Anthropocentrism in Environmental Ethics with an Emphasis on the Islamic Perspective

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Abstract

This article examines the emergence of environmental ethics and its key issues, focusing on anthropocentrism, one of the most significant philosophical debates in this field. Some argue that religious anthropocentrism, as found in Christianity and other Abrahamic religions, is the root cause of environmental crises. They believe that any solution to environmental problems must abandon anthropocentric thinking. This paper aims to present an Islamic perspective on religious anthropocentrism. In this view, while humans are considered the noblest of creatures and central to the universe, this elevated status not only does not diminish their moral responsibility toward other beings, especially animals but also makes them more accountable for maintaining the natural order and preventing environmental crises.

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Problem Statement

Humans are beings who, even before reaching the stage of consciousness, awareness, and choice, benefit from the table of nature. The formation of human embryos and fetuses depends on the resources available in nature, where they grow and develop into conscious and autonomous individuals. Humanity's initial use of nature is rooted in natural instincts and occurs within the framework of nature itself. However, as humans develop free will, they gain the ability to transcend the natural boundaries of utilizing the environment. While humans must rely on nature to meet their material needs, they sometimes exploit its resources recklessly for pride, accumulation of wealth, or frivolous purposes. This irresponsible behavior often deprives other living beings, including fellow humans, of the proper use of nature's blessings. Although the improper utilization and destruction of nature is not a new phenomenon, humanity's limited power to cause environmental harm in earlier centuries prevented a full-blown crisis in the relationship between humans and nature.

The advancement of science and knowledge has dramatically increased human power over nature, enabling exploitative tendencies to accelerate. While this dominance-oriented mindset has driven human activity in nature and provided many conveniences for life, its most significant consequence has been environmental[1] crises (Callicott, 2003: 467)

Throughout human history, there have always been unstable and concerning situations that harmed both nature and human society. However, what is meant today by "environmental crises" refers to the disorder and disruptions in nature caused by the rapid expansion of science and technology by humans who view nature as their exclusive property and see themselves entitled to manipulate it as they wish.

Some ethicists argue that the root cause of environmental crises lies in anthropocentric thinking—a legacy of traditional religious and philosophical thought—which has become more pronounced in modern times due to humanity's increased power over nature. They claim that this destructive impact stems from the moral

1 . For a further discussion of the nature of this crisis, see Dr. Nasr' interview with Mozaffar Iqbal

framework of Abrahamic religions, which share a common perspective that places humans at the center of creation despite their diverse approaches. This study seeks to refute this claim by demonstrating its inaccuracy.

Roots of the Environmental Crisis

Two main factors transformed human dominance over nature into an environmental crisis:

1. The expansion and widespread use of new technologies provided humans with extensive capabilities to interact with nature. While beneficial to humans, many of these technologies cause significant harm to the environment. For example, DDT, widely used to control pests, not only eradicated thousands of insect species but also entered the human body, leading to a rise in dangerous diseases such as cancer (Shrader, 2005: 189).
2. A shift in human perspective toward nature. Previously, following divine teachings, humans viewed earthly life as a brief phase in their eternal existence and sought to live simply. However, with the emergence of modern philosophies rooted in materialistic worldviews, this perspective changed drastically. Contrary to deep religious traditions that saw nature as a reflection of God, modern thought stripped nature of its sacredness and imposed no limits on its exploitation.

The first consequence of denying the symbolic nature of the natural world and its role as a mirror for the metaphysical was a profound transformation in the epistemology of modernity. Although this transformation initially emphasized reason and its remarkable ability to uncover truths about existence—facilitated by the emergence of empirical sciences[1] and their expanding domains—it later evolved into

1 . Empirical sciences, which form the core of modernity, view the purpose and aim of science not as understanding nature as a sign, but as understanding its laws to dominate nature. According to some, like Dr. Nasr, this shift in the field of natural studies, which transformed the study of nature from its past form into today's empirical sciences, is one of the roots of the environmental crisis. This change in perspective on nature's role has contributed to the current ecological

an interpretation of reason as an independent understanding that humans achieve without divine guidance. This opened the door to subjective approaches, characterized by using humans as the standard for measuring everything.

