

**Summary of the CASIS Saturday Night Lecture by Prof. Dr. Syed
Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas on 8th Sept 2012**

Concept of Justice

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In the fifth lecture, Professor Al-Attas started with an extended response to a question from the audience in the previous lecture two weeks ago pertaining the difference on the conception of justice in Islam and in the West. Prof. Al-Attas started by stating that in general there is not much difference between Islam's and the West's conception of justice because it is a universal concept. What the Qur'an says regarding justice seems to be agreed a lot in the West. He stressed that the Muslims should have respect for the West pertaining this, because the Muslims do agree with a lot with what the best representatives of the West have to say about it. This is true especially with the Western medieval thinkers and philosophers who were thinking more like Muslims. However, the general difference is that we are nearer to those who affirm both the natural as well as civil/political justice—not just the political justice whose proponents says justice begins from the state. We agree with people who say justice being something before the existence of state.

Professor Al-Attas then goes on to relate the conception of justice and happiness in the worldview of Islam in comparison with the West. He then continued his deliberation on the meaning of submission in the religion of Islam and highlighted the fact that Islam is the name of a religion. This matter has been written by Prof. Al-Attas in 1975 because he foresees that this is going to be a problem. There is a religion that is sincere, willing, approved by God (*Islān*) and grudging, not approved by God. Prof Al-Attas then links the meaning of submission in Islam with happiness. First, Prof. Al-Attas explained that there are levels of happiness and that we experience all that levels - but the higher level of happiness (*al-sā'adah*) can only be attained through certainty (*yaqīn*). That is freedom in itself, from doubt. Therefore, as repeatedly explained by Al-Attas, we must heed the hadīth where the Prophet said: "Know yourself and you will know your Lord". It is necessary that one must first know one's self—that self refers to that self that has covenanted with God, before it has the body (See Surah al-'araf: 172). One must know one's good qualities, bad qualities and try to suppress the bad qualities—it is a big struggle, and that is why the prophet said fighting against yourself is the greatest Jihad.. Freedom ultimately refers to freedom of the self - it is a state of tranquillity, where one is no longer vespilating - that is what freedom really means and it has to do with submission. In order to attain this, the theoretical reason (*'ilm*) has to be trained and developed before the practical reason (*'amal*) - the four primary virtues: courage, temperance, wisdom, and justice have to overflow into each other. This is the science of *akhlaq* in the intellectual tradition of Islam which is unfortunately no longer taught in universities.

Finally, Al-Attas reminded us that we must focus on producing good individuals, and thus he reiterated that the science of ethics is very important. Furthermore, Prof. Al-Attas reminded us that the understanding and practise of the religion (of Islam) must be right - therefore we must know ourselves, we must know our religion, we must know that it (the religion of Islam) is not the same like all other religions—we must know the fundamental difference of other religions and we must know how to practise it properly.