

## Dehumanization in the Age of Artificiality: Rethinking Medical Education Through The Islamic Conception Of Man

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**ABSTRAK:** Pendidikan kedokteran kontemporer menghadapi krisis dehumanisasi yang kian menguat, dipicu oleh kemajuan pesat teknologi dan kecerdasan buatan. Dalam sistem teknokratis, baik praktisi maupun mahasiswa kedokteran berisiko memandang pasien semata sebagai data klinis, bukan sebagai manusia seutuhnya. Fenomena ini mencerminkan krisis ontologis dan epistemologis yang lebih mendalam. Dalam perspektif Islam—khususnya pemikiran Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas—krisis ini berakar pada *kehilangan adab*, yaitu kegagalan dalam menempatkan ilmu, diri, dan martabat manusia pada tempat yang semestinya. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif-konseptual yang berlandaskan pada tradisi intelektual Islam. Analisis dilakukan terhadap karya-karya utama al-Attas, teks klasik Islam, serta literatur kontemporer tentang pendidikan kedokteran. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan kedokteran modern yang berakar pada epistemologi sekuler dan reduksionis telah mengabaikan dimensi spiritual, moral, dan metafisik manusia. Hal ini menyebabkan komodifikasi profesi medis dan kelelahan emosional pada tenaga kesehatan. Berdasarkan antropologi metafisik al-Attas, studi ini menawarkan konsepsi holistik manusia yang mencakup *jasad*, *qalb*, *'aql*, *nafs*, dan *rūh*. Pendidikan kedokteran perlu direkonstruksi sebagai proses moral dan spiritual, bukan semata-mata pembentukan kompetensi profesional. Mengatasi dehumanisasi memerlukan pergeseran paradigma yang menempatkan kembali manusia sebagai inti ontologis dan etis dari pendidikan. Reformasi pendidikan kedokteran Islam mencakup desain institusional, pengembangan dosen, dan model pembimbingan spiritual yang integral.

**Kata kunci:** pendidikan kedokteran islam, sekulerisme, artificial intelligence.

**ABSTRACT:** Contemporary medical education faces a growing crisis of dehumanization, driven by the rapid advancement of technology and the rise of artificial intelligence. Within a technocratic system, both medical practitioners and students are at risk of perceiving patients as clinical data rather than holistic human beings. This phenomenon reflects a deeper ontological and epistemological disorder which, from the Islamic perspective—particularly in the thought of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas—is rooted in the *loss of adab*, the failure to recognize the proper place and purpose of knowledge, self, and human dignity. This study adopts a qualitative-conceptual methodology grounded in Islamic intellectual tradition. It engages with primary texts by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, classical Islamic sources, and contemporary literature on medical education. The findings reveal that modern medical education, rooted in secular and reductionist epistemologies, marginalizes the spiritual, moral, and metaphysical dimensions of the human being. This has led to the commodification of the medical profession and emotional fatigue among healthcare providers. Drawing from al-Attas's metaphysical anthropology, the study articulates a holistic conception of the human being comprising *jasad*, *qalb*, *'aql*, *nafs*, and *rūh*. Medical education should be reconceptualized as a moral and spiritual endeavor, aimed not only at professional competence but also at the cultivation of virtuous, God-conscious individuals. Addressing dehumanization in medical education requires a paradigm shift that re-centers the human being as the ontological and ethical core of educational practice. Islamic medical education must be reformed through institutional redesign, faculty development, and spiritually informed mentorship models.

**Keywords:** Islamic medical education, secularism, artificial intelligence

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Amid rapid technological advancement and the rise of artificial intelligence in the medical field, modern medical education faces a fundamental crisis: dehumanization. Within a system driven by technocratic efficiency, both medical students and physicians are at risk of losing sensitivity toward the meaning of being human—failing to understand themselves as *insān* (human beings) and perceiving patients merely as clinical cases rather than whole persons. This crisis is exacerbated in what several thinkers have termed *the age of artificiality*—an era marked by the dominance of simulation, instrumental rationality, and the disorientation of meaning, where the values that once defined authentic humanity become blurred and fragmented (Baudrillard, 1994).

