

The Definition of Justice

Justice in Islam, referred to as *al-'adl,* is derived from the Arabic root letters *'ain-dal-lām*, which convey the idea of balance, fairness, and the straight path. The term reflects equality and rectitude, emphasizing the importance of ensuring fairness and impartiality in all matters.[18] This understanding aligns with al-Asfahani's explanation in his book *Mu'jam Mufrodāt al-Fāẓ al-Qur'an*, where justice means equality, derived from the verb *(fi'il) 'adala*, and its verbal nouns *(maṣdar)* are *al-'adl* and *al-'idl*. *Al-'adl* is reasoned justice *(baṣīroh),* while *al-'idl* is sensed justice. For example, *al-'adl* represents justice in law, whereas *al-'idl* exemplifies justice in weights, measurements, and calculations.[19]

Subsequently, the meaning of justice from the Qur'anic notion was expressed through several terms such as *al-'adl*, *al-qisṭ*, and *al-mīzān*. Majid Khadduri, in his book The Theology of Justice in Islamic Perspective, identifies synonyms for the term *al-'adl*, including *al-qisṭ, al-qaṣd, al-istiqāmah, al-wasaṭ, al-naṣīb*, and *al-hiṣṣa*. The term justice ('*ādilun*) itself encompasses several meanings, which are to straighten or sit upright; to amend or change; or to escape, depart, or turn away from a wrong path toward a correct one; another meaning is to be equal or equivalent or to make equal;

[15] Muhammad Hanif Al Hakim and Hudzaifah Muhammad Maricar, "On Islamic Concept of Man and Justice in Pancasila," *Tsaqafah* 19, no. 2 (2023): 335–352.

[16] Mohamad Latief et al., "Problems of the Secular State and Its Impact on Justice," *Ananlisis: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 23, no. 1 (2023): 67–88.

[17] 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 (2023): 220.

[18] Ahmad Munawar Ismail, Latifah Abdul Majid, and Muhammad Farhan Firas, "Rethingking Justice: Unravelling the Tapestry of Justice in Islamic and Western Philosophics," *Islamiyat* 46, no. 1 (2024); Refer to Abu al-Hussain Ahmad bin Faris Zakariyya, *Mu'jam Maqayis Al-Lughah* (Beirut: Dar Ittihad al-'Arabi, 2002).

[19] Al-Ashfahani, *Mu'jam Mufrodat Al-Fadh Al-Qur'an* (Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 1972). 336

the last meaning is to balance or counterbalance, to be comparable, or to be in a state of equilibrium.[20]

According to Al-Attas, justice is a condition of harmony or a level of relationship that assures everything is positioned in its proper and correct place. According to the philosophical standpoint, justice is considered to be. Additionally, this encompasses a condition of equilibrium, regardless of whether it refers to inanimate items or living creatures. In this context, the term "proper place" refers not only to the overall condition of an entity in its relationship with other entities, but also to the relationship that the thing has with itself and other entities.[21]

Analysis

1. The Individual as the Subject of Justice

Al-Attas's viewpoint on humanity is grounded in the Islamic paradigm, which derives from Divine revelation rather than human reasoning. This revelation is regarded as direct instruction from Allah.[22] In this context, Al-Attas asserts that people are designated as God's vicegerents *(khalifah)* on Earth[23] as referenced in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 30. He further characterizes humans as sensible beings *(hayawān an-nāṭiq)*.[24] Thus, the core of humanity is found in its function as a servant *(‘abd)* of God, a fundamental truth inherent to human creation, known as *fiṭrah*. In light of this, the essence of human existence is to attain knowledge of and venerate the Divine, with adherence to His will harmonizing with their inherent nature,[25] this constitutes the fundamental tenet of the Islamic belief system.[26] In conjunction with al-Attas, ar-Razi explicated Surah An-Nisā’ verse 58, arguing that Allah's command to honour trusts and maintain justice is fundamental to human existence. As per ar-Razi, trust comprises three domains: Faith in God requires compliance with His commands and abstention from His prohibitions. Secondly, trust in others encompasses the return of entrusted belongings, preserving integrity in transactions, and promoting social equity, whether about the ruler's fairness towards the populace or the scholars' fairness towards the general public. Third, self-trust entails selecting an admirable lifestyle. Ar-Razi contends that justice is not solely a cultural construct but also an inherent facet of human nature designed to uphold truth and praise Allah SWT.[27]

In accordance with verse 172 of Surah Al-A'rāf, which states that a person can behave in a manner that is either just or unjust toward themselves, Al-Attas explains that justice must come from a just individual.[28] Furthermore, in the same surah, verse

[20] Majid Khadduri, *Teologi Keadilan Perspektif Islam* (Surabaya: Risalah Gusti, 1999). 8

[21] Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, “Manusia Dan Cita Keadilan,” *Majalah Bestari*, 1990. 23

[22] Abdul Rohman, Amir Reza, and Muhammad Ari Firdausi, “Melacak Makna Worldview: Worldview Barat Dan Islam,” *Kanz Philosophia* 7, no. 1 (2021): 45–64.

