Seyyed Hossein Nasr's Ecological Ethics

Bridging Science, Religion, and the Environment

By

Muzzamel Hussain Imran

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Introduction

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, an Iranian-American scholar of Islam and comparative religion, born in 1933, is a prominent figure in the field of Islamic views on ecological matters. He is widely recognized as a leading authority and possibly the "founding father" of Islamic environmentalism. Nasr's work has paved the way for ongoing debates and discussions on the relationship between Islam and the environment.[1] He was among the first to approach the topic from an Islamic perspective and spent a significant part of his life in the US, where he raised awareness of the spiritual aspects of the ecological crisis in the Western world. In 1965, several months before Lynn White Jr's famous book on the "historical roots of our ecological crisis," Nasr published an essay on the subject.[2]

Despite Nasr's persistent efforts in writing and speaking about the topic, his message has not garnered the same level of attention as Lynn White's book. White blamed Christianity for the ecological crisis and played a significant role in shifting Western cultural views away from religion. On the other hand, Nasr's views advocating a return to genuine religion may have been less well-received. For reasons unknown, Nasr's ecological perspectives seem to have gone largely unnoticed until now. Nasr's reputation is extensive and acknowledged in the field of Islamic philosophy, comparative religion, and the interplay between Islam and modernity. He is also celebrated for his holistic perspective on knowledge, science, and the sacred, making him a commonly cited source for both Muslim and non-Muslim individuals. Nasr's written works on Islamic cosmology, mysticism, and metaphysics, have established him as a respected contemporary Iranian philosopher. His contribution to academia has earned him high regard within academic circles.[3] Furthermore, Nasr has emerged as a distinguished personality behind the contemporary program "*A Common*

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1 B. Taylor (ed.), "Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature" (New York: Continuum, 2005-2008), s.v. "Seyyed Hossein Nasr."

2 In this book, the "ethos of medieval Christianity" is linked to the emergence of "an exploitative attitude towards nature in the Western World." For further information, see: B. Taylor (ed.), "Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature" (New York: Continuum, 2005-2008), s.v. "White, Lynn"; Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," Science 155:3767 (March 10, 1967): 1203-1207.

3 M. Fakhry, "A History of Islamic Philosophy" (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 322.

Word," aiming to cultivate optimistic communication with the Catholic Church. Various publications have recently surfaced, scrutinizing and evaluating the perception of Nasr's scientific contributions in Indonesia, along with his stance on religion, diversity, interfaith conversation, and association with Traditionalism.[4] [5] Around the turn of the 21st century, a cohort of academics took notice of Nasr's ecological teachings and initiated a study of the interplay between humanity, its surroundings, and the spiritual realm. Nasr's ecological contributions have subsequently been recognized in the authoritative *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*. [6] Despite the valuable perspectives these sources provide, a holistic evaluation of Nasr's ecological viewpoints remains absent.

The objective of this book is to analyze and contextualize Nasr's ecological thought, particularly focusing on the crucial role played by the concepts of "religion," "tradition," and "modernity" in his argument. According to Nasr, to solve the ecological crisis, the contemporary world must reexamine traditional principles and knowledge concerning nature and the cosmos. He believes that only "traditional cosmologies" hold the key to solving this crisis, which can be found at the core of all genuine religions or traditions, but must be retrieved from their often neglected heritage. In this book, we will investigate how Nasr's understanding of traditional cosmologies can be situated within the frameworks of "traditionalism" or "perennial philosophy." This inquiry will underscore the belief in the "intrinsic harmony of all religions," which is closely linked to intellectual movements in the West, including "Western esotericism." A precise definition is required from an academic perspective in order to tackle these challenging categories.

Nasr asserts that Islam holds a critical significance in the present global context, as the onset of modernity has led to a significant loss of traditional knowledge in Western society, while Islamic communities maintain a strong connection to the sacred. Therefore, Nasr believes that Islam offers valuable

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4 "A Common Word", accessed March 25, 2023, www.acommonword.com/.

5 Adnan Aslan, "Religious Pluralism in Christian and Islamic Philosophy, The Thought of John Hick and Seyyed Hossein Nasr" (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1998). Seyyed Hossein Nasr on "Science and the Reception of his Ideas in Indonesia," MA book, Leiden University, 2005,

6 Bron Taylor (ed.), "Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature, 2 vols." (New York: Continuum, 2005, 2008), s.v. "Nasr, S.H.," "Perennial philosophy," "Islam," "Islam and eco-justice," "Islam and environmental ethics."

insights that could benefit the West. This research will primarily focus on Nasr's perspective on the "Islamic tradition," the Islamic approach to environmental issues, and the ethical principles of Islam regarding the environment. According to Nasr, traditional Islam encompasses both an esoteric and exoteric aspect, with inner and outer dimensions. The non-Western manifestation of Western esotericism can be observed in the neo-platonic, mystical, gnostic, or theosophical philosophy that characterizes the inner dimension of Sufism. In contrast, the outer aspect follows orthodox practices and involves adherence to traditional *shari'a* laws concerning religious rituals (*ibadat*) and social interactions (*mu'amalat*), rooted in the Quran and Hadith. However, Nasr's concept of Islam differs from that of fundamentalists, as it encompasses not only these laws but also the cultural accomplishments of fourteen centuries of Islamic civilization, including philosophy, arts, poetry, architecture, and urban planning.

Nasr's Islamic environmental ethics are rooted in the beliefs mentioned above. Although his views are comprehensive and do not fully address practical implementation, they serve as a guide to the emerging fields of Islamic environmental law, economics, and Islamic reformist political theories. These fields represent the most direct application of Nasr's Islamic perspective and can be viewed as practical interpretations of his metaphysical cosmology. The relationship between worldview and practice in the Islamic discourse on the environment is significant. Nasr, among many others, posits that Islam provides a comprehensive worldview and the means to translate cosmology into practice, which he describes as connecting the Heavens to the Earth. These means, derived from the classical sharia (madhab), facilitate the establishment of ethical norms for environmental concerns. However, this gives rise to a politically charged environment with divergent and conflicting opinions on the application of *Sharia* in the present-day context. This book aims to contextualize Nasr's perspectives within the wider range of current Islamic ideologies.

