

## The analysis of the Relationship between the Environmental Crisis and the Contemporary Human's Spiritual Crisis (with Emphasis on the Ideas of Seyyed Hossein Nasr)

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#### Abstract:

Humanistic philosophic approaches and the ever-increasing dominance of humans on nature and the excessive use of it have all led to the emergence of an environmental crisis. This incident has necessitated the clarification of the causes, as well as understanding the spiritual and philosophical dimensions of the crisis for all. Researchers have found that this crisis is the result of philosophical approaches that have led to the exploitation of nature through the fundamental transformation of human's understanding of nature. This theory has had many consequences, due to a secular look and the elimination of spirituality from nature and the instrumental look. Seyyed Hussein Nasr, to restore spirituality to nature and revive his sacred reality, by looking at the man as part of nature to save the natural life of man, challenged this theory. The method of this study is library research based on the analysis. The purpose of this research has been to study and analyze the spiritual foundations of the environmental crisis and to improve the awareness of people to protect the environment. In this article, Seyyed Hossein Nasr's views, the oppositional views, and the cause of the emergence. The results of the research show that although some scholars attribute the environmental crisis to religious teachings, arguing that the beliefs of religious leaders have led to the deterioration and degradation of environmental resources, as well as weakening their motivation to develop a safe environment, recognizing the spiritual dimensions of the crisis can play an important role in developing the appropriate attitudes and behaviors toward the environment; So the solution to the crisis is restoring spirituality to nature and reviving the sacred reality.

**Keywords:** Nasr, Spiritual Crisis, Environmental Crisis, Modern human, Spirituality.

#### چکیده:

رویکردهای فلسفی انسان‌مدارانه و تسلط هر چه بیشتر انسان بر طبیعت و بهره‌برداری بی‌رویه از آن منجر به پیدایش بحران محیط‌زیستی شد. این رخداد ضرورت توجه و شناخت علل و ابعاد معنوی و فلسفی بحران را برای همگان روشن ساخت. پژوهشگران دریافتند این بحران حاصل رویکردهای فلسفی است که با تحول بنیادین فهم انسان از طبیعت، موجب استثمار طبیعت شده است. این تئوری با نگاهی سکولاریزه و زدودن معنویت از طبیعت و نگاه ابزاری به آن تبعات فراوانی داشته است. سید حسین نصر با طرح بازگرداندن معنویت به طبیعت، احیای واقعیت قدسی آن و نگاه به انسان به‌عنوان جزئی از طبیعت در جهت نجات حیات طبیعی انسان به معارضه با این تئوری برآمد. روش این تحقیق کتابخانه‌ای و تحلیلی است. هدف این پژوهش نقد، بررسی و تحلیل مبانی معنوی بحران محیط‌زیستی و ارتقای آگاهی افراد جهت صیانت از محیط‌زیست می‌باشد. در این نوشتار آراء سید حسین نصر، دیدگاه‌های مخالف و علل پیدایش بحران موردنقد و بررسی قرار می‌گیرد. نتایج تحقیق نشان می‌دهد؛ علی‌رغم اینکه برخی از اندیشمندان، بحران محیط‌زیستی را به آموزه‌های دینی نسبت داده و ادعا می‌کنند؛ اعتقاد دین‌باوران سبب تپه‌سازی و تخریب منابع محیط‌زیستی شده و انگیزه آنان را برای سالم‌سازی محیط پیرامون تضعیف می‌کند؛ ولیکن شناخت ابعاد معنوی بحران، نقش تعیین‌کننده‌ای در ایجاد نگرش و بروز رفتارهای مناسب محیط‌زیستی دارد و راه‌حل بحران در بازگرداندن معنویت به طبیعت و احیای واقعیت قدسی آن است.

**واژه‌های کلیدی:** نصر، بحران معنوی، بحران محیط‌زیستی، انسان معاصر، معنویت.

## Introduction

The remarkable growth of science and technology and the changing attitudes of human beings towards nature have raised the alarm for the excessive use of nature by all nations. Therefore, it is necessary to pay due attention to the environment and to try to protect it. Attempts that have been made to explain the factors that have given rise to the crisis in the living environment have led to global, general, and philosophical debates (Parsa, 2017).

Environmental crises are one of the most important challenges facing human society. Different schools have come up with different solutions to solve these problems; environmental degradation has become one of the biggest challenges in the contemporary world due to its dire consequences, affecting the whole of humanity (Abbasi, 2010). This crisis first began in the West; then it was spread to the world with the entry of modernism into the East (Nasr, 2008). The current environmental crises are the product of materialistic, developmental, and hegemonic ideas, as well as the consequence of the disruption of the human relationship with the environment.