Self-founded and independent human reason, particularly in the sensitive realm of moral and social values, turned into subjectivism[1] or moral autonomy[2]. Consequently, instead of understanding the purpose of creation in nature through divine revelation and behaving in a way aligned with that purpose by recognizing natural laws, humans began to view nature as a lifeless matter at their disposal. This perception allowed unrestrained desires to dictate how nature was exploited. Thus, removing the divine realm from nature and emptying it of any sacred signs led to the elimination of any obligations or laws derived from a higher perspective beyond human desires and interests. Ultimately, this confined human efforts and competition

problems. Regarding the role of modern sciences in transforming human religious perspectives, see: Sherrard, Philip, "Modern Sciences and the Dehumanization of Man," translated by Hādi Sharīfī in Javidan Khirad Journal, Year 1, No. 4, Fall 1977, pp. 34-55.
For more on modernity's role in the environmental crisis, refer to: "Traditional Man, Modern Man, and the Environmental Crisis: An Interview with Seyyed Hossein Nasr," translated by Manouchehr Dinparast in Information on Wisdom and Knowledge, Year 3, No. 3, pp. 8-10.

1 . Subjectivism indeed has various forms, one of the most extreme being Individual subjectivism, which considers each person's desires and inclinations as the standard for determining the correctness of their actions. For an examination of this view, see Gensler, Harry J., "A New Introduction to Moral Philosophy," translated by Ḥamīdeh Baḥraynī, ʻĀsimān Khiyāl Publishing, 2006, pp. 123-143. However, there are other forms of subjectivism that, instead of individual minds, consider the collective mind as the basis for moral values. This is known as cultural relativism. For an analysis of this perspective, refer to Holmes, Robert L.,"Basic Moral Philosophy," translated by Masʻūd ʻUlyā, Qoqnūs Publications, up to p. 367. The main characteristic of these viewpoints is rooting morality in human desires rather than in objective matters external to human will and desire.

2 . Moral autonomy, in one sense, implies the authenticity of ethics and its irreducibility to biological sciences or psychology. However, in modern times, this term generally refers to the independence of ethics from religion. In this view, revelation not only does not contribute to ethics, but attention to religious teachings, including its promises and warnings, in moral actions actually diminishes the moral value of those actions. See: Rachels, James, "God and Moral Autonomy" in Can Ethics Provide Answers? London, 1997, pp. 109-123
For a critique of this view, see: Quinn, Philip L. "Religious Obedience and Moral Autonomy" in Divine Commands and Morality, ed. Paul Helm, Oxford 1981, pp. 49-67

in life to the material and natural world, accelerating the greedy exploitation of it.

Dr. Nasr generally believes: "The crisis in the relationship between humans and nature in the West arose from two errors: the lack of a proper and profound understanding of humanity and the sacred reality of nature. This was one of the consequences of the spiritual crisis that emerged during the Renaissance and the 17th century, wherein modern humans saw themselves as earthly beings with no responsibility toward God and His creations. Additionally, as a result of this intellectual and spiritual crisis, the sacredness of nature was set aside." (Nasr, 1387 Sh: 9)

Since both factors contributing to the crisis—namely, the emergence of new and destructive technologies affecting human life, particularly their unrestrained use, as well as ignorance or neglect of divine signs in nature and its desacralization—stem from human behavior, thought, and actions, the main focus for addressing the environmental crisis has become human thinking, behavior, and conduct[1]. Environmental ethics is one of the most fundamental outcomes of this effort to address the crisis, which is also the subject of this article's examination of one of its most significant issues.

What initially comes to mind with the term "environmental ethics" is the application of known ethical principles to human behavior towards nature. While some aspects of modern environmental ethics do this, offering recommendations for interacting with nature and animals, the scope of this emerging field of ethics is much broader. These researchers believe that environmental ethics should be based on a different normative theory, addressing fundamental theoretical issues. For instance, it should clarify whether nature or animals have intrinsic moral value and are subject to ethical considerations like humans (Shrader, 2005: 191).