Contemporary Ecological Crisis

According to substantial studies, the causes of recent global warming may mostly be attributed to anthropogenic sources or human actions

that have a significant negative influence on the environment.[7] There are also grave concerns about the effects on human society as a whole. These human actions are regarded as environmentally important behaviors. Environmentally relevant behaviors can be defined by their effect, which refers to how much they affect resource availability and the composition of the biosphere, or by their purpose, which refers to action conducted with the intention of changing the environment.[8] The process of modernity has caused humanity to turn outward, making it difficult for them to comprehend that the environmental destruction they are causing is a manifestation of the internal destitution of their own souls.[9] Stott discusses the consequences of pollution on humanity, arguing that it poses a greater threat than even nuclear war. He identifies four major factors that are contributing to the devastation of the natural environment: population growth, depletion of resources and biodiversity, improper waste disposal, and the release of toxic chemicals into the atmosphere, which affects the protective ozone layer. According to Stott, these factors are interconnected and constitute a singular "interlocking global crisis."[10]

Since the advent of large-scale agriculture and human habitation, the world's forests have suffered immense devastation. Unfortunately, the damage has continued to the present day, and if deforestation trends persist, it is projected that nearly 25% of all species will become extinct by 2025. In addition to their intrinsic value, forests play a vital role in supporting human life by providing food, fiber, medicine, industrial goods, and genetic resources necessary for breeding better crop varieties, which in turn, support global food security.[11] However, human activities have led to rising levels of carbon dioxide, methane, and CFCs in the atmosphere, contributing to climate change. This, in turn, is causing the polar ice caps to melt, which will lead to a rise in sea levels, disrupting agriculture and

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7 Paul C. Stern, "New Environmental Theories: Toward A Coherent Theory Of Environmentally Significant Behavior," Journal Of Social Issues 56, no. 3 (2000): 407-424, doi:10.1111/0022-4537.00175.

8 Ibid.

9 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man" (Chicago: ABC International Group, 1997), 3.

10 John R. W Stott, "Wakai No Tsutome" (repr., Tōkyō: Sugu Shobō, 2001).

11 Jessica Tuchman Mathews, "Preserving The Global Environment" (repr., New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), 1.

shifting ecological habitats across the landscape. Unless effective measures are taken to mitigate these impacts, many species that are unable to adjust to the changing climate and its effects could face extinction.[12]

The environmental and ecological crisis of today is largely attributed by climate scientists to the economies and lifestyles based on contemporary science and technology.[13] The crisis comprises various issues such as air pollution caused by burning fossil fuels (oil, gas, and coal), pollution of land and water due to chemical waste from industries, and its aftermath which includes climate change, deforestation, desertification, ocean acidification and a risk to several species. The term "environmental crisis" refers to the developing state of ecological disequilibrium caused mostly by human activities based on contemporary technology, as expressed by the majority of climatologists. There has been a recent discussion about a specific aspect of the ecological problem, namely global warming. Scientists affiliated with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) discovered inaccurate data on the melting glaciers of the Himalayan, which sparked the following discussion.[14] Notwithstanding, most climate specialists maintain that this finding should not be construed as proof that the crisis is either non-existent or not caused by human activities. Their argument is that the IPCC and other scientific evaluations of climate change, which engage numerous scientists to conduct extensive and thorough investigations, are prone to making errors. However, when these errors are identified, they are corrected. The recent events have not altered the essential conclusions about climate change in any significant way.[15]

Will Stephen and his team, which included Nobel laureate Paul Crutzen, put forth a convincing argument that the current environmental crisis

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Peter Doran and Maggie Kendall Zimmerman, "Examining the Scientific Consensus on Climate Change," *EOS* publication of American Geophysical Union, 90, no.3 (January 20, 2009): 22. Naomi Oreskes, "The Scientific Consensus on Climate Change: How Do We Know We're Not Wrong?" in *Climate Change: What it Means for Us, Our Children, and Our Grandchildren*, eds. Joseph Dimento and Pamela Doughman (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), 65-99.

[14] Elizabeth Rosenthal, "U.N. Panel's Glacier Warning is Criticized As Exaggerated" New York Times, January 18, 2010.

[15] Peter Gleick et al., "Climate Change and the Integrity of Science," Science, vol. 328. no. 5979 (May 7, 2010): 689-690.

can be attributed to unrelenting industrial growth.[16] Their claim was that pre-industrial civilizations had an insignificant effect on the environment and that it is the contemporary economic system and way of life, powered by advanced science and technology, that bears the blame for the environmental decline.[17] Stephen and his colleagues proved that the upsurge in atmospheric CO2 levels commenced solely following the commencement of the industrial revolution. It steadily rose and by 1900, surpassed the highest limits achieved in the preceding 250 thousand years.[18]

In addition, they made the discovery that the acceleration of economic growth and technological advancement correlates with an increase in atmospheric CO2, which currently stands at roughly 33% more than levels present before the industrial era.[19] The exponential growth of the world's population by six times since the Industrial Revolution is frequently considered a leading cause of environmental issues. However, this surge is in fact a direct consequence of the use of fossil fuels to manufacture synthetic fertilizers that employ reactive nitrogen compounds from atmospheric nitrogen. This method has helped to enhance food production and enable the progress of other essential services that paved the way for modern population expansion.[20]

Various novel reports by scientific investigations support the need for a real solution to the situation. In a groundbreaking effort, Johann Rockstrom, who serves as the director of the Stockholm Resilience Centre, collaborated with twenty-six distinguished scientists to define the boundaries that determine the extent to which human society can maintain itself. [21] These experts have recognized nine crucial planetary systems that are at risk due to contemporary lifestyles, including atmospheric CO2 concentration, ocean acidification, stratospheric ozone depletion, nitrogen and phos-

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16 Will Stephen, Paul J. Crutzen and John R. McNeill, "The Anthropocene: Are Humans Now Overwhelming the Great Forces of Nature," Ambio vol. 36, no. 8 (December 2007): 614-621.