Scholars belonging to various schools have provided many ideas to solve this crisis; international organizations, public institutions, and governments, both developed and developing, have expressed their concern by attending conferences and congresses worldwide. Approaches such as conservationism, preservationism, social ecology, animal rights, land ethic, ecofeminism, stewardship, and sustainable development can be regarded as some of the things the Global Forum of Spiritual and Parliamentary Leaders has done so far to address this huge environmental crisis (Abedi, 2007).

With all human endeavors aiming to achieve

more development and progress, environmental crises and pollution continue to increase; failure to achieve its goals must be seen in a fundamental perspective on man and the environment, the human relations with the environment, gradual desecration of nature, rationalism, and humanism. In this regard, many Western thinkers, and even some theologians, including Arnold Toynbee and Lynn Townsend White (1973), instead of recognizing the origins of crises in the advances and developments related to the Renaissance and the seventeenth century, assume that the monotheistic religions are mostly responsible for the crisis.

Criticizing Judaism and Christianity, they argue that Judeo-Christian thoughts assume a special position for man, holding that he is God's caliph on earth and that all nature should be subservient to man. Also, they believe that the humane ideals of the classical monotheistic religions have caused human beings to be arrogant towards nature, leading to the excessive exploitation and destruction of nature. However, by rejecting these views, Nasr (2006) offers an alternative theory in which man's relationship with nature is not regarded as one of domination and this domination is not expected to lead to the exploitation of the natural life. Rather, human beings must preserve and honor their environment; in this regard, monotheistic religions play a fundamental role. So, the believing man, in the light of religion, considers the world of nature sacred and full of the manifestation of God's grace and love, as well as a divine entity; so, he considers himself responsible for the environment.

What is clear is that the modern man has faced an unprecedented crisis he has created and this is now threatening the entire planet; nevertheless, he still refuses to find the real roots of the problem. It seems that this inability to solve environmental crises is

related to ignoring the factors and merely following the consequences (Nasr, 2010).

This descriptive-analytical paper is an attempt to answer these questions:

A) How can the relationship between the environmental crisis and the spiritual crisis of the contemporary man be analyzed and critiqued?

B) According to Nasr's views, by reviving sacred knowledge within human beings and restoring spirituality to nature, can we improve the relationship between man and his nature?

### **Research objectives**

1. The purpose of this study is to analyze the spiritual foundations of the environmental crisis as a spiritual, religious, and philosophical goal based on a descriptive, analytical, and inferential method.

2- The other aim is criticizing the views of Nasr and the opposing views on the environmental crisis to find a suitable solution to tackle this crisis.

3- Finally, this study is intended to explain the relationship between the environmental crisis and the spiritual crisis of the contemporary man, as well as their impact on each other; the focus is also on creating a spiritual attitude and promoting people's knowledge and awareness of appropriate environmental behaviors to protect and preserve the environment.

### **Research methodology**

The present study uses a descriptive-analytical method to collect library information including identification, study, information classification, data collection, and analysis of the subject under study. The nature of this research is a qualitative and fundamental one. In this method, the researcher describes, interprets and critiques the existing opinions and ideas, in addition to examining the current

situation and explaining the pros and cons; also, the study focuses on the 'why' and 'how' of the problem and its dimensions, discovering the facts and creating a general understanding leading to a solution for the crisis and the problem under investigation.

### **The environment**

From Nasr's (2008) perspective, the environment means nature or pristine nature. That is everything that is not man-made or has not been influenced by human circumstances. The environment includes the environment of the human body. Thus, the crisis that threatens the environment also threatens the human body, and this threat is so alarming that he believes it is as if mankind has committed suicide.

That means if we destroy nature, we have destroyed the very foundation of our existence. In fact, "killing nature is suicide" (Schwencke, 2009). So, nature is all that has not been made by human hands, and human activity has did not affect its construction. From the peaks of the mountains to the depths of the oceans and from algae to elephants, they are all part of nature. In other words, man is also a part of this nature, and his body is subject to the same physical and natural laws that the rest of the natural world is.

However, since man is free to oppose or rebel against God, as well as disrespecting nature, he is technically not the same as other natural beings. So, nature means everything that is not human and out of human activity. Of course, in traditional societies, these activities have been usually compatible with nature, but in industrial societies, such adaptation to nature is never seen (Dinparast, 2008).

### **Sacred matter - sacred science**

In Nasr's (2006) works, sacred understanding or sacred matter is sometimes interpreted as sacred knowledge and is associated with

tradition, revelation, and religion. In his view, metaphysics or wisdom is always considered a sacred science; if metaphysics is the ultimate science of truth, it is sacred understanding. Sacred knowledge is nothing but the sacred understanding that exists in the very heart of every revelation, and its center is the circle that encompasses the tradition, determining and limiting it. In other words, divine wisdom and mysticism are at the highest level of sacred science or holy science (Nasr, 2008).