Subject and Issues of Environmental Ethics

Many discussions in books and articles on environmental ethics

1 . For a more accurate understanding of the role of humans in the environment, see: Watt, Kenneth, Fundamentals of Environmental Science, translated by AbdulHussein Vahabzadeh, Jihad University Publishing, Mashhad, 8th edition, 2005, pages 147-176.

revolve around theoretical topics, such as the moral status of animals, plants, and nature. Consequently, environmental ethics has a more theoretical nature compared to other branches of applied ethics.

Louis Pojman, in his influential book Environmental Ethics, organizes the issues of environmental ethics into two sections: theoretical and practical.

The primary issue in this section is the debate over the exclusive moral status of humans, which many believe characterizes conventional moral theories. In contrast, alternative theories propose granting moral status to animals or even the entirety of nature. Other topics include ecofeminism and responsibility toward future generations.

Concerning the practical issues, the main practical concerns are population growth and global poverty, which some researchers argue are interconnected. Additional topics include pollution causes, disposal of hazardous waste, and nuclear energy. This section aims to provide specific practical models to address these challenges.

Without delving into practical matters, this article focuses on two fundamental questions:

1. Do humans have intrinsic moral obligations only toward other humans, or do these obligations extend to animals, plants, and even nature itself?
2. Should anthropocentrism in ethics be abandoned in favor of new perspectives like ecocentrism to expand the scope of moral considerations?

By addressing these questions from an Islamic perspective, the foundations of Islamic environmental ethics become evident. Islamic environmental ethics not only ensures the preservation and vitality of nature for future generations but also views nature as a mirror reflecting divine beauty. It consistently calls humanity toward transcendence and spiritual growth through contemplation of nature.

Anthropocentric Environmentalism

In this perspective, only humans possess intrinsic value and moral status. This means that every human being is responsible only to another human as a moral agent and has no inherent or

primary moral responsibility toward animals or inanimate objects. If, at times, a person is compelled to act in a morally specific way toward animals, plants, or even natural objects, it is solely due to their connection with a moral agent, such as oneself or another human being.

First, let us clarify the meaning of intrinsic value and extrinsic (non-intrinsic) value of something. To understand the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic value, it is sufficient to note that sometimes something has value for itself and in and of itself, while at other times it has value for something else. In the latter case, comparison with something else must always be involved. However, in the former case, one can speak of the intrinsic value of something without comparing it to anything else.

It is often claimed that traditional and prevalent Western ethics have been anthropocentric, recognizing moral importance and status only for humans (Wenz, 2007: 258). To better understand this approach, we'll first discuss Lynn White's[1] perspective, which is frequently debated in environmental ethics literature.

Western attitudes towards nature are typically rooted in Judeo-Christian religious teachings (Old and New Testaments) and ancient Greek philosophy, particularly Aristotle's works. The general belief is that both sources are strongly anthropocentric, unlike some Eastern religions and philosophical schools. In Abrahamic religions and Greek philosophy, especially Aristotle's works, signs of anthropocentrism are evident. Humans are considered the only beings with moral status, both responsible for others and deserving of ethical consideration from others.[2]

White refers to certain verses in the Bible, including the first creation narrative in Genesis, where God, after describing the creation of other objects and living beings, mentions the creation of humans: *"God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in*

1 . Lynn White's classic article titled "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis" has been published in various places. For example, see: Pojman, Louis P., Environmental Ethics, Wadsworth, Fourth Edition, pp. 19-26.

2 . For a brief overview of the historical development of this perspective, refer to: Brennan, Andrew and Yeuk-Sze Lo, "Environmental Ethics," The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'" (Genesis 1:27-29)

Here we refrain from presenting criticisms that other authors have raised against White, such as:

1. If this were true, the environmental crisis should not affect non-religious countries like China, which exist in a non-anthropocentric environment.
2. Seeking a single factor for the environmental crisis is simplistic, and important factors like capitalism, technological expansion, urbanization, and individualism play a more significant role than Christian anthropocentrism in this regard.
3. Why, despite the same religious thinking in the past when religiosity was even more intense, such a problem did not arise, and with the emergence of modernity, such a crisis befell humanity[1].