17 Ibid., 615.

18 Ibid., 617

19 Ibid., 618

20 Ibid., 616.

21 Johan Rockstrom et al, "A Safe Operating Space for Humanity," Nature, vol. 461, no. 7263 (September 24, 2009): 472-475.

phorus cycles, global freshwater consumption, alterations in land use, loss of biodiversity, atmospheric aerosol loading, and various forms of chemical pollution. Out of these systems, atmospheric CO2 concentration, nitrogen cycle equilibrium, and biodiversity preservation have already exceeded the acceptable limits. Scientific studies have led to a significant conclusion that our focus cannot be limited to any one planetary system alone, and instead, we must consider the interconnection and interdependence among these systems. If we cross a boundary in one system, it puts other boundaries at serious risk as well.[22]

According to the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the global temperature is projected to rise by 5.2 degrees Celsius by the end of this century, which is significantly higher than the previous estimate of 2.4 degrees Celsius.[23] Coral reefs may become chemically inhospitable due to the process of ocean acidification caused by the absorption of CO2 by ocean water. This could pose a threat to the habitats of a significant portion of the marine population by the year 2050.[24] Moreover, the quantity of nitrogen compounds that enter the ecosystem through synthetic fertilizers surpasses the amount introduced by all natural processes combined. This has become a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and water pollution.[25] The effects of pollution on both human and non-human life can be profound, even if they are not immediately apparent. In fact, it is predicted that the annual decline in biodiversity will be at least one hundred times greater than the level prior to industrialization, which will have significant consequences for the environment in the coming decades.[26] Studies conducted by David Pimentel, a well-known scientist at Cornell University, indicate that pollution of water, air, and soil is already responsible for forty percent of all global fatalities annually.[27]

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[22] Rockstrom et al, "A Safe Operating Space for Humanity," 474.

[23] "The Key Scientific Developments Since The IPCC Fourth Assessment Report of June 2009," prepared by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in Science Brief 2, June 2009, p. 5, available from www.pewclimate.org.

[24] Ibid., 1.

[25] Rockstrom et al., "A Safe Operating Space," 474.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Andrea Thompson, "Pollution May Cause 40 Percent of Global Deaths," LiveScience, September 10, 2007, http://www.livescience.com/environment/070910_pollution_deaths.html.

Many prominent economists, however, have largely rejected these observations about the environment that appear to be relevant to the present economic system. Recently, one individual expressed the belief that "if things go as they have since 1800... The environment will be improving" but this statement emphasizes the need for further discussion on the matter.[28] However, our argument aligns with most climate scientists' views that human actions, facilitated by current knowledge and technology, are the driving force behind the environmental problem.

Over the past few decades, many environmental organizations, as well as national and international economic strategies, have made efforts to address this growing challenge, particularly since the early 1970s. To comprehend Seyyed Hossein Nasr's unique religious and philosophical approach to the issue, we must first examine his background, wide-ranging intellectual work, and his historical position in Western and Islamic environmental activism.

What is New

Despite Nasr's historical significance, the depths of his message, and its present relevance, his response to the environmental crisis has never been presented in a single work comprehensively and systematically. Nasr's investigation into the philosophical roots of the environmental problem leads him to attribute it to rationalism and contemporary technology, as evidenced in his two works: The Encounter of "*Man and Nature"* and "*Religion and the Order of Nature*." As a solution to reinvigorate a religious worldview, he recommends a spiritual reawakening and advocates for the replacement of modern science with a sacred science that honors the metaphysical principles present in all religious traditions. According to Nasr, resolving the environmental crisis in any civilization would necessitate leveraging the conventional intellectual resources of that civilization. Nevertheless, his works do not present a complete and unambiguous plan of action for the resolution he envisions for any given civilization. His approach is evident in several essays and interviews where he discusses

[28] Deirdre N. McCloskey, "Bourgeois Dignity: Why Economics Can't Explain the Modern World" (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 12.

how the Muslim world can address the environmental crisis within the present intellectual framework.

In order to grasp Nasr's approach to the Islamic world, it's essential to possess knowledge about various aspects of Islamic intellectual traditions that he alludes to. There is a need for a comprehensive single volume that covers all the aspects of Nasr's perspective on the environmental issue. Furthermore, there is a need for further examination of how Nasr's ideas interact with other environmental philosophies and worldviews, as well as their relevance and applicability to non-Islamic cultures and societies.

This book underscores that Nasr's concurrence is not exclusively centered on physical survival, which is the primary concern of mainstream environmentalism, or moral instructions, as highlighted by religious environmentalism. Rather, it is grounded in his comprehension of the spiritual essence of nature and its relevance to the human mission as elucidated by religion. According to Nasr, it is imperative to have a strong knowledge base because modern science, which he deems accountable for the crisis, contests religions with the knowledge it purports to hold. The expectation is that this study will aid in comprehending this distinguished thinker, who has been advocating spiritual renewal as the ultimate long-term remedy for the environmental crisis since the 1960s. This will be achieved by assembling arguments that are pertinent to the present intellectual climate, a view shared by numerous prominent environmentalists today.

Why this is Study Important

Religion and ecology specialist Max Oelschlaeger emphasized the significance of religion in addressing the environmental crisis. He asserted that some social values such as sustainability and conservation of endangered species and natural habitats cannot be fulfilled through market mechanisms.[29] Rather, religion is the key means for understanding these values as it represents the foremost cultural dialogue outside of the modern narrative of economic expansion and technological solutions. [30] Mary Evelyn Tucker,

[29] Max Oelschlaeger, "Caring for Creation: An Ecumenical Approach to the Environmental Crisis" (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 48.

[30] Ibid. p. 47

a distinguished scholar in the field of religion and ecology, also recognizes that religions hold unparalleled moral influence that cannot be found in any other institutions.[31]

Some individuals hold the belief that modern environmentalism, being entirely secular, may not be as effective in persuasion. According to Bryan Appleyard, a notable detractor of modern science and its contemporary applications, the conventional environmental movement only offers a mechanical interpretation of the cosmos. As a result, it falls short of providing any spiritual rationale for the deep-seated change of heart that environmental advocates view as crucial in altering human conduct to address the urgent environmental predicament and stave off its exacerbation:

> "While eco-friendly behavior may bring environmentalists a sense of tranquillity, their underlying motivations are rooted in practical considerations rather than spiritual ones. Their movement is driven by a sense of imminent crisis rather than an aspiration towards a higher understanding. The primary goal is to rectify the damage already inflicted, with no higher ambitions. Even in an imagined "Green paradise," humanity is viewed as subservient to the silent, alien landscape of nature. This perspective echoes the tenets of mechanical determinism, in which nature holds the ultimate power, and humans are forever relegated to a subservient role."[32]

Seyyed Hossein Nasr's perspective on environmentalism is currently gaining importance, particularly due to the lack of a more compelling justification in mainstream environmentalism and the quest to rekindle spiritual or religious principles. Nasr acknowledges that the primary cause of the environmental crisis is the contemporary economic system, which capitalizes on human desires, particularly the greed for material possessions, by manufacturing artificial needs that are not authentic necessities.[33]

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[31] Mary Evelyn Tucker, "Wolrdly Wonder: Religions Enter Their Ecological Phase" (Chicago: Open Court, 2003), 9.

[32] Bryan Appleyard, "Understanding The Present: An Alternative History of Science" (London: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2004), 137.