Nasr (2008) states in his book 'Knowledge and Sacred: "There has been a connection between sacred understanding and human prosperity, but in modern times, we see the desecration of this knowledge and therefore, the unattainability of the human's prosperity." Knowledge in the modern world is limited to superficial matters.

Nasr (2008) considers the catastrophes of the modern world as a result of human beings turning to the logic of calculation and instrumental reasoning, stating that the original Islamic tradition can be the source of some principles and criteria for a society different from the current one. "Modern man considers the earth as his home, viewing it as a big business in which he is free to roam and choose things of his choice. He has, therefore, lost his strong understanding" (Ibid).

### **Environmental crisis**

The ecological crisis has a wide range of dimensions what has been called the "environmental crisis", is not only the crisis of the natural world but also the world within man, that is, the internal crisis of man. Nasr (2000) addresses a wide range of issues as "environmental crises": species extinction, ocean pollution, soil, water resources, global warming or climate change, deforestation, etc. (Asghari, 2007). The environmental crisis is the disruption of order, harmony, and the balance of the natural world; in other words, it

is the disruption of the relationship between man and nature. The root of the environmental crisis lies in the issues arising from the current social changes (Rahmati, 2008).

### **The spiritual crisis of the contemporary man**

Nasr (2000) is one of those thinkers who consider the root of the environmental crisis to be embedded in a deeper crisis, which is the spiritual crisis. He believes that the word 'spirituality' in the current sense is modern. Those dimensions and elements of religion that have been forgotten in the West have been misinterpreted as spirituality. Spiritual crisis means that man has distanced himself from his original self or God.

Neglect and indifference to the spiritual man have not only led to problems at the human level but have also affected the relationship between man and nature. The crisis of the relationship between man and nature in the West was based on two mistakes: one was the lack of a deeper understanding of man and the other was the sacred reality of nature.

This was one of the consequences of the spiritual crisis that arose after the Renaissance in the seventeenth century and the Age of Enlightenment; the modern man saw himself as a terrestrial creature with no responsibility toward God or his creatures. Also, as a result of the intellectual and spiritual crisis, the sacred aspect of nature was abandoned. Nature was considered as a mechanical and arithmetic entity for man. This spiritual crisis has become more serious since the Industrial Revolution (Nasr, 2000). For this reason, the nature of man and the evolution of the nature of traditional and modern man from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment era are of great importance.

The despiritualization of nature and the degradation of the laws of the universe culminated in purely mechanical and

mathematical laws, which could be regarded as the cause of the environmental crisis, due to the philosophy of modernism and the age of modernity. For this reason, he explores the history of the West from a metaphysical point of view to discover the causes of this crisis (Nasr, 2000).

### **Traditionalism and the Transcendent Unity of Religions**

The concept of "tradition" is the main component of the intellectual discipline of Seyyed Hossein Nasr (2007) and other traditionalists; other elements of this intellectual system are somehow defined about it. "Tradition" means a set of principles that are superhuman and descend from the higher world; it is a special kind of manifestation of the divine essence, along with its application in different periods and different divine conditions for a particular human community. The tradition includes sacred science, which is rooted in the essence of truth and is itself the only means of attaining this truth.

Islam can be spoken of as a tradition in the sense that Christianity and Buddhism are also called traditions. In other words, tradition means a collection of ideas, beliefs, teachings, and sciences that can create a civilization in all aspects of existence, such as art, science, technology, and so on. Tradition often stems from a source of heavenly inspiration or revelation (Awani, 2009).

Despite the differences existing in the various traditions, the source of all of them is the spiritual realm, being from God; in metaphysical language, it is the ultimate truth that has had special features and structure in every historical religious civilization. In this way, a tradition in the conventional sense of the word not only means religion but also religion has a special place in it. We also have traditional art, traditional clothing, traditional

music, traditional architecture, and traditional sciences, all of which are based on a basic set of metaphysical facts (Nasr, 2006). Tradition is always sacred, and no tradition is man-made.

Tradition takes over the sacred aspect, transfers and applies it, making it visible and tangible in various ways and by various means; so, tradition and the sacred matter are inseparable; tradition is incompatible with modernism and modernity, the sacred matter is not only opposed to worldly affairs and materialism but also is incompatible with desecration and secularization, which are the characteristic of our world and our environment (Nasr, 2006).

It is important to note that the concept of tradition and its relation to the environment and nature are not limited to Eastern traditions; the West also has traditions that remain intact, but these traditions have remained better in the East than in the West. Thus, the West has no choice but to seek the help of its still-living Eastern traditions to revive its intellectual and spiritual tradition and to transfer this spiritual view of nature to prevent the crises facing mankind, including the environmental crisis. Tradition can play a significant role in reviving the sacred matter and restoring the sacred quality of nature.