We'll address critiques of White's perspective from an Islamic viewpoint later, but first, let's explain different interpretations of anthropocentrism in ethics.

In environmental ethics discussions, various anthropocentric theories have been developed. They all share the view that natural beings and objects, apart from humans, have instrumental value. In this approach, what gives value to non-human entities is their usefulness to humans. Different theories emerge depending on which uses or benefits are emphasized.

Sometimes economic benefit is the focus, and our value system is based on the economic utility of natural objects and beings - their role in our economic growth and development. Anthropocentric theories that consider economic benefit as the criterion for valuing natural things are divided into two groups:

1. Those who believe natural resources are unlimited, thus imposing no restrictions on their economic use.

1 . For a more detailed examination of these types of criticisms of Lynn White's view, see: Moncrief, Lewis W., "The Cultural Basis of Our Environmental Crisis" in Louis Pojman's Environmental Ethics, 2005.

2. Those who believe the limitation of natural resources for economic exploitation introduce specific ethical constraints and obligations concerning nature.

The first group is known for advocating unrestrained exploitation and expansionism of nature and its resources, while the second group, with the same instrumentalist approach, is associated with resource conservation and development.

A third interpretation of anthropocentric views differs from the previous two, emphasizing the non-economic benefits that humans can derive from nature. This theory, known as resource preservation, focuses on evaluating nature and its elements based on non-economic benefits that cannot be measured economically. Here, the basis for preserving various species or natural objects is not their economic value, but other uses humans can have from nature, such as scientific research or aesthetic appreciation[1].

In any case, in this approach as well, only the human being possesses intrinsic value, while other matters hold instrumental value — though not of an economic kind. Understanding that something has instrumental value and is useful is easier than conceiving that something has intrinsic value. Nevertheless, in traditional religious and even non-religious Western thought, only humans are considered to have intrinsic value.

Believers attribute intrinsic value to humans due to their possession of a soul, which is the source of their creation in the divine image. Non-religious Western culture also considers humans to have intrinsic value, believing that they are the only rational beings among all creatures.

Non-Anthropocentric Environmentalism

With the growth and expansion of scientific research in biology, many people developed serious doubts about the special creation of humans accepted by Christianity and the exclusive rational ability of humans endorsed by the non-religious philosophical culture of the West. Cognitive sciences[2] seem to have revealed the deep

1. For research on the various types of these uses, see: Fox, Warwick,"A Critical Overview of Environmental Ethics" in Applied Ethics, pp. 25-28.
2. Cognitive sciences refer to a collection of disciplines such as evolutionary

connection between humans and other animals, and their similarities. It has become clear that other animals also possess rational characteristics to varying degrees, such as mental representation, problem-solving, use of various tools, symbolic behavior with others, and finally self-awareness and self-knowledge. Thus, the idea that human reason and rational capabilities could be the basis for anthropocentrism came into question.

Although, some like Peter Singer, believe that in traditional thinking, the basis of intrinsic value was not consciousness and reason, but rather the ability to feel pleasure and pain. For this reason, they argue that a newborn child with no awareness or reason yet has the same moral status as a rational adult.

With the collapse of the traditional distinction between humans and other animals based on the presence of consciousness in one and its absence in the other, the scope of ethical considerations expanded to include animals as well as humans.

Thus, the foundation of non-religious anthropocentrism, which was the exclusive existence of reason in humans, collapsed. However, religious anthropocentrism based on the existence of the soul was also called into question. Doubt about the existence of the soul was raised not only by materialistic and empiricist philosophies but also by emerging sciences like cognitive science. According to cognitive sciences, the brain is responsible for continuously constructing our images of the world, including ourselves, and it is claimed that in the brain's set of self-images, there is nothing that can be called a soul - an independent entity that could continue to exist even after brain death.

Although many believers in the West did not lose their faith and belief in the existence of the soul amidst doubts arising from modern philosophies and cognitive sciences, they faced difficulties in rationally explaining it. This collection of doubts paved the way for setting aside the fundamental anthropocentrism which, according to claims by people like Lynn White, is the basis of traditional religious and even non-religious conventional ethics in the West.