[33] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Religion and the Environmental Crisis," in "The Essential Seyyed Hossein Nasr, ed. William C. Chittick" (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2007), 31-32.

He queries how we can restrain people from incessantly desiring more without the aid of the Spirit that religion provides, as no other influence in the world holds comparable sway, save brute force.[34] Nasr is a firm believer that religion should be regarded not only as a basis of ethics but also as a fount of knowledge, comprising profound comprehension of God, human existence, and the natural world.[35]

Nasr, who has extensively studied Western culture and spent most of his life in the West, criticizes Western civilization from an Islamic perspective without engaging in "West bashing." He is critical of the secular ideology's tendency to overlook religious ethics and values. While some environmentalists hear him, Western environmental ethicists rarely do. Mainstream ethicists in the field of environmental ethics have shown a preference for secular ethics, while metaphysical or religious ethics are generally not favored.[36] During a Green-Left party conference in the Netherlands, there was a discussion about the significance of ethics in tackling climate change. However, religious ethics were dismissed as "metaphysical" and not given due consideration. Calls for a reconsideration of religion in environmental ethics are occasionally heard but seldom followed up on. The introduction of a 2006 UNESCO publication on Environmental Ethics and International Policy emphasizes the significance of religious environmental ethics, but the volume does not delve into it in depth.[37]

Although a specific ethical stance may be grounded in philosophy, it is believed that religious environmental ethics should receive greater attention. The main reason for this is rooted in pragmatism, as most people around the globe live, work, and think within a religious context. As 'worldviews' and 'value systems,' religions play a pivotal role in guiding human behavior and serve as major sources of inspiration for individuals, communities, and cultures. These ideologies are impossible to disregard. With the global scope and gravity of environmental challenges, it is reasonable to

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[34] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Religion and the Environmental Crisis," (lecture, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, February 4, 2008), 32-33.

[35] Ibid., 36.

[36] Marcel Duwell, "Challenges for Individual Rights?," Ethics and Politics of Climate Change conference, Utrecht University, January 23-24, 2009, accessed March 25, 2023, http://www.ethicsandpoliticsofclimatechange.nl/.

[37] "Environmental Ethics and International Policy" (London: Routledge, 2006), 27.

anticipate that an increasing number of Muslims will contemplate these issues from an Islamic perspective in the forthcoming years. There is no inherent conflict between religious ideologies and secular value systems, despite concerns among some in the Western world. At present, various Islamic movements endeavor to establish common ground with other religions, expressing their religious convictions in a universal language that goes beyond the particular cultural customs of Muslims. According to Fuller, an approach centered around values is less intimidating to outsiders compared to an approach that relies heavily on strict doctrine or ritual. Nasr's eco-philosophy embodies this value-centered approach to addressing the shared challenges faced by communities around the world, including the environmental crisis. In America, many Muslim communities and mosques are actively engaging with non-Muslim members to seek common solutions to shared problems.[38]

Thus study on Seyyed Hossein Nasr's environmental philosophy is necessary for several reasons:

1. Nasr is one of the foremost scholars of Islamic environmental thought, and his work has made a significant contribution to the development of this field. Researching his ideas can help to deepen our understanding of Islamic environmental ethics and its potential for promoting sustainability and environmental justice.

2. Nasr's environmental philosophy offers a critique of modernity and its impact on the environment, which is relevant to contemporary debates in environmental ethics and environmental policy. His ideas can help us to rethink our relationship with the natural world and develop more sustainable and just ways of living.

3. Nasr's work engages with multiple intellectual traditions, including Islamic, Sufi, and Perennialist thought. Studying his ideas can help to promote interfaith and cross-cultural dialogue on environmental issues and highlight the role of religious and

[38] Fuller, G. "*The Future of Political Islam*," New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003, p.205.

spiritual perspectives in shaping our relationship with the natural world.

4. Nasr's environmental philosophy has implications for a wide range of fields, including environmental ethics, philosophy, theology, and cultural studies. Researching his ideas can help to bridge disciplinary divides and foster interdisciplinary collaboration in addressing environmental challenges.

Overall, research on Seyyed Hossein Nasr's environmental philosophy can help to enrich our understanding of the relationship between religion, culture, and the environment and inspire new approaches to environmental ethics and sustainability.

Failures of Mainstream Environmentalism Today

In the United States during the early 1960s, the public became increasingly aware of the environmental issues that were affecting their local communities. This was due to the fact that the country was heavily industrialized, making it more likely for people to notice the pollution that resulted from industrial activities. As time passed, it became clear that modern industrialization was the main reason for the ecological problem that needed to be addressed. In 1972, the publication of the Club of Rome's Limits to Growth brought the issue of environmental protection to the forefront of public consciousness.[39] Consequently, a number of environmental protection laws were passed by 1976. By doing so, the intersection of business interests, social movements, and political movements portrayed environmentalists as individuals who overreacted to situations, creating a negative image of them. During the 1980s and 1990s, advocates of economic growth devised a fresh approach to weaken the environmental movement, particularly as the worldwide scope of the crisis became increasingly apparent. During the early 1960s, environmental issues at the local level began to be acknowledged by the United States, and by the early 1970s, it was commonly accepted that contemporary industrialization was the primary contributor to environmental deterioration. Although laws were enacted to support

[39] Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jorgen Randers, and William W. Behrens III, "The Limits to Growth" (New York: Universe Books, 1972),

environmental protection, they inadvertently led to the marginalization of the environmentalist movement, allowing business interests and other groups to dismiss environmental concerns as alarmist.

In his book "Planet Dialectics," Wolfgang Sachs presents a critical analysis of environmental policies aimed at addressing the issue of environmental degradation.[40] According to Sachs, these policies have been primarily focused on managing the remaining natural resources of the world, without challenging the underlying economic goal of perpetual growth.

Sachs identifies two key components of these policies. The first component is the belief that technological advancements will enhance efficiency and reduce the number of resources required for a given result of performance. This idea implies that as efficiency increases, the negative impacts of economic development will be offset. However, Sachs argues that this notion fails to address the underlying problem of resource depletion and does not challenge the assumption of perpetual growth.[41] The second component of these policies, as Sachs sees it, is the argument that poverty in developing countries drives people to exploit natural resources. This argument has led policymakers to push for economic growth to alleviate poverty. Sachs suggests that this approach does not address the underlying problem of resource depletion and instead perpetuates the cycle of exploitation. Sachs argues that environmental policies need to challenge the dominant economic paradigm of growth and focus on sustainable management of natural resources. Such policies need to address the root causes of environmental degradation and poverty, rather than just their symptoms.[42]

In recent times, economic policymakers have ramped up developmental efforts in the name of safeguarding the environment from impoverished communities with the aim of lifting them out of poverty. However, in doing so, they overlook the fact that such actions often exacerbate ecolog-

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[40] Wolfgang Sachs, "Planet Dialectics: Explorations in Environment and Development" (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing, 2001),

[41] Ibid., 47-48, 59.

