

Islamic Philosophy: An Introduction

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas

The following paper is excerpted from the Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam, with the generous permission of the author, Syed Naquib al-Attas. Originally published by ISTAC, Kuala Lumpur, 1995.

YouTube - Interview of Sayyed Naquib al-Attas by Shaykh Hamza Yusuf - MBC/YouTube - Don't Miss.

From the perspective of Islam, a "worldview" is not merely the mind's view of the physical world and of man's historical, social, political and cultural involvement in it as reflected, for example, in the current Arabic expression of the idea formulated in the phrase *na'rat al-islam li al-kawn*. It is incorrect to refer to the worldview of Islam as a *na'rat al-islam li al-kawn*. This is because, unlike what is conveyed by *na'rat*, the worldview of Islam is not based upon philosophical speculation formulated mainly from observation of the data of sensible experience, of what is visible to the eye; nor is it restricted to *kawn*, which is the world of sensible experience, the world of created things. If such expressions are now in use in Arabic in contemporary Muslim thought, it only demonstrates that we are already being unduly influenced by the modern, secular Western scientific conception of the world that is restricted to the world of sense and sensible experience.

Islam does not concede to the dichotomy of the sacred and the profane; the worldview of Islam encompasses both *al-duny* and *al-khira*, in which the *duny*-aspect must be related in a profound and inseparable way to the *khira*-aspect, and in which the *khira*-aspect has ultimate and final significance. The *duny*-aspect is seen as a preparation for the *khira*-aspect. Everything in Islam is ultimately focused on the *khira*-aspect without thereby implying any attitude of neglect or being unmindful of the *duny*-aspect. Reality is not what is often "defined" in modern Arabic dictionaries as *waqiyah*, whose use, particularly in its grammatical form *waqiyah*, is now in vogue. Reality is *haqiqah*, which significantly is now seldom used due to the preoccupation with *waqiyah* which only points to factual occurrences. A factual occurrence is only one aspect in many *haqiqah*, whose ambit encompasses all of reality. Moreover, a factual occurrence may be an actualization of something false (i.e. *batil*); whereas reality is the actualization always of something true (i.e. *haqiqah*). What is meant by "worldview", according to the perspective of Islam, is then the vision of reality and truth that appears before our mind's eye revealing what existence is all about; for it is the world of existence in its totality that Islam is projecting. Thus by "worldview" we must mean *na'rat al-islam li al-wujud*. The Islamic vision of reality and truth, which is a metaphysical survey of the visible as well as the invisible worlds including the perspective of life as a whole, is not a worldview that is formed merely by the gathering together of various cultural objects, values and phenomena into artificial coherence.

[Full article] Download: Journal of Islamic Philosophy 1 (2005):11–43

`<object width="425" height="355"><param name="movie"`

`value="http://www.youtube.com/v/3pONK42suCY&hl=en"></param><param name="wmode"`

`value="transparent"></param><embed src="http://www.youtube.com/v/3pONK42suCY&hl=en" type="application/x-shockwave-flash" wmode="transparent" width="425" height="355"></embed></object>`