### **Epistemological and anthropological fundamentals of the environmental crisis**

Nasr (2005) attributes the emergence of the contemporary man in the West to the distortion of the image of the traditional man. Following the mental and objective changes that took place in the West, traditional anthropology declined and a new image of man was drawn. The process of distorting the human image began in the Renaissance, although the roots of some of its factors go back to a time before that era.

Gradually, various historical and intellectual factors emerged in the West, leading to the decline of humanity from the position of the divine caliph. This distortion began with the secular humanism of the Renaissance; probably, humanism was the anthropology of the modern age that replaced Christian anthropology. In the Renaissance, the man was reduced to a mere human (Nasr, 2006).

At this time, the dominance of the Christian tradition over a Western man was weakening, leading the humanists to revolt against traditional Christian teachings about man; at times, however, some Christian views, in a causative manner, may have boosted such naturalistic views of man in the opposite side. Among other things, some of the teachings of official Christian theology, such as drawing a definite line between the natural and supernatural worlds, and the predominant attention to the supernatural aspect place too much emphasis on the separation of the soul from the body and the angelic religion beliefs in man, leading to the excessive earthly and natural view of mankind and the denial of its heavenly dimension.

Angelic religious beliefs in this context mean that Western Christian theology emphasized mainly the heavenly half and angel-like half of humans, rather than his earthly, material, and natural half (Mohaqeq, 2007). The theology of Western Christianity does not place much emphasis on the sanctity and divinity of the human body. Thus, the humanists of the Renaissance, to honor the earthly and natural aspect of man, which was his body, opposed that common theological belief and denied or ignored his spiritual and heavenly aspect (Abbasi, 2010).

In the following, we will examine and explain three important factors that play a key role in the emergence of the environmental crisis. These three factors are 1- the gradual desecration of nature, 2- Rationalism, and 3-

Humanism.

### **Three important factors contributing to the emergence of the environmental crisis from Nasr's point of view**

#### **Desecration of the sacred matter**

The root of many crises facing the contemporary man is the separation of understanding from spirituality. For this reason, sacred knowledge is of uttermost importance. The issues raised about knowledge are fundamentally different from those of the Western epistemological philosophers. The reason for this is that Western epistemology is unholy and therefore, unacceptable.

In the history of Western thought, knowledge has gradually been deprived of spirituality and sanctity, and relativism in knowledge has replaced certainty. The desecration of understanding has had many negative consequences since its inception (Qasemei, 2001). The desecration of knowledge has been directly related to the desecration of the universe and nature; this has led to developing a mechanical view of the universe and emptying the world of the sacred gem with desecration of knowledge. In the new age, reason has been reduced from its intuitive and sacred position to mere reasoning.

After the desecration of knowledge, as well as the final separation of reason and faith, the sanctity of the universe and nature has been lost. It should be explained that in the earlier traditions, all teachings, from theology to nature, had sanctity and holiness, meaning there was a dominant mysterious view in nature.

The traditional man lived in a world where even the material world had a sacred face; however, in the Renaissance, the sanctity of the material universe was denied at first, and everything became a pure earthly entity. In this view, which also brought about the

secularization of the natural sciences, traditional cosmologies were discarded, and only experience and senses were used to understand nature. Thus, the birth of modern science, with a worldly and secular character, was one of the consequences of the desecration of knowledge (Nasr, 2008).

Nasr's (2006) approach is traditionalistic. Contrary to the popular belief, tradition does not refer to the transmission of current customs from predecessors to descendants, but to a set of principles that are a particular manifestation of the divine world and can be applied in specific temporal and spatial conditions to human beings. Thus, every tradition is necessarily sacred; in addition to stability, it also has continuity. Tradition is, after all, a sacred knowledge. Tradition in this sense is opposed to modernism (Jahakbglo, 2008). In this regard, the dominance of principles and teachings based on tradition in human-nature relations plays a major role in preserving and protecting the environment and preventing possible future crises.

### **Rationalism**

After the Middle Ages, with the abandonment of church authority, rational reasoning was considered a new source of certainty, and this was followed by the Western philosophy of opposition to revelation, taste, and intuition as sources of cognition, limiting itself to empiricism and rationalism. With the denial of the sacred and intuitive reason, man's epistemological source for attaining truth was only based on individual reasoning (Nasr, 2006). To discover and understand reality, the modern man relied only on pure reasoning, so he did not pay attention to his origin, considering himself independent of heaven. On the other hand, this pure reasoning, which was, its essence, accompanied by a kind of skepticism in understanding reality and the ability to know man, caused the man to doubt

many certainties. Perhaps the only thing this man did not doubt was his ability to conquer the natural world. This man was nothing but a creature of the earth and had no purpose other than to exploit nature (Qasemei, 2011).