[42] Ibid., 60. Lloyd Timberlake, "The Emergence of the Environmental Awareness in the West," in "The Touch of Midas," ed. Z. Sardar (Manchester Univ. Press, 1984), 127.

ical scarcity. In reality, the individuals who have always relied on the environment have no alternative but to pursue the last remaining vestiges of its resources. [43] Additionally, the term "development" and the expression "poverty reduction" have acquired a sacred status in economic terminology, with their definitions deemed beyond criticism. This has led to project proposals that are filled with such terminology to make them more appealing for funding. Unfortunately, real questions about what is actually done are often left unanswered. As observed by Andrea Cornwall, the economic rhetoric has been carefully crafted to imbue these phrases with a sense of nobility, while obscuring the negative consequences of these actions.[44] It is crucial to recognize that impoverished communities who depend on the environment have intrinsic knowledge of how to manage natural resources sustainably. Therefore, it is imperative to involve them in the decision-making process when designing and implementing development projects. This will ensure that the initiatives are not only effective in reducing poverty but also ecologically sustainable, benefiting both people and the environment.[45]

Sachs argues that while pursuing technical efficiency to reduce environmental harm may offer some advantages, it can also reinforce the economic objective of ongoing growth in production and consumption within a limited global system, resulting in potential drawbacks over time. Ironically, a growing economy's faster development in demand ignores the cost-saving effects of greater efficiency.[46] In fact, several studies conducted over the last decade have found that despite technological advancements, resource usage and pollution have not usually decreased.[47] In general, increased productivity and industrial waste have followed increases in efficiency. Because of this, efficiency efforts will not be successful in reducing resource use as long as economic development continues. Sachs notes that

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[43] Wolfgang Sachs, "Planet Dialectics: Explorations in Environment and Development" (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing, 2001), 35.

[44] Andrea Cornwall, "Buzzwords and fuzzwords: deconstructing development discourse," Development in Practice, Volume 17, Numbers 4-5, August 2007, p. 472.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Sachs, "Planet Dialectics", 41-42.

[47] James Gustave Speth, "The Bridge at the Edge of the World" (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 56-57.

regions that have already attained a certain level of industrialization are the only ones where seeking efficiency may be most effective.[48] If not for that, the utilization of modern technology can be justified by increased productivity alone. Simply prioritizing efficiency in material production overlooks the non-material goals and principles connected to "less efficient" traditional production techniques.[49]

In the 30-year update of the 1972 classic Limits to Growth, the authors observed that the adoption of efficient technologies takes time, money, and effort. Technologies are often designed to solve specific problems, and their development is a slow and costly process. [50] Even after proving their viability in laboratories, further delays are caused by the need to develop necessary resources such as capital, labor, sales, service staff, marketing, and finance mechanisms required for widespread use. [51] Although favorable market forces, political will, and societal support can help expedite the adoption of efficient technologies, it still takes several years. In a race against time, such as the current environmental crisis, this delay can significantly reduce their effectiveness. Therefore, it is crucial to address environmental problems promptly and invest in the research and development of efficient technologies that can be brought to the market more quickly.

Meadows et al. predict that if the world does not take significant steps to reduce its environmental impact, various aspects of life may improve until 2025, but then rapidly decline.[52] The decline would be due to a lack of access to non-renewable resources. Even under optimistic assumptions, such as a 100% increase in accessibility to non-renewable resources and a 4% annual improvement in pollution-reducing technology, the decline would only be delayed by about 50 years.[53] [54] The primary discovery of

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[48] Sachs, "Planet Dialectics", 41.

[49] Ibid., 51, 53-54.

[50] Donella Meadows, Jorgen Randers, and Dennis Meadows, "Limits to Growth: The 30-Year Update" (White River Junction, Vermont: Chelsea Green, 2004), 471.

[51] Ibid., 212.

[52] Meadows et al., Ibid., 168-169.

[53] Speth, James Gustave. "Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability" (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 114.

[54] Meadows et al., "Limits to Growth: The 30-Year Update" (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2004), 210-11.

the authors is that if society continues to delay confronting environmental constraints by means of economic and technological adjustments, it will face a greater likelihood of confronting several limits simultaneously. This finding underscores the importance of taking proactive measures to limit economic development to avoid exacerbating environmental challenges."[55] Meadows et al.'s research highlights the need for sustainable development practices that balance economic growth with environmental protection. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing that natural resources are finite and that efforts to improve efficiency and productivity must be accompanied by efforts to reduce consumption and waste. By acknowledging the limitations of our current economic systems and taking steps to address them, society can work towards a more sustainable future.

Sachs argues that a mechanistic perspective of the environment has led to a reliance on technological solutions to environmental issues. Scientific empiricists redefined ecology in the early 20th century as a self-regulating environment, diminishing the concept of interdependence among natural elements. [56] The term "homoeostasis" is now used to describe this self-regulation, relying on mechanical engineering principles. As a result, environmentalists have difficulty viewing ecology beyond a mechanical framework. [57] Sachs suggests that a broader understanding of ecology is needed, one that recognizes the interconnectedness of all natural systems and is not solely dependent on technology to solve environmental problems.[58]

The ecosystem has been viewed as a mechanical system that can be understood and managed scientifically. This perspective portrays ecology as a functional machine without a higher goal. Jane Bennett, a renowned political theorist, notes that modern environmentalists use techniques to rationalize nature and transform it into well-managed residential, recreational, commercial, and industrial sites.[59] Sachs contends that modern

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[55] Meadows, Donella H., Dennis L. Meadows, Jorgen Randers, and William W. Behrens III. "The Limits to Growth" (New York: Universe Books, 1972), 223.

[56] Sachs, Wolfgang. "Planet Dialectics: Explorations in Environment and Development." London: Zed Books, 1999, 62-63.

[57] Ibid., 63.

[58] Ibid., 62.