From an Islamic perspective, this issue is not merely technical or managerial in nature but is rooted in a deeper and more foundational crisis: the *loss of adab*. This term, conceptualized by Professor Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, refers to an ontological and epistemological disorder that underlies the broader crises in knowledge, education, and civilization. According to al-Attas, “The confusion and error in knowledge which led to the loss of adab further gives rise to the rise of false leaders, who are recognized as authorities in fields of knowledge which they do not possess, and who mislead society and confuse it further.” (Al Attas, 2010) In his view, *adab* is not limited to ethical decorum but encompasses the recognition and acknowledgment of the proper place of things—particularly, the correct understanding of the human being and its role in the cosmos.

Thus, the crisis in contemporary medical education cannot be adequately addressed by resisting technological overreach alone; it demands a reorientation of the conceptual foundation of what it means to be human. A medical education framework that does not rest upon a sound Islamic *worldview* tends to neglect the spiritual, moral, and innate nature (*fiṭrah*) of the human being. This leads to a reductionist view of the medical profession—stripping it of its theological and moral dimensions—and reconfigures it as a merely technical occupation aimed at efficiency, material gain, or academic prestige. Therefore, a fundamental reformulation is necessary: one that grounds medical education in the Islamic conception of the human being, derived from divine revelation, harmonized with reason, and cultivated through *adab*.

The Islamic perspective posits that the human being is a purposeful creation (*ghayah*) of Allah, honored by Him (Qur’an, Al-Isrā’: 70), and entrusted with the responsibility of *khalifah* (vicegerency) on Earth (Qur’an, Al-Baqarah: 30). Human nature is holistic and integrated, consisting of the *jasad* (body), *qalb* (spiritual heart), *‘aql* (intellect), *nafs* (soul), and *rūḥ* (divine spirit), all of which function within vertical relations with the Creator and horizontal relations with creation. Within this worldview, medical education should aim to cultivate an ontological understanding of the human being as a divine trust, instill *adab* in the pursuit and application of knowledge, and shape physicians who perceive their role not merely as clinical practitioners, but as agents of divine mercy (*rahmah*) in the service of life.

This paper critically examines the dehumanization of contemporary medical education through the lens of Islamic thought, with a particular emphasis on the intellectual framework of Prof. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas. The primary objective is to offer an epistemological and practical foundation for reconstructing Islamic medical education based on the concepts of *insān*, *adab*, and *khidmah* (servanthood). Through a qualitative-conceptual approach, this study aims to contribute a value-based alternative to the current medical education crisis—one that seeks not only to produce competent physicians but also cultured and ethical human beings who restore the sanctity of life and human dignity.

## 2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative-conceptual methodology, appropriate for philosophical and epistemological inquiry within the Islamic tradition. Primary sources include Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas's seminal works such as *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam* and *The Concept of Education in Islam*, complemented by classical Islamic texts and Qur'anic exegesis. Secondary sources involve academic literature on medical education, secularization, and philosophical anthropology.

Data was analyzed through a hermeneutical approach, emphasizing the interpretative synthesis of Islamic metaphysics with contemporary critiques of modern education. The core analytical framework was structured around three interrelated concepts central to al-Attas's thought: (1) the ontology of the human being (*insān*); (2) the concept of *adab* and the structure of knowledge; and (3) the implications of these concepts for the reform of medical education.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Dehumanization in Modern Medical Education

Over the past two decades, global medical education has undergone rapid acceleration in diagnostic technologies, AI-assisted therapies, and data-driven healthcare systems. However, this progress has paradoxically coincided with a regression in foundational values of the medical profession: loss of empathy, depersonalization of the patient-doctor relationship, and emotional fatigue among healthcare providers. Medical students often experience a decline in empathy as their exposure to clinical pressures and academic burdens increases (Bhatia & Shetty, 2023).

This trend supports the thesis that modern medical education has undergone dehumanization—a process whereby the understanding of the human being is reduced to mere biological components to be measured, diagnosed, and corrected (Heusser, 2016). Both patient and physician are treated not as spiritual and moral subjects but as functional units within a healthcare system. Furthermore, the digital transformation and the rise of the "age of artificiality" have shifted the evaluation of medical success from ethical and humanistic principles to efficiency and quantifiable outcomes (Kulikowski, 2022). When algorithms dictate clinical decisions more than human intuition and moral wisdom, we encounter what can be described as an "epistemological displacement" — a shift from wisdom to dataism (Grote & Berens, 2020).