### **Humanism**

Of all human fields, the importance of the epistemological field is more than the effective and voluntary ones. The "epistemological" and "rational" view takes over all issues, and the importance of mysticism and Sufism, especially theoretical mysticism, is evident from this. The metaphysical basis is that "the human mind can know what is and all that benefits from existence," and this cognition includes the top to the bottom of existence (Nasr, 2002). "Contemporary man" is mostly meant to be modern human beings.

There are two types of human beings: traditional human beings and modern ones. Man has a fixed truth, but he also adds that man, because of the gift of free will, has the possibility of living or not living according to that truth. Thus, traditional human beings who are faithful to their inner truth and live according to it are normal and natural ones. In contrast, human beings who have given up living according to that truth, because they are moving against their existential structure and, in fact, against the structure of the universe, are not normal and natural.

We consider the modern man, who has risen in the West since the Renaissance, to be a clear example of this kind of abnormal and unnatural man (Nasr, 2007). In his view, the difference between traditional and contemporary man is that the former is aware of his true nature and lives according to it, while the modern man, by forgetting it, has taken a rebellious path and is out of his normal state.

The traditional man is the emergence of the

true nature of man; he is the one who has been faithful to this nature. In contrast, the contemporary man has deviated from this nature in his way of thinking and living, taking a different path, although he has not been able to remove that true nature from his nature (Nasr, 2004).

As we assume in the Islamic thought that the nature of man is immutable, the nature that we consider here for man is immutable and no change can alter it; the only thing that is possible is neglecting this nature and forgetting it. So, the contemporary man has an "inner man" in himself (Mohaqeq, 2015).

### **Opposing views and concise answers**

Some environmental economists attribute the environmental crisis to religious teachings, claiming that religious beliefs weaken and degrade the environment and affect their motivation to improve the environment. The most important of these views are 1. the conquest theory, and 2. the theory of **temporality**, and 3. the theory of silence (Farahani, 2006).

#### **1. Conquest theory**

According to the believers, God Almighty has created the universe to be in the service of man and his agent, making it obedient to man, so that he can easily use it. Some biologists believe that this belief in Christians and Muslims is more or less the cause of environmental degradation. Environmentalists believe that with the domination that man has received from God over nature, he can seize whatever he wants in nature, and this will lead to the destruction of nature and the environment.

White Jr. (1973) sees the environmental crisis as rooted in the dominance that the Bible has bestowed to the man on earth. The pride given by religion to human beings has allowed them to control and exploit nature (White, 2012).

#### **2. The theory of silence in the classical**

#### **religious texts**

Some scholars have objected to religious communities from the point of view that they have remained silent in the face of this crisis. Classical texts of religious traditions have little to offer regarding deforestation, soil erosion, waste of water resources, land and climate pollution, and global warming.

Also, some religious teachers still ignore the growing human population; this makes all these threats significantly worse. "Religion and theology are known not to care much for the good of the natural world," says Russell E. Train.

Traditionally, churches, synagogues, and mosques have paid little attention to major environmental issues. He has been leading the environmental movement for more than thirty years, finding it astonishing that religion and theology have been so indifferent to the current crisis" (Ruseel Train, 1990). Nasr's (2000) response to this critique is that human domination does not mean the ordinary domination as many modern Muslims claim to be thirsty for that power, which the modern science has given to man; rather, it overcoming what is permissible, only to the condition that it is by divine laws. He sees the conquest as a result of the post-Renaissance secularist attitude.

#### **3. The theory of temporality of the world**

Halt (1990), a professor of theology and director of the Center for Science and Religion Studies at Georgetown University in the United States, regarding the opposition of religion to the environment, argues that religion's orientation toward the supernatural world is the reason why religion assumes little value for life on the planet and instead, it is much concerned about the welfare in this world. Religions that hope for a divine savior in the future will even allow us to turn our attention away from the present world.

This view of religion leaves out the basic



principle of environmental ethics, he says. "An essential principle of environmental ethics is to consider the earth as our true home; however, religion cannot accept this world as our home". "Religion tells us we are just pilgrims or travelers on earth." How can this non-worldly view claim to take ecology seriously? The global homelessness that religion implies cannot provide enough moral energy to help the ecological movement (Ruseel Train, 1990).

On the other hand, the prophetic religion has allowed many religious people to think that this is the way to destruction and therefore, is not worthy of salvation. In another part of his speech, Halt (1990) states: "At the very least, man's desire for eternity untimely separates him from the earthly society to which we belong." "Therefore, such a dichotomous separation from religious thought, especially in the past, has been predominant, leading to cosmic displacement." So, it seems that we are facing an unsolvable puzzle; on the one hand, religious teachings tell us to live without a home (belonging to the world); on the other hand, environmental ethics requires us to penetrate deeply into nature.