[59] Bennett, Jane. "Unthinking Faith and Enlightenment: Nature and the State in a Post-Hegelian Era." New York: New York University Press, 1987, 47.

environmentalists seek to establish the maximum amount of harm an ecosystem can endure before collapsing and how to sustain that equilibrium by manipulating technology, all while ignoring the underlying causes of environmental degradation.[60] Environmental management often focuses on setting threshold values for pollutants that must not be exceeded, according to Bennett. However, the preference for technical solutions among environmentalists is partly due to opposition from industries and corporations that resist pursuing wider or more fundamental environmental goals.[61] The focus on technology as a solution to environmental problems disregards the interconnectedness of natural systems and the need to address the underlying causes of ecological damage. To create a sustainable future, there is a need to develop a comprehensive understanding of ecology that recognizes the value of natural systems beyond their functional purposes and the importance of addressing developmental aspirations that harm the environment. It is crucial to adopt a holistic approach to environmental management that balances economic development with ecological sustainability.

James Gustave Speth, a well-respected environmental advisor who held top positions in the Carter administration, founded the World Resources Institute and was the head of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, has determined that in various ways, conventional environmentalism has been unsuccessful in preserving the environment. In his book, The Bridge at the Edge of the World, Speth admits that he believes the current methods and styles of environmentalism are too limited, despite being well-intentioned.[62] As James Halteman notes, Speth's reputation as a leader in environmental reform makes his book a "confession." [63] Speth argues that mainstream environmentalists are working within a restricted framework to protect what they can, but that this approach is not sufficient. Rather, a more comprehensive approach that addresses the underlying systemic causes of environmental problems is necessary.

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[60] Sachs, Wolfgang. "Planet Dialectics: Explorations in Environment and Development." London: Zed Books, 1999, 36.

[61] Bennett, Jane. "Unthinking Faith and Enlightenment: Nature and the State in a Post-Hegelian Era." New York: New York University Press, 1987, 47.

[62] Speth, James Gustave. "The Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability." New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008, 78.

[63] Halteman, James. "A Sustainable World." Christian Century, December 16, 2008, 38.

Speth has emphasized that environmentalists who work within the existing framework face significant limitations, particularly due to the foundation of modern capitalist culture which is driven by science and technology. According to him, this society fosters a continuous increase in environmental harm as influential companies, with insufficient transparency and limited supervision, employ technology to pursue financial gains and expansion. This principle creates a significant impediment to environmental protection efforts. [64]

Environmentalists face significant challenges when dealing with corporations and industries due to the latter's economic interests. Moreover, the complexity of technologies needed to identify and restore polluted environments is daunting. Consequently, a formidable regulatory and management system has emerged in response to the resistance from commercial and industrial sectors, which is challenging for both laypeople and experts to comprehend. The struggle against corporate opposition often forces environmentalists to concentrate on reducing the visible symptoms of environmental damage by striving for greater technical proficiency instead of addressing the underlying causes of environmental crises.[65] [66] Despite their efforts, these challenges remain a significant impediment to their work, requiring further exploration and possible solutions. [67]

The Call for Spiritual Values

The environmental activists we addressed above, as well as many others, believe that the resurgence of what we may define as spiritual values is a prerequisite for any viable plan that would allow mankind to escape the environmental crises from a deteriorating state.

While Speth considers scientific progress as one of the most important instruments for dealing with the situation,[68] he admits that embracing modern technological solutions to fulfil our material demands has led us to

[64] Ibid., 82.

[65] Ibid., 83.

[66] Ibid., 84.

[67] Ibid., 85.

[68] Ibid., 113

the ecological crisis we confront today: We developed a potent technology and established an institution to deploy it swiftly and effectively, even at the expense of others if necessary. As a result, we managed to dominate nature and generate unprecedented prosperity. However, we became so enamored and dependent on these systems and achievements that we ignored warning signals along the way. We must refocus on being rather than having, giving rather than receiving, prioritizing needs over wants, and striving for improvement rather than material wealth. [69] Speth believes that altering our perspective is crucial to addressing the challenges of our time. Given that religious doctrines have long emphasized the values of simplicity, generosity, and mindfulness, he suggests that faith communities could play a pivotal role in this endeavor. He points to the example of Dr Martin Luther King Jr., whose Christian faith propelled him to challenge racial injustice and advocate for God's justice. Speth maintains that our generation must follow in King's footsteps and harness the transformative power of faith to effect meaningful change.[70]

The authors of "Limits to Growth" have drawn conclusions similar to Speth's after over thirty years of seeking solutions to the crisis. They also recognize the importance of modern technology but argue that a significant shift in consciousness is required to direct resources towards developing sustainable technologies. While impressive technological advancements are possible, they can only occur through determined societal decisions and a willingness to act and invest. [71] Such decisions, they contend, can only be made following a "structural change" in dominant consciousness, which currently views individuals mainly as producers and, consumers and associates social position with material accumulation. This mindset prioritizes acquiring more, rather than giving more or having enough. Failure to change this mindset will result in technologies and markets that further harm the environment.[72] The authors argue that the necessary change in consciousness is advocated in nearly every religious text. It involves changing people's goals, purpose, and understanding of their place in the world. This change is not political or physical, but internal – in

[69] Ibid., 236.

[70] Ibid., 232.

[71] Meadows et al., "Limits to Growth", 204.

[72] Ibid., 223-24.

people's heads and hearts. They suggest that a shift towards being, rather than having, is necessary to achieve this change. This means prioritizing sustainability, community, and social justice over material wealth and accumulation. Overall, they emphasize that societal decisions and actions must be driven by a fundamental shift in consciousness if we are to develop sustainable technologies and prevent further harm to the environment.[73]

According to Sachs, modern environmentalism has failed to address the environmental crisis as a civilizational problem, instead treating it as a technical issue. This is because the level of productive performance achieved by modern society is no longer viable, not just in the North but globally. Sachs suggests that the missing components in all environmental strategies are "enlightened restraint" and "intelligent self-limitation" of production and consumption. In order to tackle this problem, he suggests turning to the wise teachers of both the East and the West, who have advocated for the principle of simplicity in life for a long time.[74] [75] [76] His recommendation is to refer to the teachings of wisdom from both the East and the West, which have almost unanimously promoted the idea of leading a simple life. This principle requires a limited but skillful use of material objects. While it is true that many of the teachers of wisdom who have endorsed this principle have been devoted followers of a particular religion, Sachs maintains that this approach is applicable to all.[77] Notable figures who have championed simplicity in modern times include Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa, the Dalai Lama, and Sufi Masters like Shaykh Ahmad al-'Alawi and Shaykh Muhammad Rahim Bawa Muhaiyaddeen. To address the environmental crisis, we must address the deeper cultural and social factors that underlie it and make a fundamental shift in our values and priorities. By embracing simplicity, we can create a more sustainable and just future for all.