### 3.2 Epistemological Roots of Dehumanization: The Secularization of Medical Science

Dehumanization is not a superficial symptom but a product of the epistemological foundations of modern medical education, which is rooted in a secular worldview (Findeli, 2001). Secularism severs spiritual and moral dimensions from scientific inquiry, rendering medical science mechanistic, reductionist, and value-neutral (Pangestutiani, 2020). Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas attributes the crisis of knowledge in the modern world to the "confusion and error in the ordering of knowledge due to the absence of *adab*, resulting in the loss of wisdom and justice in man." (Al Attas, 2010) Medical education detached from the worldview of *tawhīd* inevitably neglects the spiritual dimension of the human being, leading to an education devoid of meaning, direction, and acknowledgment of man as a moral and responsible creature. This condition, which al-Attas terms the "loss of *adab*," manifests when individuals fail to recognize the rightful place of knowledge, profession, and the self. Secular medical education tends to prioritize technical competence over moral character formation, measures success by material output (e.g., GPA, publications, salary), and treats ethics as an auxiliary rather than an integral dimension of scientific substance.

The consequences of dehumanization in medical education are manifold. One of the most evident is the reduction of human beings to biological objects. Patients are treated as collections of symptoms or diseases, not as persons with inherent dignity, narratives, and souls. Human relationships in the clinical setting become transactional (Neuwirth, 2002). Moreover, a crisis of meaning afflicts the medical profession itself, as many physicians experience moral and spiritual emptiness (Førde & Aasland, 2008). This is reflected in high burnout rates and a growing desire among doctors to leave the profession (Hämmig, 2018). Additionally, the erosion of *adab* in educational relationships is evident: students view professors merely as evaluators (Akhmad & Saleh, 2020), not as *murabbis* (spiritual mentors); patients are no longer regarded as teachers in clinical learning but as test subjects (Stockhausen, 2009). Medical ethics, too, has become peripheral, taught as a standalone module rather than as the moral essence of the entire educational process (Atta, 2024). This indicates a dangerous divorce between knowledge and wisdom.

### 3.3 The Challenge of the Age of Artificiality

The age of artificiality is characterized by a tendency to replace authentic reality with artificial representations (*simulacra*), as critiqued by Baudrillard. This profoundly affects our understanding of humanity and life itself (Baudrillard, 1994). With technologies such as medical chatbots, robotic surgery, and AI-based decision support systems increasingly replacing human roles, we are compelled to ask: does the physician still hold meaningful significance as a healer, or has the doctor become a mere operator of systems? In this regard, Syed Naquib al-Attas warns: "Modern man has lost his soul, and in losing his soul he has lost his center; and in losing his center he has lost his direction." (Al Attas, 1995) Hence, rearticulating Islamic medical education must begin by restoring the human being as the central subject—not technology, not systems, not efficiency. Education must cultivate physicians who are not only healers of the body but also nurturers of the soul, including their own.

### 3.4 The Islamic Conception of Man: A Worldview Perspective

To establish a just and holistic system of medical education, a proper understanding of the nature of the human being (*al-insān*) is indispensable. In Islamic tradition, the human being is not merely a biological or psychological entity but a moral, spiritual, and intellectual being rooted in *fiṭrah* (primordial disposition) and divine creation (Daulay, 2014). Education that is not founded on a sound conception of the human being leads to distortions, as described by al-Attas as the "loss of *adab* and confusion of knowledge." From the Islamic viewpoint, as elaborated by al-Attas, the goal of education is to produce the *insān ʿādil wa muʿaddab* (a just and virtuous human being), one who recognizes and fulfills his proper place and purpose in the cosmos.