[23] Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *On Justice and the Nature of Man* (Kuala Lumpur: IBFIM, 2015). 45

[24] Nur Shadiq Sandimula, “De-Westernisasi Konsep Manusia: Menelaah Konsep Syed Naquib Al-Attas Tentang Hakikat Manusia,” *Refleksi Jurnal Filsafat Dan Pemikiran Islam* 22, no. 2 (2023): 1–35; Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: Ta’dib International, 2018). 13

[25] Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysic Al-Islam an Exposition of the Fundamental Elements of the Worldview of Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1995). 59

[26] Rakhmad Agung Hidayatullah, Amir Reza Kusuma, and Jarman Arroisi, “Konsep Manusia Ideal Menurut Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas,” in *International Conference and Visiting Scholars* (Ponorogo: INSURI, 2022), 1–15; Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysic Al-Islam an Exposition of the Fundamental Elements of the Worldview of Islam*. 45

[27] Fakhruddin Ar-Razi, *Mafatih Al-Ghaib* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab, 2000), 87.

[28] Al-Attas, *Risalah Untuk Kaum Muslimin*. 38

23 tells the account of Prophet Adam and his wife, Hawa, requesting forgiveness from Allah for the wrong they perpetrated against themselves. In the Qur'an, persons who err, act unjustly, or disbelieve are frequently described as individuals who oppress themselves. This was reflected in this particular instance. Based on this, Al-Attas arrives to the conclusion that a person who is just to themselves is a righteous, virtuous, and faithful individual, as well as a Muslim and a Mu'min member. A person like this to put themselves in the rightfully their positions, which is in harmony with their basic character. Consequently, they acquire a state of genuine purity, which ultimately results in the acquisition of genuine well-being and the accomplishment of inner peace.[29]

In this regard, Al-Attas emphasizes that the concept of justice in Islam is not merely concerned with the rational balance or relationship between one individual and another, between society and the state, or between a king and his subjects. More fundamentally, it concerns the harmony and balanced relationship between a person and themselves.[30] The equilibrium between individuals and others, between communities, or between a king and his people, takes secondary importance. Therefore, it can be asserted that justice and injustice fundamentally begin and end with the individual.[31]

Applying the term "individual" in the realm of justice is fitting, as acting justly is a universal divine command and directly addressed to each of God's servants (‘*abd*).[32] This grants each individual the responsibility toward their Creator on a personal level, where acting justly toward oneself is the key to fulfilling that responsibility.[33]

This responsibility is referred to as *ama>nah* (trust)[34] to manage the world, which is also called *tabī'ah* (nature). This means that humans must regulate, control, fulfil, and preserve both themselves and their relationship with the surrounding environment,[35] all of which must be accounted for before God.

Therefore, the core of justice lies within each individual, carried out based on obedience to Allah. This enables justice to form and spread more widely within society, and even within the state.[36] When justice is successfully implemented within society, especially within the state, it fulfils the covenant made by each soul of all humans with Allah [37] (as mentioned in Surah Al-A'rāf, verse 172). This is also called the primary covenant between a servant and their Lord.[38]

Suppose the individual is the central axis for the realization of justice on Earth. In that case, there is an essential aspect within the human being that governs the movement of justice toward oneself or others, and this aspect is called the *soul*.[39] As previously mentioned regarding the primary covenant between a servant and Allah,

[29] Al-Attas. 39

[30] Al-Attas, "Manusia Dan Cita Keadilan." 23

[31] Al-Attas. 23

[32] Hal ini merupakan penjelasan yang terkandung di dalam surah An-Nahl ayat 90.

[33] Al-Attas, *Risalah Untuk Kaum Muslimin*. 39

[34] Moh Bakir, "Tanggung Jawab Sosial Dalam Al-Qur'an: Studi Analisis Terhadap Term Al-Islah," *Jurnal Kaca: Jurnal Dialogis Ilmu Ushuluddin* 11, no. 1 (2021): 6.