Email: mhimran@tongji.edu.cn; imran.du24@gmail.com;
muzzamelhussainimran@gmail.com

ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8141-6654

[73] Ibid., 240.

[74] Sachs, "*Planet Dialectics,*" 68.

[75] Ibid., 41, 48

[76] Ibid., 49,67

[77] Ibid., 212.

Chapter 1

Nasr's Writings and Basic Thoughts

This section serves as an introduction to the esteemed Islamic scholar and environmental philosopher, Seyyed Hossein Nasr. Nasr's extensive contributions to Islamic philosophy, Islamic science, Sufism, Islamic art, and the school of perennial philosophy have earned him widespread recognition as one of the most influential Islamic philosophers of contemporary times. His remarkable career as an academic and administrator has spanned over five decades, with notable accomplishments in Iran, Lebanon, and the United States.

Our focus in this chapter will be on Nasr's perspective on the ecological crisis, which is centered around the restoration of the religious outlook and the rejection of scientism. Nasr posits that the environmental problem is a result of a secular and materialistic mindset that ignores the spiritual dimensions of nature. His approach seeks to bridge the gap between science and religion by advocating for a holistic and integrated approach to the environment.

Additionally, we will delve into some of Nasr's notable works, which encompass a diverse range of subjects relating to Islam, modernity, and spirituality. His writings are characterized by a deep reverence for traditional wisdom, a critique of the excesses of modernity, and a commitment to promoting the spiritual dimension of human life. Overall, this chapter aims to present a comprehensive overview of Nasr's contributions to Islamic thought and environmental philosophy.

Nasr's life and works

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, a highly esteemed academician, was born in Tehran in 1933 into a family of intellectuals. His father, Seyyed Valiullah Khan Nasr, was a distinguished philosopher with a deep understanding of both Arabic and Persian languages, and his mother was also an accomplished scholar. It was in this academic environment that Nasr's interest in the nature of physical reality was sparked, leading him to pursue undergrad-

uate studies in physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1950.[78] After graduating from MIT in 1954, Nasr went on to pursue a PhD in the history of science at Harvard University, where his studies became more closely linked with philosophy. During the course of his studies, Nasr developed a profound appreciation for the historical and cultural context in which science developed, which would later influence his work as an academic and administrator. Over the past five decades, Nasr has made significant contributions to the fields of philosophy, religion, and science. He has held academic positions at numerous institutions in Iran, the USA, and Lebanon and has authored over fifty books and hundreds of articles on topics ranging from metaphysics to Islamic art and architecture. Since 1984, Nasr has served as a distinguished professor of Islamic Studies at George Washington University's Department of Religion in Washington, D.C. His exceptional scholarship and administrative abilities have earned him widespread recognition, and he continues to inspire new generations of students and scholars with his intellectual curiosity and academic rigor.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr is widely considered to be one of the most influential Islamic intellectuals of our time. He has produced a vast collection of written material that comprises almost fifty books and hundreds of articles on a wide range of subjects, encompassing Islamic philosophy, science, art, the ecological problem, Sufism and the school of perennial philosophy propagated by René Guénon (1886-1951) and Frithjof Schuon (1907-98). Throughout his long and illustrious career, Nasr has earned numerous accolades and achievements. Perhaps the most prominent among these is his selection as the distinguished Gifford Lecturer at the University of Edinburgh in 1981, a prestigious honor that is bestowed upon individuals who have made significant contributions to the field of natural theology. In 2001, Nasr was also included in the Library of Living Philosophers, a distinguished list that recognizes the most influential philosophers of our time.[79] His work has earned the admiration and respect of scholars across

[78] Seyyed Hossein Nasr. "An Intellectual Autobiography." In "The Philosophy of Seyyed Hossein Nasr", edited by Lewis Edwin Hahn, Randall E. Auxier, and Lucian W. Stone Jr., The Library of Living Philosophers, Volume XXVII, 16. Chicago and La Salle: Open Court Publishing Company, 2001.

[79] "The Philosophy of Seyyed Hossein Nasr", edited by Lewis Edwin Hahn, Randall E. Auxier, and Lucian W. Stone Jr., The Library of Living Philosophers, Volume XXVII (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court Publishing Company, 2001), introductory pages.

disciplines. Huston Smith, a prominent intellectual of world religions, has described him as "one of the major intellects of our day," while Keith Critchlow, a leading scholar of religious art and architecture, has dubbed him "the most important living philosopher on the planet today."[80] [81]Nasr's impact on Islamic thought has been immense, as he has sought to bridge the gap between traditional Islamic scholarship and the modern world. He has argued for the importance of understanding the historical and cultural context in which Islamic thought developed, and has advocated for a renewed focus on traditional Islamic sources in contemporary Islamic discourse. Through his writings and teachings, Nasr has inspired countless students and scholars to explore the rich and complex traditions of Islamic thought and to engage in critical reflection on the challenges facing the contemporary world. His influence continues to be felt in academic and intellectual circles around the globe, making him one of the most important and respected figures in the contemporary Islamic world.

Nasr not only holds the distinction of being the first Islamic and Muslim scholar to address the ecological crisis, but he has also authored numerous works on the philosophical and religious aspects of this matter.[82] [83] Nasr is notable for being the pioneer in advocating for a holistic and all-encompassing religious solution that surpasses mere ethical considerations, setting him apart from all previous individuals. As the foremost spokesperson of the perennial philosophy school, he has presented the most comprehensive and exhaustive approach to the environmental crisis among all other proponents of this school.[84] Nasr's environmentalism emphasizes

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[80] Huston Smith. Quoted on the dust jacket of Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Religion and the Order of Nature" (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[81] Keith Critchlow. "Keyonte Speech." In "The Beacon of Knowledge: Essays in Honor of Seyyed Hossein Nasr," edited by Mohammad H. Faghfoory, xlvii. Louisville, Kentucky: Fons Vitae, 2003.

[82] Richard Foltz. "Introduction to Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust." Edited by Richard C. Foltz, Frederick M. Denny, and Azizan Baharuddin, xxxviii. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003.

[83] Giovanni Monastra. "Seyyed Hossein Nasr: Religion, Nature, and Science." In "The Philosophy of Seyyed Hossein Nasr," edited by Lewis Edwin Hahn, Randall E. Auxier, and Lucian W. Stone Jr., The Library of Living Philosophers, Volume XXVII, 496-7. Chicago and La Salle: Open Court Publishing Company, 2001.