With the abandonment of the idea that only humans have

biology, neurophysiology, neuropsychology, comparative psychology, linguistics, and artificial intelligence.

intrinsic value, various non-anthropocentric theories that extend the range of intrinsic value beyond humans emerged and dominated the field of environmental ethical research. The main theories can be classified into sentience-centered, life-centered, and holistic integrity approaches.

A precise explanation of the theories that fall under this approach requires examining their rational foundations, arguments, and practical implications, which is beyond the scope of this article.

Islamic Anthropocentrism

Islam is the final link in a chain of divine religions revealed at different times to guide humanity toward *Hayat Tayyiba*—a pure and virtuous way of life that serves as a prelude to eternal salvation. As such, Islam not only confirms the fundamental teachings of earlier Abrahamic religions but also completes them. Therefore, many of the Islamic perspectives on humanity's position and its relationship with nature discussed here are also applicable to major religions like Christianity and Judaism.

The discussion on humanity's status and its relationship with nature takes various forms. Here, the focus is limited to aspects related to the environmental crisis. Addressing this topic is particularly necessary because, according to figures like Lynn White, religions have undeniably contributed to exacerbating environmental crises. This section serves as a response to such accusations.

The idea that nature is subservient to humans originates from religious teachings. Both the Bible and the Qur'an emphasize that the earth, heavens, and living creatures exist for human benefit. However, this analysis does not delve into whether followers of divine religions historically leaned more toward the spiritual dimension of religion—fostering empathy and kinship with nature, as scholars like Dr. Seyyed Hossein Nasr assert—or whether they misunderstood the concept of nature's subservience to humanity, promoting destructive anthropocentrism instead.

While such historical debates are valuable, this analysis focuses on examining religious texts and teachings. Despite appearing to support White's interpretation, these texts collectively present a different model of anthropocentrism when describing humanity's position relative to nature. This issue is

explained through two interconnected but distinct points[1]:

The Status of Nature (Non-Human Entities)

A. Nature is God's creation and one of the magnificent manifestations of divine wisdom, power, and management. Encouraging humans to reflect on various aspects of nature, including animals, plants, and inanimate objects, to recognize God's power and craftsmanship is among the most important religious teachings. *"Indeed, in the alternation of night and day and what God has created in the heavens and earth, there are surely signs for a people who are Godwary."* (Quran 10: 6)

The concept of creation as signs (ayat) of God, repeatedly emphasized in the Quran, is a fundamental Islamic teaching. The important question is: What do these signs indicate?

Primarily, according to Quranic verses, these are signs of God, symbolic words pointing to a meaning beyond their apparent form. The main purpose of calling humans to deep contemplation of nature is to see what nature symbolizes.

However, the mirror of nature, besides reflecting God, also indicates something else important. There is purpose and intent in the creation of the heavens and earth and all within them. *"We did not create the heavens and earth and all between them in vain. That is the assumption of those who disbelieve. So, woe to those who disbelieve from the Fire"* (Quran 38: 27).

Therefore, reflection on nature can lead to understanding the purpose of creation, thus revealing the destination of creation. Nature and natural processes can largely indicate a path that guides humans, away from unnatural deviations, towards the final destination of creation. The natural guidance in nature is a sign of the voluntary guidance of humans towards God. Certainly, the expanse of creation is not for play (Quran 21:16-17), and the natural life cycle of humans ultimately reaches its end by returning to God (Quran 23:115).

There is balance in nature (Quran 55:5), and there is no contradiction or flaw in the creation of nature. "He who created the seven heavens one above another: No want of proportion will

1 . Some of these points are derived from the following article: Mawily, Izzi Deen, Islamic Environmtal Ethics, Law and Society in Ethics of Environment and Development, ed. J.R. Engel (London: Belhaven Press, 1990).

you see in the creation of (Allah) Most Gracious. So, turn your vision again: do you see any flaw?" (Quran 67:3). Nature glorifies God and submits to Him (Quran 17:44).