The Islamic conception of man is rooted in divine revelation, which offers a profound understanding of human origin, status, and mission on Earth. The Qur'an declares that man is created in the best of forms (*fi ahsani taqwīm*, QS. At-Tīn: 4), intrinsically honored due to the divine spirit breathed into him (QS. Al-Hijr: 29), and entrusted as a vicegerent (*khalīfah*) on Earth (QS. Al-Baqarah: 30). This exalted status does not stem from intellectual or physical superiority alone but from the spiritual essence that enables man to recognize, serve, and uphold divine truth. As *khalīfah* and bearer of divine trust (QS. Al-Aḥzāb: 72), man holds moral, epistemological, and spiritual responsibility to preserve order and justice in the world according to divine will. Humanity is not a cosmic accident but a purposeful creation endowed with a noble mission.

In his *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam* (1995), Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas systematically articulates the ontological structure of the human being from the Islamic worldview (Al Attas, 1995). He outlines five integrated components: *rūḥ*, *qalb*, *‘aql*, *nafs*, and *jasad*. The *rūḥ* is the divine element originating from Allah, transcending material laws and forming the innermost essence of human existence. The *qalb* is the seat of spiritual and moral consciousness, home to faith, intuition, and receptivity to revelation. The *‘aql* serves as the intellect that is value-laden and must submit to revelation in its pursuit of truth. The *nafs* is the dynamic self that ranges from the base (*nafs al-ammārah*) to the tranquil soul (*nafs al-muṭma‘innah*). Lastly, the *jasad* is the physical body that serves as a vehicle for worship but remains subordinate to the spiritual faculties. This holistic anthropology affirms that the human being is neither a purely biological nor a purely rational entity, but a spiritually anchored being whose essence guides all dimensions of life. Education that neglects this structure becomes fragmented and instrumentalist, ultimately compromising the integrity of the human form.

### 3.5 Man as Subject of Education, Not Object of Production

Within the Islamic framework, the human being in education is not a passive recipient of technical formation but an active subject guided to recognize his rightful place before the Creator and within the cosmos. As al-Attas asserts: "The purpose of education in Islam is not to produce engineers or doctors or clerks, but to produce a good man." (Al Attas, 1992) The current crisis in medical education arises from systems that treat students as "academic products" rather than evolving beings progressing toward *insān kāmil* (the complete human). Consequently, many graduates, though technically proficient, suffer from moral and spiritual alienation (Abdulhasan, 2021).

The Islamic and secular conceptions of the human being diverge significantly, both ontologically and teleologically. In Islam, the human is a divinely created being, honored by God, with integrated physical and spiritual dimensions. The purpose of life is to serve Allah and attain His pleasure through righteous action and spiritual awareness. By contrast, the secular worldview posits man as a product of biological evolution, value-neutral, and often reduced to materialistic or dualistic terms (Wildman & Wildman, 1998). Life's purpose is framed in terms of comfort, utility, or self-actualization (Aisyahrani et al., 2020). These differing views manifest clearly in educational philosophy: Islamic education emphasizes *adab*, meaning-making, and nearness to God, while secular education prioritizes technical skills and economic productivity.

### 3.6 Implications for Medical Education

Understanding the human being within the Islamic worldview necessitates a holistic reorientation of medical education. It must transcend purely cognitive and technical objectives to nurture all dimensions of the human person—intellectual, spiritual, moral, and emotional. Scientific knowledge must be integrated with *ḥikmah* (wisdom) and spiritual values to preserve its higher purpose. Medical students must be instilled with the awareness that the profession is not merely a worldly occupation but a form of servanthood (*khidmah*) to both Allah and humanity. Every clinical act should be viewed as a meaningful deed in the divine order, restoring dignity and sanctity to both patient and healer.

One of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas's major contributions to Islamic philosophy of education lies in his profound understanding of its purpose and essence. He firmly rejects the utilitarian and secular conceptions of modern education, which

reduce learning to the mere production of labor for economic development. For al-Attas, education is fundamentally a process of internalizing knowledge aimed at producing the just and virtuous human being (*insān ‘ādil wa mu‘addab*). As he states: “Education in Islam is not conceived as a process of utilitarian production of workers for the economic development of the nation. Rather, it is a process of instilling *adab* in man so that he becomes a good man.” (Al Attas, 1992) In this context, “a good man” is not merely someone of general moral character, but a person who recognizes and places all things in their proper place—an embodiment of *adab* as defined by al-Attas.