Can these two feelings be combined and reconciled? (Passmore, 1974). In response to this suspicion, Nasr (2010) does not accept the silence of religions, holding the view that although Christianity confirms the importance of the environment, due to pre-Renaissance deviations and the struggle with worldly affairs, rationalism, and philanthropy, the field is practically open for secularism. He refers to the fact that there was no call from Islam to the West because the West often limited its study of Islam to two groups of fundamentalist reformists (Wahhabism and Salafis) and modernists (Seyyed Ahmad Khan in India and Abduh in Egypt and Taghizadeh in Iran) (2006). Islam's true whisper about the environment has not, therefore, reached the

West.

#### **4. Revival and possession**

One of the views mainly based on Islamic teachings on the use of environmental resources is the issue of revitalization. According to some narrations from the infallible Imams (PBUH), according to which the jurists have also issued fatwa's, whoever exploits the land of the dead, mines, etc., becomes the owner of those resources; because there are restrictions on such uses, it will lead to the depletion of resources and the destruction of the environment.

The result of these views was that religious teachings were one of the effective factors in creating the environmental crisis, or at least did not take effective measures to prevent it. However, there are differing views on how to deal with environmental issues, and a wide range of environmentalists and extremist groups advocating economic growth have been formed.

Undoubtedly, these views are influenced by philosophical and doctrinal ideas about the world and moral approaches to it. The study of this view suggests that the destructive views of the environment stem from philosophical ideas (Passmore, 1974). Nasr (2010) believes that this criticism has no place. By referring to the religious literature, especially Islam, and studying the attitude of religion towards the world, we realize that based on the religious views, although the ultimate goal is the Hereafter and this has been the concern of divine religions, it never means ignoring the world; rather, the world is considered the farm of the Hereafter, and the happiness of the Hereafter is introduced through the path of this world. Whoever destroys his farm and does not pay attention to it, he or she will not have any fruit in the Hereafter.

### Critical analysis of Nasr's views

According to the claims made regarding the environment, there are questions that we will analyze in the present study; first of all, it must be determined whether the claim that the environmental crisis is a spiritual challenge in the first place and requires a spiritual solution is correct. In other words, in solving this crisis, is environmental theology a priority or environmental engineering?

Second, it must be determined whether Nasr has been able to provide a suitable solution to this challenge or not, and what criticisms have been leveled at his solution. Third, by assuming that he has been successful in the theory-building stage and presented coherent and unconventional theories,

can his theory be applied or not? For example, while a person may know the scientific method of desalination of saline water correctly, there is no tool to do so; in that case, the saltwater will not be drinkable (Dinparast, 2010).

1. What is the role of the population in the environmental crisis? Will the crisis be resolved if the theology of the environment is developed and the people of the world live in a religious world? On the other hand, wouldn't there have been a crisis if the Earth had had the same population as in our past?

In any case, more population means more need for nutrition, air, facilities, and the like. In the past, due to the low population, there was no need to destroy the natural environment for agriculture, housing, and the like. It seems that this important component has not been considered in the theory of environmental theology.

2. Poverty is one of the causes of the environmental crisis; the secondary needs are not taken into account when the basic needs of the people of a society are not met. In a society where there are many poor and hungry people, for example, the extinction of a rare

species is no longer important. That is why the environmental crisis is of paramount importance to the developed countries.

3. What is the role of education in environmental theology? This seems to play an important role in resolving the crisis. In some countries, for example, environmental education begins in kindergartens, such as waste separation or recycling. They also make educational films that can play an effective role.

4. What is the role of politics and government in the environment? For example, information may or may not be limited to a communist government; as another case, air pollution with water is not properly reported to the public.

5. How can we go back in time and reverse the desecration process of nature? Nasr's response (2007) may be that the mere premature return to the past is not intended. However, is it still the case that we live in a modern world and it is impossible to go back in time and make our way of life like the ancient people?

And even if it is possible, it is not desirable. Even if nature is sanctified for us, we will inevitably face challenges and difficulties. That is, even if we revive the sacred within ourselves and assume the role of the caliph of God and feel responsible for nature, none of this will cause us to use horses and mules instead of cars, planes, trains, and the like. Or in urban life, instead of using natural gas, we would use animal waste to heat our homes.

The traditional methods of agriculture, which preserve nature, are, therefore, unable to feed the world's growing population today. People in today's society are forced to live in small apartments and, like traditional people, do not have large houses with cellars and the like. Therefore, they have to use gas and electricity for heating and cooling, which, in turn, leads to using energy and causes pollution; it is the

environmental engineering which can be the solution here.