With such a description of nature in the Quran, can we say that humans have the right to play with the order of nature as they wish and exploit it to any extent they desire? Doesn't this mean scratching the mirror of nature and blurring God's image in it? Isn't the destruction of nature equivalent to fading the signs of the path for humans? It is on this basis that Imam Ali (a.s) considers it a capital for human transcendence and growth[1].

B. The Quran and the teachings of the Imams (a.s) emphasize respecting animal rights and explain how humans should interact properly with them. In the Quran, animals are referred to as "nations" (Ummah) like humans.

"There is no animal on land, nor a bird that flies with its wings, but they are communities like yourselves. We have not omitted anything from the Book. Then they will be mustered toward their Lord." (Quran 6: 38)

With such a portrayal of animals, can we say that humans are allowed to hunt them as they wish, for example, for recreation and pleasure, and put different animal species at risk? Doesn't the concept of the resurrection of animals mean that one day they will file complaints against humans in God's court on Judgment Day?

The idea of animal resurrection can emphasize human attention and care in dealing with animals. Animals also have a share in the earth's bounty, and humans have no right to ignore their share. *"And the earth—He laid it out for mankind. In it are fruits and date-palms with sheaths, grain with husk, and fragrant herbs[2]."* (Quran 54:10-12)

The Status of Humans

A. Alongside the previously mentioned verses about nature, we also find instances in the Quran where God states: *"It is He who*

1 . Ṣubḥī Ṣāliḥ, Nahj al-Balāghah, Wisdom 131, p. 492.

2 . In many Persian translations and Arabic commentaries, the term anām [as in the verse] has been interpreted to mean "human beings," in line with the view of one well-known exegete. However, numerous lexicographers—as well as notable figures such as Ibn ʿAbbās—understand it to refer to all living creatures. See: Ṭūsī, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn, al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān, Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, Beirut, n.d., 9/466.

created for you all that is on the earth. Then He directed Himself to the heaven and made them seven heavens, and He is Knowing of all things" (Quran 2:29).

Even more significant is the verse: *"And He has subjected for you the sun and the moon, both constantly orbiting, and He has subjected for you the night and the day"* (Quran 14:33).

From these verses, it can be inferred that divine religions in general—and Islam in particular—affirm humanity's superiority over and dominion over nature. They emphasize that everything has been made subservient to humans.

At first glance, this notion might appear, as some like Lynn White suggest, to represent a form of misguided anthropocentrism. Such an interpretation could seemingly justify unrestricted human exploitation of nature and even other animals.

B. The reality is that the concept of nature being subjugated (*musakhkhar*) to humans becomes clear when considered alongside the fundamental Islamic concept of humans as God's vicegerent (*Khalifatullah*) on Earth. Yes, nature is subjugated to humans because humans are God's representatives on Earth. However, being a vicegerent does not mean that humans are free from all limits and boundaries in their interactions with nature. Humans are meant to preserve and cultivate God's creation, not to destroy it, as such destruction would contradict their role as God's vicegerent.

Indeed, nature is subservient to humans, but this does not imply permission for any kind of exploitation or harmful interaction with it. Rather, it means that nature has been made accessible for beneficial use responsibly and appropriately. Just as God, in His infinite wisdom, has established balance and proportion in all things and governs the natural order with justice, fairness, and benevolence, His vicegerent on Earth must also adopt a just and benevolent approach toward animals and all other elements of nature.

Therefore, even if some individuals within religious communities have misunderstood the meaning of nature's subjugation and acted wrongly toward it, reflection on core religious teachings reveals otherwise. Islam, while emphasizing humanity's central role in creation, warns humans against considering themselves as unconditional rulers of the world.

The human being is not the lord of the universe but a servant, and the more deeply rooted he is in servitude and adherence to its principles—such as ethical conduct, justice, and compassion—the more firmly he is grounded in his human identity and, in reality, the closer he is to his central role.

Although we do not intend to undertake a historical analysis, contrary to White's view, it appears that the environmental crisis did not emerge within the framework of religious thought—particularly the notion of divine vicegerency[1], which, in my opinion, affirms and reinforces servitude and commitment to moral constraints. Rather, it arose from abandoning that perspective and adopting a non-sign-based view of nature, as seen in various forms of materialism and certain strands of modern philosophy.