[35] Al-Attas, "Manusia Dan Cita Keadilan." 22

[36] Al-Attas, *Risalah Untuk Kaum Muslimin*. 39

[37] Suriadi Samsuri, "Hakikat Fitrah Manusia Dalam Islam," *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 18, no. 1 (2020). 7

[38] Al-Attas, *Risalah Untuk Kaum Muslimin*. 39

[39] Amir Hidayatullah and Amir Reza Kusuma, "Pendidikan Jiwa Islami Menurut Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas," *Edunomika* 07, no. 02 (2023). 6

humans are often identified as possessing a dual nature, corresponding to the faculties bestowed upon them: the *soul* and the body.[40]

A person is said to truly exist when they can develop and utilize their social *soul*. If, for instance, persons by the fulfilment of their desires through disobeying God's commands, harboring hatred toward Him, or rejecting God entirely, then at that moment, they have violated their own pledge - the individual covenant with God. Based on this, it is essential to understand why belief in the resurrection of the body after death is a fundamental teaching in Islam. This is because the *soul*, reunited with its original body, will not be able to escape responsibility for the actions of its physical being. The eyes, tongue, hands, feet, and other human senses (as organs of ethical and moral agency) will witness the injustices committed by the individual against themselves.[41]

Suppose human senses are the faculties through which an individual's ethical and moral actions are manifested, and are susceptible to injustice. In that case, their correction will safeguard the individual from such oppression. In Islam, ethics and morality are also referred to as *akhlaq*. In his work *Risalah Untuk Kaum Muslimin*, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas underscores that good *akhlaq* and virtuous behaviour, particularly in the context of the individual's relationship with God, manifest justice. It can therefore be argued that when a person demonstrates virtuous *akhlaq* and moral conduct, grounded in their obedience to God, they are simultaneously enacting justice.

Islam recognizes the significance of both individual welfare and collective well-being, maintaining a harmonious balance between the individual's rights and society, without compromising either. Islam does not impede the fulfilment of human nature (*fiṭrah*) nor the original divine laws and lofty goals intended for humanity.[42]

2. Individual Freedom as the Fundamental Principle of Justice

Suppose the individual serves as the foundation for the execution of justice and the focal point for its actualization. In that case, a vital component that each individual must maintain in establishing justice in Islam is freedom.

Within Islam, the idea of individual liberty can be understood in at least two different ways. Under the first place, freedom is a personal right, which means that every individual has the right to freedom under particular situations. The second concept is freedom as a duty, which means that to achieve genuine freedom, every individual is obligated to become free of oneself. Concerning the idea of freedom as a right, the Qur'an asserts that every individual possesses several rights, including the right to freedom of independence[43] and the right to freedom of religion.[44]

The concept of individual freedom, which is frequently seen as synonymous with independence, has been present in Islam ever since the beginning of human existence. This concept is referred to as the fundamental covenant, addressed explicitly in verse 172 of the Surah Al-A'rāf. At that time, humanity was allowed to testify to

[40] Mulyadi, "Konsep Manusia Dan Pendidikan Islam Menurut Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas," *Al-Ikhtibar: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan* 6, no. 1 (2019); Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), 1993). 206-207

[41] Al-Attas, "Manusia Dan Cita Keadilan." 23

[42] Sholihan, *Keadilan Sosial Dalam Pemikiran Barat Dan Islam Kontemporer: Kajian Terhadap Pemikiran John Rawis Dan Sayyid Qutb* (Semarang: Rasail Media Group, 2014). 75

[43]Q.S 49: 13; 2: 177; 9: 60, M Taufiq Rahman, *Keadilan Sosial Dalam Pemikiran Barat Dan Islam: Studi Komparatif Atas Pemikiran John Rawls Dan Sayyid Qutb* (Bandung: Lembaga Penelitian Sunan Gunung Djati, 2012). 79

[44] Q.S 50: 45; 18: 29; 2: 256

Allah by asking: *"Am I not your Lord?" They (the humans) responded in unison: "Yes, you are our Lord; we bear witness."* This suggests that Allah gave all humans the freedom to choose and think for themselves, regardless of whether or not they were required to bear witness.[45]

In this regard, Al-Attas elaborates that freedom aims to comprehend the intrinsic character of things in its perfection. This is the purpose of freedom. In this verse, the freedom of a human being is symbolized by the acknowledgment of each person's Lord as the Creator of the universe.[46]