[84] Christopher James, the 5th Lord Northbourne, and Joseph Fitzgerald, eds., "Of the Land and the Spirit: The Essential Lord Northbourne on Ecology" (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2008).

the need to revive religiously-centered lifestyles globally as a substitute for the modern lifestyle that is driven by technology and economic interests, which he attributes as the cause of the ecological crisis. This comprehensive feature of Nasr's philosophy, as we will delve into, mirrors the essence of both the perennial philosophy school and the core aspect of Islam.[85]

To gain insight into Nasr's approach to the ecological problem, it is essential to grasp the meaning of three critical terms: 1) Religious viewpoint, 2) Scientific viewpoint, and 3) Scientism. These concepts can be succinctly explained as follows: 1) Religious viewpoint pertains to the fundamental nature of the universe as perceived by a religion, which holds that the cosmos is replete with indications of the divine.[86] 2) According to the scientific viewpoint, the universe is made up of ontologically independent material phenomena that do not have any connection to a supernatural source of their existence. This is how current science sees the nature of reality in the universe.[87] 3) Nasr contends that scientism, which upholds modern science as the preeminent or perhaps only dependable means of attaining genuine knowledge, has been the prevailing fundamental doctrine in the West and other Westernized area of the world since the 17th-century Scientific Revolution, wherein the scientific perspective gradually supplanted the religious viewpoint.[88] [89] Nasr argues that the present condition is the origin of the environmental predicament and demands transformation. The restoration of the religious outlook is vital for the durable resolution of the environmental dilemma. Although the reliance on scientific research seems to conflict with holding advanced technology accountable for the ecological problem, this is because Nasr's stance does not refute the ability of modern science to comprehend the physical aspect to a considerable extent.[90] The

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[85] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "The Need for a Sacred Science" (New York: State University of New York, 1993), 71-94.

[86] Mircea Eliade, "The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion, trans. Willard Trask" (New York: Harcourt, 1987), 116.

[87] John J. Carvalho IV, "Overview of the Structure of a Scientific Worldview," Zygon 41, no. 1 (March 2006): 113-124.

[88] Huston Smith, "Scientism: The Bedrock of the Modern Worldview," in "Science and the Myth of Progress, ed. Mehrdad M. Zarandi" (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2003), 233.

[89] Huston Smith, "Beyond the Postmodern Mind : The Place of Meaning in a Global Civilization" (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 2003), 244.

[90] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Islam and the Problem of Modern Science," in "An Ear-

complication with modern science, as per Nasr, is its refusal or neglect of the existence of any actuality beyond nature's material dimension.[91]

Nasr's contribution to academic literature is remarkable, as he boasts a prolific publication record that spans several decades. With an impressive collection of over 50 books and hundreds of articles, he has firmly established himself as a leading authority in various fields of study, including Islamic cosmology, theology, science, metaphysics, Sufism, philosophy, religious pluralism, Islamic art and architecture, Persian mysticism, and modernity. Apart from his original works, Nasr has also edited several influential anthologies and encyclopedias, which have been instrumental in shaping our understanding of these complex subjects. Some of his notable works in this regard include "Islamic Spirituality" (1991)[92], which offers an in-depth analysis of the spiritual traditions in Islam; "History of Islamic Philosophy" (1996) [93], " a comprehensive survey of Islamic philosophical thought from its origins to the modern era; "An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia" (1999, 2000),[94] which explores the rich intellectual legacy of Persian philosophy; and "The Heritage of Sufism" (1999) [95], a seminal work that delves into the mystical dimensions of Islam.

In addition to his scholarly pursuits, the author has produced a significant number of works intended for a general audience, which aim to introduce or examine the relationship between Islam and modernity. His publications include "Traditional Islam in the Modern World," which was first published in 1985, "Islam and the Plight of Modern Man," published in 1975, and "A Young Muslim Guide to the Modern World," which was published in 1998.

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ly Crescent: The Future Knowledge and Environment in Islam, ed. Ziauddin Sardar" (London: Mansell, 1998), 133.

91 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "The Need for a Sacred Science" (New York: State University of New York, 1993), 4.

92 Nasr, S.H., ed. "The Encyclopaedia of Islamic Spirituality" (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2000).

93 Nasr, S.H. and Leaman, O., eds. "History of Islamic Philosophy" (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 2007 of the Routledge History of World philosophies.

94 Nasr, S.H. and Amanirazavi, M., eds. "An Anthology of Philosophy of Persia" (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2005).

95 Lewisohn, L., ed. "The Heritage of Sufism" (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999).

These works have gained widespread recognition and have been translated into an impressive 22 languages, including Japanese, Indonesian, Turkish, Bosnian-Serbo-Croatian, Persian Arabic, Polish, Urdu, Dutch, French, Tamil, and others, making them accessible to a broad range of readers across the world. Nasr's most recent books, "The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity," published in 2004, and "The Garden of Truth: The Vision and Promise of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition," published in 2007, aim to provide a more favorable view of Sufism and Islam and to non-Muslim readers. These books offer a deep insight into the mystical and philosophical dimensions of Islam, focusing on its spiritual and moral values and their relevance in the contemporary world.

Nasr's work is centered around Islam, but also has a comparative approach known as "perennials." He explores and compares major philosophical and metaphysical systems in his work. One of his key concepts is "tradition." Nasr is a member of the "Traditionalist school" and his philosophy can be found throughout his work, particularly in his most significant work, "Knowledge and the Sacred" (1989). The book was based on a series of lectures at the University of Edinburgh, known as the Gifford Lectures, which was delivered by him in 1981. This was considered a turning point in Nasr's career. After leaving Iran, he wrote the lectures and they crystallized in his mind like a "running river."[96] Soon after, he continued his academic career at George Washington University.

> I have multiple objectives. Initially, I strive to delve into the diverse aspects of natural sciences, traditional metaphysics, and cosmologies that contrast with contemporary science. Secondly, I strive to discover alternative methods for studying the history of science beyond the dominant positivist approach, drawing inspiration from the works of Pierre Duhem. Thirdly, I endeavor to establish a genuine methodology for studying Islamic science and philosophy from an internal perspective. Fourthly, I seek to revive the entirety of the Islamic philosophical tradition, including, philosophy, Sufism, sciences, and arts, within the context of contemporary society.
>
> Additionally, I aspire to approach Western thought from the

[96] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "The Philosophy of Seyyed Hossein Nasr" (2001), 77-78.