### 3.7 The Concept of *Adab* and Its Relationship with Knowledge

Al-Attas argues that the educational crisis in the Muslim world stems from a *loss of adab*, where knowledge and its seekers fail to recognize the hierarchical structure and order of truths. This leads to epistemological chaos. He writes: “Loss of *adab* is the corruption of knowledge, for it presupposes the disorder in the self, which in turn leads to the loss of justice. And when man is unjust, he cannot be wise.” (Al Attas, 2010) In the context of contemporary medical education, this phenomenon manifests in technocratic attitudes, depersonalization of patient care, and the segregation of ethics from scientific inquiry. (Balak et al., 2020) An education devoid of *adab* produces professionals who neither comprehend the essential nature of their vocation nor its spiritual orientation.

Al-Attas frames his conception of the human being within an Islamic cosmological and metaphysical context, which he connects directly to the purpose of knowledge. He writes: “Man is a rational, spiritual, and moral being endowed with the responsibility to recognize and acknowledge the reality of things according to their proper places in the order of creation.” (Al Attas, 1995) Thus, education is not simply about transmitting information or imparting technical skills, but about guiding the human being toward the discovery of meaning, knowledge of God, and proper positioning of oneself in relation to knowledge, society, and the natural world.

### 3.8 A Critique of Secularism in Medical Science

A pivotal aspect of al-Attas’s thought is his sharp critique of secularism, especially within the domain of modern science. He asserts: “Secularization is the deliverance of man first from religion as a system of meaning and values, then from metaphysical considerations, and finally from all absolute truths and sacred authority.” (Al Attas, 2010) It is this very process of secularization that contributes to the dehumanization found in modern medical education. (Richardson, 2000) When medical science is severed from transcendental values, it loses both its spiritual and ethical compass. The physician is no longer viewed as a noble servant of humanity, but merely as an operator of biological systems.

Drawing on the philosophical framework of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, several foundational principles emerge for the reformulation of Islamic medical education. First, the ultimate aim of education should not be limited to producing technically competent professionals, but rather to form just and virtuous individuals—those who are morally, spiritually, and socially integrated. Second, knowledge must never be divorced from *adab*, as the absence of *adab* renders knowledge vulnerable to misuse—whether for power, intellectual arrogance, or social exclusion. Third, the conception of the human being in medical education must be holistic, encompassing the physical body (*jasad*), intellect (*‘aql*), spiritual heart (*qalb*), soul (*nafs*), and spirit (*rūh*), thereby preserving the full dignity of both student and patient. Fourth, medical education

must be embedded within the broader process of *ta'dīb*—the cultivation of individuals who recognize their rightful place before God, knowledge, and society—so that the medical profession is pursued as a sacred trust (*amānah*) and a form of service (*khidmah*), rather than merely a career or means of social mobility.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The current crisis of dehumanization in medical education is not simply a technical problem to be addressed through ethics modules or empathy training; it is a civilizational crisis rooted in the secular dislocation of knowledge from its metaphysical ground. As demonstrated through the intellectual framework of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, the loss of *adab* lies at the heart of this crisis, resulting in a fragmented conception of the human being and a utilitarian distortion of the medical profession.

To restore meaning, dignity, and justice to medical education, a paradigm shift is necessary—one that re-centers the human being as understood in the Islamic worldview. This entails recognizing the physician as a custodian of divine mercy, the patient as a bearer of sacred trust, and knowledge as a means toward human flourishing and divine proximity.

Suggestions for future action include:

1. Institutional Reform: Islamic medical schools should embed Islamic anthropology and ethics across the curriculum, not confine them to isolated modules.
2. Faculty Development: Educators must be trained in both medical expertise and Islamic intellectual traditions to serve as moral exemplars.
3. Spiritual Mentorship: Mentoring programs rooted in the *murabbī* model should be revived to cultivate personal and professional *adab*.
4. Research Agenda: Further interdisciplinary studies are needed to explore the integration of Islamic metaphysics with clinical practice, medical pedagogy, and healthcare ethics.

In conclusion, the Islamization of medical education is not a return to tradition at the expense of progress, but a return to truth and meaning—anchoring progress in a metaphysical and moral framework that upholds the sanctity of human life and the nobility of knowledge.

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