Surah At-Tin states[47] that Allah created humans as the best of His creation. This is one of the meanings Al-Attas refers to, that in the sacred covenant with Allah, humans have acknowledged the acceptance of all tasks and duties given to them. This represents humans' pure or original nature before they are tainted by sin.[48]

In addition to Surah At-Tīn, Surah Al-Inshirah alludes to the concept of freedom for humanity, emphasizing that every individual is free to decide on their life choices, including fulfilling their duties and obligations. The notion of freedom in this context, however, is coupled with responsibility.[49]

Furthermore, in relation to freedom as an obligation, or what can be described as liberation, Sayyid Qutb in his book *al-'Adālah al-Ijtimā'iyyah fi al-Islām* asserts that freedom is a fundamental element in establishing justice within Islam; indeed, it is the primary principle upon which other elements are founded.[50]

The type of freedom Sayyid Qutb refers to is the liberation of each individual's soul from all forms of servitude or submission to anything other than Allah,[51] liberation from fear, and from subjugation to wealth, desires, ambitions, and other materialistic inclinations.[52] A common example of this is when individuals become reliant on entities other than Allah, driven by fear of losing their wealth, or are captivated by the pursuit of worldly success and material acquisitions.

According to Qutb, the effort to liberate oneself from polytheism can be achieved by strengthening the individual's faith,[53] faith governs the heart and mind in determining one's actions. A strong belief system will also subdue the individual, ensuring accurate submission to Allah alone and preventing any form of association with Him. This is because even the Prophets and Messengers, in essence, are servants obligated to submit to Allah.[54] The emphasis on strengthening faith, as articulated by Qutb, aligns with the views of Al-Maududi,[55] who also asserts that belief *(aqi>dah)* is the most fundamental principle in Islam.[56]

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[45] Al-Attas, *Risalah Untuk Kaum Muslimin*. 31

[46] Al-Attas. 31-32

[47] Q.S 95: 4-5

[48] Al-Attas, *Risalah Untuk Kaum Muslimin*. 32

[49] Fitriani, Lukman Hakim, and Abu Bakar, "Konsep Mental Block Perspektif Al-Qur'an (Analisis Penafsiran Surah Al-Insyirah Dan Teori Logoterapi Victor E. Frankl)," *Ulumul Qur'an: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 4, no. 2 (2024): 190–206.

[50] Sayyid Qutb, *Al-'Adaalah Al-Ijtima'Iyyah Fil Islam* (Kairo: Daar As-Syuruq, 1993). 44

[51] Qutb. 45

[52] Qutb. 40-45

[53] Qutb, *Al-'Adaalah Al-Ijtima'Iyyah Fil Islam*, 49.

[54] Qutb. 48

[55] Abul A'la Al-Maududi was an Indian journalist in the early 1900s who later became a political observer and a prominent figure in the Islamic movement. His concern for politics and the Islamic movement was reflected in his writings, which were compiled into books, such as these books *Al-Jihad Fil Islam*, *Tafhimul Qur'an*, *Principles of Islam*, dsb. H. A Mukti Ali, *Alam Pikiran Modern Di India Dan Pakistan* (Bandung: Mizan, 1998). 241

[56] Abul A'la Al-Maududi, *Prinsip-Prinsip Islam Terj. Abdullah Suhaili Principles of Islam* (Bandung: PT. Al-Ma'arif, 1991). 25

Al-Maududi explains that belief (*'aqīdah*) has at least nine significant effects on an individual who holds firmly to it. First, it broadens one's perspective on the universe, as the individual believes in the Being who governs the heavens and everything within it. Second, it instils pride and a sense of self-worth related to one's religious identity. Third, it fosters humility. Fourth, it allows one to know with certainty that salvation and success are solely in the hands of Allah. Fifth, it prevents the individual from losing hope or becoming despondent. Sixth, it nurtures great strength, cultivating courage, patience, reliance on Allah (*tawakkul*), and determination when faced with significant challenges. Seventh, it enables a person to possess steadfastness in accepting and believing in God's divine decree (*qadar*). Eighth, it elevates the individual's status and cultivates humility. Ninth, it binds the individual to the commandments of Allah through reason, outward actions, and inner devotion.[57]

Thus, the soul that has been liberated from worldly enslavement and all other materialistic desires is what Islam seeks to cultivate and manifest. The goal is for this freedom to subdue base desires and guide individuals toward greater objectives beyond the transient pleasures of the material world.[58]