6. In addition to environmental engineering, there are environmental studies that support forests, animals, ecosystems, and the like. In practice, environmental engineering has been instrumental in resolving the crisis; For example, Tokyo's progress is not comparable to Tehran's in terms of pollution, despite both being industrial.

7. One of the major criticisms of traditionalism is that traditionalist thinking is evading from reasoning. Based on this criticism, it can be argued that he did not provide any argument for resolving the environmental crisis. His response to this accusation is that the idea of traditionalism is by no means evading from reasoning, but does not limit itself to reasoning, which is only one of the forces of wisdom.

Nasr (2010) refers to Muslim scholars who, despite their skill in applying to reason, did not reduce philosophy to mere reasoning. Ibn Sina and Suhrawardi (2006) both believed in the wisdom of taste; Mulla Sadra considered the transcendent wisdom to be the result of a combination of argument, mysticism, and the Qur'an. Thus, traditionalists opposed rationalism in the sense of Western rationalism, but they were not against the use of reasoning.

By referring to the works written by Nasr (1999) on the environmental crisis and its solution, it seems that he did not provide an argument for his theories and merely provided evidence. His solution, which emphasizes referring to the sacred nature and reviving the philosophy of traditional nature, seems to be just a claim not founded on reasons. That is, there is no practical guarantee that environmental problems will be completely solved with the help of the traditional metaphysics (Qasemei, 2011).

8. Nasr's (2004) critique of modernity is based

on essentialism. It is as if Western philosophy and modernity have an independent nature. Accordingly, attributes such as secularism and the like are attributed to this essence, but if we claim that we are dealing with instances and not with an independent essence, we cannot completely reject the modernity and the product of that modern science; instead, here, we believe in separation and distinguish good results from bad ones.

Nasr (2004) does not provide any evidence that modern science has a single essence, and that it is a secular and divine essence, but refers only to historical documents. How can new sciences that are non-sacred and humanistic be acceptable? What should we do regarding the new science? If the basics are invalid, they must be put aside. If it is secular, even if it has practical uses, and even if science accepts its limitations, it must still be put aside; this is because science should only be divine. Should we Muslims and religious people create our science?

If nature is to be sanctified, the experimental sciences must be set aside. It may be argued that, as was the case in the Islamic tradition, the experimental sciences were sacred and at the lowest level in terms of length, such a thing is possible; this is because it is important that the worldview of scholars is a religious one, and that in such metaphysics, they found their knowledge.

However, in any case, the question remaining is what we should do about modern Western science? Has the scientific progress of the West been desirable or it should be condemned? Was this progress possible without secularizing science? If yes, why did this progress happen only in the West, where science became secular? On the other hand, if we consider nature sacred, does it not make it somehow difficult to conduct research (Ibid)?

10. Would the traditional people use it if they

had modern tools? Didn't their mere divine worldview cause them not to exploit nature, or they not have the means to do so?

For example, in situations where they might have been traveling for a long time with difficulty for months and would encounter bandits and sometimes not even survive, would they have used airplane train or the automobile if they had been invented immediately at the same time? Or they might have said that these would destroy the natural environment, pollute the air, erode the soil and so on, and it would be still better to travel with the same horse and mule as before?!

Therefore, Nasr must believe that he is referring to a rebellious human being who does not pay attention to his origin and is without a center; the traditional man is a man who pays attention to his sacred origin, and this man may have appeared at any time, or it may be said that the rebellious man was born during the Renaissance. On the one hand, tradition cannot be considered beyond time and space; on the other hand, historical documents can be used to prove their claim, and certain periods can be regarded as the origin of some things (modernity, modern science, and the like) (Ibid).

11. Assuming that Nasr's solution is acceptable and practical, it will take a long time to implement his solution, while the environmental crisis requires an immediate and urgent solution.

12. Nasr (2006) believes in eternal wisdom as having eternal cosmology. In this way, he accepts only one solution, which is universal and abandons other metaphysical solutions.

13. Nasr (2001) believes in the transcendent unity of religions; however, because he is a Muslim thinker, he uses the sources of Islamic philosophy. But he also considers other traditions to be similar to the Islamic tradition.

14. Environmental theology is essential, but in today's modern world, it alone cannot solve all

problems unless all human beings lead a mystical and Sufi life and turn away from all manifestations of civilization (Rahmati, 2008).

### **Discussion and conclusion**

Nasr (1998) considers the environmental crisis to be the result of the loss of coherence and harmony between man and nature, the lack of metaphysical knowledge, and the epistemological view of holiness, thereby considering modernism and modernity to be responsible for it. He wants to highlight the religious and spiritual factors of the environmental crisis and the gap between knowledge and the sacred entity that plays a major role in environmental pollution and the destruction of the natural order. The order of nature is nothing, but the order of human beings and their harmony is the same as the inner harmony.