C. In addition to the previous points, one of the most significant teachings of the Abrahamic religions is that human life within the realm of nature is but a fleeting moment in humanity's eternal existence. Therefore, it is not appropriate for humans to devote all their efforts to their temporary dwelling. Nature is not a battleground for competition to exploit its resources as much as possible; such a perspective is rejected. Instead, nature is a divine blessing provided so that humans may prepare the provisions necessary for their eternal journey.

As Imam Ali (AS) beautifully stated, *"The world is a marketplace where the friends of God acquire provisions for the Hereafter*[2]*."*

Within this perspective on nature, humans are naturally encouraged toward simplicity and moderation in living. Extravagance (*Israf*) and greed (*Takathur*), which lie at the root of environmental destruction, are incompatible with the religious view of humanity and life. Interestingly, those who see nature as humanity's final opportunity for existence—without any hope of life beyond it—often seek to exploit it as much as possible and deny any responsibility toward it.

In contrast, a believer considers themselves accountable for

1 . In Christian texts, the term stewardship is often used, which to a large extent corresponds to the concept of Khalīfat Allāh (vicegerency of God). For further examination, see: Clare Palmer, Stewardship: A Case Study in Environmental Ethics in Berry, Robert James, Environment Stewardship, 2006.
2 . Ṣubḥī Ṣāliḥ, Nahj al-Balāghah, Wisdom 131, p. 492.

every action taken concerning nature, viewing it as a trust (*Amanah*) from God. Moreover, since they perceive their time in this world as brief, they refrain from immersing themselves in the excessive exploitation of nature. This sense of responsibility stems from the belief that life on Earth is merely a transient phase within the broader context of eternal existence.

D. Among the signs found in the teachings of religions, particularly Islam that refute the mistaken interpretation of figures like Lynn White regarding the concept of anthropocentrism in Islam is the abundance of recommendations and directives concerning how humans should interact with water, soil, animals, and other natural entities. Any aimless or improper behavior toward these elements—such as soil and water—is considered inappropriate and deserving of condemnation.

From these recommendations, it becomes evident that Islam's approach to nature differs from many non-religious anthropocentric views. It does not treat nature merely as a tool for future human use. Instead, Islamic teachings reveal an acknowledgment of the intrinsic value of natural entities.

Although there is no space here to reference specific teachings and instructions, they can be found by consulting religious texts, especially books of Hadith and narrations[1].

1 . For example, see: Farahani-Fard, Saʿid. Muḥīṭ-e Zīst: Mushkilāt va Rāh-hā-ye Burūn-Raft az Manẓar-e Islām [Environment: Problems and Solutions from the Perspective of Islam]. Iqtiṣād-e Islāmi Journal, vol. 6, Summer 2006, pp. 106–109.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be emphasized that the concept of religious anthropocentrism is not the source of the environmental crisis. Therefore, the solution to the environmental crisis is not to turn to non-anthropocentric views such as Gaia theory or Earth spiritualism, nor is it to deny the superior value of humans or equate their status with other beings. Instead, the solution lies in recognizing the importance of humanity's role as God's vicegerent (*Khalifah*), which allows for reasonable use of nature and even animals within a defined framework.

Moreover, acknowledging the mirror-like value of nature, which is the source of its intrinsic worth, can free us from falling into the illusion of playing God over the natural world. This perspective prevents us from being trapped in non-religious viewpoints that have manifested in various forms of non-anthropocentric theories.

Natural beings are manifestations of God, and thus they are all valuable. However, among them, there is a kind of gradation and hierarchy, with humans being the noblest. Yet, the meaning of human nobility and superiority does not imply ignoring the dignity and mirror-like status of other beings. Humans have a great and perpetual responsibility to cultivate and maintain the Earth and preserve its orderly structure, which serves as a divine world-reflecting cup. They can never tolerate the sickness or death of nature, as they see it as the death of divine signs and ultimately the decline of human dignity itself.

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