From this, it can be concluded that Islam addresses the issue of freedom from all perspectives and aspects. It guarantees the complete freedom of the soul that is not only directed towards its spiritual or material aspects alone but is aimed at both dimensions. Beginning with the maximized facilitation of the freedom of each individual's soul, larger freedoms within the community or society at large will be realized, ultimately reflecting a more holistic understanding of freedom.[59]

3. Equality as an Essential Prerequisite for Justice

The freedom of each individual, which is central to the establishment of justice, is closely linked to the concept of equality, which is one of the most essential principles in upholding justice.[60] In Islam, the concepts of equality and freedom are likened to the pillars and foundation of the edifice of justice, as explained by Qutb in his book: "When equality is grounded in the profound freedom of the soul, just as it is grounded in the Sharia and its implementation, this aspect becomes the strongest support, both for those with great abilities and those with lesser capacities."[61]

Islam recognizes the fundamental equality of all human beings. This equality is grounded in human dignity, which transcends individual, group, racial, ethnic, or religious distinctions.[62] Islam ensures that non-Muslims are entitled to the same protections for their lives as Muslims, provided there is a peace agreement between them.[63]

The basis for Islam's perspective on the concept of equality is rooted in several key principles, such as the fact that all of humanity originates from a single element—earth.[64] All of humankind descends from a single progenitor (Adam the principle of

[57] Al-Maududi. 74-83

[58] Qutb, *Al-'Adaalah Al-Ijtima'Iyyah Fil Islam*. 60

[59] Qutb. 63

[60] Beny Yunianto and Tomy Michael, "Keberlakuan Asas Equality Before The Law Bagi Pejabat Pelaksana Kebijakan Covid-19," *Mimbar Keadilan* 14, no. 1 (2024).

[61] Qutb, *Al-'Adaalah Al-Ijtima'Iyyah Fil Islam*. 44

[62] Qutb. 78

[63] Sholihan, *Keadilan Sosial Dalam Pemikiran Barat Dan Islam Kontemporer: Kajian Terhadap Pemikiran John Rawis Dan Sayyid Qutb*. 81

[64] Q.S 23: 12, Rahman, *Keadilan Sosial Dalam Pemikiran Barat Dan Islam: Studi Komparatif Atas Pemikiran John Rawls Dan Sayyid Qutb*. 78

causality applies equally to all;[65] all are entitled to sustenance;[66] And all have equal education opportunities.[67]

Surah al-A'rāf, verse 172, provides a clear explanation of how all humans, through their free will and conscious acknowledgment, recognize their Lord, thus establishing equal rights and duties for every individual.[68] Al-Attas further elaborates by referencing verse 56 of Surah Aż-żāriyāt and verse 44 of Surah Al-Isrā`, which indicate that all humans, without exception, are assigned the same primary duty - to worship Allah,[69] This duty extends not only to humanity but to all of creation, including the earth, planets, and every living being within them, all of which are subject to and worship Allah.[70] Consequently, Allah honours humanity as a species,[71] not based on individual, racial, or ethnic distinctions. This honour applies to all in the context of absolute equality. If Prophet Adam, made from earth, was honoured, it follows that all his descendants share the same rights and obligations.[72]

The Islamic teachings that promote the universal dignity of all human beings demonstrate that, to this day, Western civilization has yet to reach the point where it can implement the concept of equality free from fanaticism, ethnicity, and race.[73] This is evidenced by Western civilization's tendency to proclaim equality, yet justify actions such as the systematic extermination of Native American populations by the United States, the oppression of black people through racial laws in apartheid South Africa, and the suppression of Muslims in regions under the control of Russia, China, and India.[74]

Al-Attas explains the events mentioned above through the lens of Surah Ali 'Imrān, verse 83, which reminds all of humanity not to associate partners with the religion of Allah, which is Islam.[75] Al-Attas also elucidates that Islam is referred to as the religion of fitrah, meaning its teachings are directly revealed by God without human interference. Thus, Islam presents itself in its original form, reflecting the innate nature of humanity, which is free from anything that leads individuals away from submission to their Creator.[76]

This situation is contrasted with the pre-Islamic era, often called the age of Jahiliah, marked by numerous injustices committed by society without any humanistic foundation. Practices such as burying newborn girls alive, rampant slavery, and discrimination against women were prevalent during that time. In such a context, Islam emerged to declare the unity of the human race, irrespective of origin or place of return, life and death, rights and obligations before the law, and before Allah. In Islam, no distinction is made between individuals except by their deeds, and the only measure of nobility is piety (*taqwa*).[77]