The components of nature are our components and the destruction of nature is our destruction. The analysis that can be presented is that man has lost himself and must regain his true self, his sacred reality, and his divine knowledge to overcome the environmental crisis. The environmental crisis is rooted in a deeper crisis, the crisis of spirituality (the same as the loss of a God-like human being) (Nasr, 2006). It is unfortunate to say that for modern human beings, nature has become meaningless and has lost its sanctity. Therefore, Nasr's solution (2000) for the environmental crisis is to return to the spiritual tradition.

"If the man's encounter with nature is not to lead to complete misery, the long tradition of the spiritual view of nature must be revived by the metaphysical teachings on which this vision is based. Contemporary man needs inherent holiness, a God-like nature, and a divine spirit. He is born of this tradition, and the role and sign of divinity cannot be

eliminated from his very existence.

So, as long as man is a human being, he needs the source from which he originates, and he has a deep sense of regret for his sacred nature and the eternal one (Nasr, 2002). Over the past few centuries, theologians and philosophers have often been responsible or at least contributed to the secularization of nature. So, in this way, the groundwork was laid for its full secularization through the Industrial Revolution and the endless use of modern science; only by reviving the spiritual entity and the spiritual conception of nature, which is also based on the rational and metaphysical principles and ideas, one can hope to prevent plundering and destruction of nature by the modern science.

The metaphysical approach and the rational view based on sacred knowledge can help to rediscover the pristine nature and solve the environmental crisis by removing the barriers imposed by individual-based rationalism on the human view of nature. The way out of this crisis is to revive the religious view of nature and restore its sacred science. Religious understanding of nature, including the physical body, which is a central issue in many contemporary discourses about man and nature and is still central to many religions, must be fully expressed in the style and manner of each tradition; according to such knowledge, environmental religious ethics should be promoted in such a way that it would be meaningful on a global scale (Nasr, 2008). Religion, in addition to a kind of ethics, should be expanded to include non-human things; as well, a kind of sacred science should be developed that would help how to deal with other creatures by drawing on the esoteric teachings of religions and knowledge, showing that they are related to us both physically and biologically, as well as psychologically.

Emphasizing the spiritual dimension and

religion, Nasr (2000) considers the environmental crisis to be the external manifestation of the internal crisis of human beings, who have turned from the "sky" to the "earth" and are now on the verge of destroying it. The solution is the rebirth of man as a traditional human being and a bridge between earth and sky; he, once again, imagines the natural world as a sacred realm that reflects the creative forces of God. Religious knowledge of nature, traditional worldviews, and sacred sciences preserved in many non-Western areas must be revived; at the same time, the legacy of the Western tradition itself should be seriously revived (Ibid).

The result is that because the environmental crisis is primarily a spiritual one, it seems that the solution to the crisis is through sanctifying the nature; to do so, it is necessary for a human being, who has lost its divine center, to create a revolution that would restore the sacred entity, thus observing the sacred quality of nature. In this regard, only religion and the philosophies based on it, as the treasures of the sacred and the means to achieve it, can revive the sacred quality of nature, thereby suggesting that the path to the desecration of nature and knowledge be reversed; also, the process leading to secularization and monopoly of science should be reversed and the traditional and metaphysical teachings on the sanctity of nature should be revived.

Once we know that nature is a living truth that has sacred content and is connected to the truth of our existence, we will respect and avoid destroying it. Therefore, by reviving true metaphysics and sacred science, a pattern including all kinds of knowledge should be developed. Sacred science does not negate what modern science has discovered, but provides another kind of knowledge of the world, which is rooted in a sacred reality;

theology can develop in the light of this revival, encompassing nature and protecting it from any damage. Therefore, Nasr (2007), by referring to different traditions in different places and times, confirms the sacred nature. He believes that in today's world, no force other than religion has the power to deter and control.

However, the result of the skeptical views was that religious teachings were an effective factor in creating the environmental crisis, or at least they did not take any effective action to prevent it. However, there are different views on how to deal with environmental issues and a wide range of people including environmental extremists and extremist groups in favor of economic growth have been developed. Undoubtedly, these views are influenced by philosophical and doctrinal ideas about the world and moral approaches to it, making it more necessary and important to

address Nasr's ideas.

Finally, the sanctity of nature means the need to consider ethical teachings before development and technology projects based on the preventive approach; this is correcting human misbehavior toward the environment and contributing significantly to the protection of it; Even more, it may be possible to adopt some measures that can prevent the serious damage to the environment, some damages that can involve high costs.

Undoubtedly, this approach of combining the environmental ethics based on spiritual and religious foundations with civil society responsibilities can be very effective in protecting the environment; without any doubt, recognizing the spiritual dimensions of environmental crisis plays a decisive role in creating appropriate environmental attitudes and behaviors.

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