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[65] Q.S 53: 39; 2: 134; 35: 18; 37: 39; 74: 38
[66] Q.S 16: 71; 59: 7
[67] Q.S 80: 1-8
[68] Al-Attas, *Risalah Untuk Kaum Muslimin*. 31
[69] Al-Attas. 34
[70] Al-Attas. 35
[71] Nurcahyati et al., "Rahasia Amtsal Dalam Al-Qur'an (Kajian Etnografi Aktualisasi Manusia Berkualitas Berdasarkan Qs. Ibrahim 24-15)," *Al Muhafidz: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 4, no. 1 (2024): 117–36.
[72] Qutb, *Al-'Adaalah Al-Ijtima'Iyyah Fil Islam*. 78
[73] Qutb. 68-69
[74] Qutb, *Al-'Adaalah Al-Ijtima'Iyyah Fil Islam*, 68–69.
[75] Al-Attas, *Risalah Untuk Kaum Muslimin*. 35
[76] Al-Attas. 35-36
[77] Qutb, *Al-'Adaalah Al-Ijtima'Iyyah Fil Islam*. 65

Therefore, instilling the values of justice leads to the logical outcome of fostering harmony within societal structures. Conversely, neglecting these values becomes the root cause of inequalities and various social issues.

Islam opposes all forms of disparity and discrimination, along with their root causes, recognizing that, fundamentally, everything is insignificant in the presence of Allah. Even the Prophet Muhammad, the most esteemed in the sight of Allah, was reminded of his humanity, being no different from any other human.[78] Each individual possesses inherent dignity, which must be respected. For example, when a Muslim seeks to visit someone's house but receives no response after knocking three times, the proper course of action is to leave rather than knock again or enter without permission.[79]

This example underscores a core value in Islam: the inviolable dignity of every individual, which anyone. No person is permitted to diminish the honour of another, as all people are equal in their fundamental worth, and it is the duty of everyone to ensure the protection of each other's dignity.[80]

Thus, the principle of equality is solidified within Islam, which comprehensively addresses the psychological and societal dimensions of human existence. As a result, there is no longer any necessity for formal legal provisions or verbal declarations to ensure equality, as it is inherent in the way Islam views human relations.[81]

Conclusion

According to Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, justice is a fundamental principle of Islam that originates from divine revelation. It is a concept that embodies harmony, balance, and the appropriate arrangement of everything. This study lends credence to this concept. Individual responsibility is the foundation upon which a more comprehensive social and political justice system is built, and humanity is fundamental in both the role of the subject and the actor of justice. When people freely and deliberately embrace Allah as the Creator, carry out their responsibilities as vicegerents and servants of the land, and maintain equality by treating everyone with respect and without bias, justice is achieved.

Consequently, equality and personal liberty are essential prerequisites for justice, ensuring that every individual has the opportunity to fulfil their divine purpose while respecting the inherent worth of others. Ethics and a profound connection with God are the cornerstone for realizing this vision of justice.

Because of his conceptual framework, which brings together Islamic exegesis, philosophy, and theology, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas's viewpoint is a crucial component of this investigation. In addition to providing interpretations of the concepts of justice and humanity found in the Qur'an, Al-Attas incorporates these concepts into a holistic worldview that places an emphasis on the significance of morality, fitrah, and metaphysical awareness. As a result, Al-Attas's way of thinking is referred to as contemporary philosophical interpretation. His method demonstrates how justice begins on a personal level, beginning with a person's ethical and spiritual consciousness, and then expanding to social and political institutions to be implemented.

In the modern context, al-Attas's principles of justice remain relevant in addressing contemporary challenges, including the burden of student debt at an early

[78] Qutb. 69
[79] Qutb. 78
[80] Qutb. 79
[81] Qutb. 79

age, which reflects an imbalance within educational and social systems. In this framework, the pursuit of justice is both technical and philosophical: students are urged to develop their financial literacy, independence, and moral awareness, while the state and educational institutions are obligated to increase access to income-based repayment plans, grants, and scholarships as a sign of social justice.

Therefore, al-Attas's Islamic perspective on justice and humanity provides a theological basis and a practical guide for addressing modern challenges of discrimination, inequality, and systemic injustice. Al-Attas significantly contributes to the ongoing discourse on justice by asserting that it is grounded in divine revelation and highlighting the individual as the principal agent of justice. This positions his views as a relevant and authoritative reference in philosophical and social domains.

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