

## **An Inquiry into the Seyyed Hussein Nasr's Ecological Thought**

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### **Abstract**

Attention to the human environment is essential in an age when human with irregular exploitation try to destroy and waste it. In between, the methodical attention to indigenous thinker's perspective can be useful and practical. In this paper by using the prominent Traditional thinker's perspective at the present time, Dr Nasr, has been tried to answer "How should be the desirable interaction between man and nature?" which it is in the field of environment with a political approach to this topic. This study has allocated to the environmental issue by using the framework of Ferkellaf discourse analysis in three levels of description, interpretation and explanation. As described level in Nasr's view, there are three signifies of meaning as the religious values, traditional values and values of human dignity which signifies traditional value has been as central signifier. In the interpretation level, three factors as de sanctity of nature and knowledge, rationalism and humanism has been affected on how to formulate Nasr's ecological discourse. As well as on the explanation level on his social function view, we can cite his criticism on single discourse; also we can cite his criticism on flawed religious approach and revival of scared knowledge of nature.

### **Keywords:**

Ecological, Environment, Political Thought, Discourse Analysis, Seyyed Hussein Nasr.

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## **Introduction**

Deliberation in the realm of political sciences has been one of human interests since past centuries and today also many people continue this way. In spite of some wrong beliefs that the present time is a suitable opportunity for objective and tangible-and not intellectual-discussions. It should be noted that many events happening around us, including interactions, struggles, and... are related to intellectual realm, and it is necessary for this branch of political sciences, to focus more powerfully on the current problems of life. Meanwhile, regarding that any society has its own set of problems and ideological foundations, in today's Iran it is reasonable to deal with native values rather than non-relevant Western viewpoints. One of viewpoints in the realm of political intellection in the present society can be the viewpoint of several thinkers such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr as one of the prominent traditionalist characters in Iran as well as across the world. Obtaining knowledge on viewpoint of such characters can help us understand the contemporary political intellection in Iran. Among different subjects which in the present time are the most urgent and at the same time have not been regarded sufficiently, is the issue of protection of environment. It is known as "environmentalism" in the political literature and has its own political features in political sciences. Undoubtedly the importance of environmentalism in the present time is the result of expansion of Western industrial civilization. Certainly the expansion of Western industrial civilization has increased the importance of environmentalism during the present period of time. Environmental crises are linked to the expansion of modern technologies that are the outcomes of industrial revolution in Europe and Northern America (Abedi Sarvestani and Shahvali, 2008: 715). In fact, man has defined specific ideals through expanding the industrial products in the new era, including, attempt to dominate upon the nature. Today, man believes that science can cope with this ideal. Francis Baken assigned this duty for science by changing the methodology of knowledge. Therefore, with the increasing growth of industry, we are witnessing the increasing intervention of man in the nature,

and this, is to some extent worrisome. Mostafa Toolba mentions some of this worry in the realm of environment as encompassing such cases as remarkable pressure upon environmental resources, shortage of water, unexpected climatic changes (warming of the weather across the world, decrease in ozone layer, and decrease in biotypes) and the danger of new diseases ,(Toolba, 1390: 157-158). The present challenge has caused some individuals to make a review on their findings, and accordingly several movements have been formed concerning protection of environment across the world. Their major concern is to find a way to have correct relation with the nature. They are seeking for a way to eliminate the present destructive relation between man and the nature and then to explain the social and political life style and permanent natural life and prosperity to the new generation in order to convince them to think about the end of the story. In this paper, it has been tried to explain the concept of environmentalism within political science and then to study Seyyed Hassan Nasr's viewpoint and finally to answer the question that according to his viewpoint about environmentalism and a political approach toward this subject how should be the manner of ideal interaction of man with the nature. Finding a good answer to this question necessitates a scientific scrutinizing using valid techniques on his thoughts in order to obtain the best results. There are three types of works in relation to Dr. Seyyed Hossein Nasr as follows:

1. *First class works* which have been written by Dr. Nasr himself and are directly or indirectly usable within the realm of environment. In the present paper some of them such as "Knowledge and Spirituality", "The Ideas of the Islamic Thinkers about the Nature", "Man and the Nature" and "The spiritual Crisis of Modern Man" have been used in this paper.

2. *Second class works* which have been written by others about Dr. Nasr and his ideology, such as "Investigation of Traditionalistic Discourse of Dr. Nasr", "The Comparative Explanation of Philosophic Foundation of Traditional Approach of Seyyed Hossein Nasr and the Modernistic Approach of Nasr Hamed Abuzeid in Pathology of Religious Training", "The Analysis

of Celestial Science in Traditionalism of Dr. Hossein Nasr”, “The Comparative Study of the Concept of Humanism in Dr. Nasr’s Thinking, and Mojtabeh Shabestari”.

3. Articles such as what Mrs. Azam Ghasemi has written with the title of “Viewpoints of Seyyed Hossein Nasr about Environmental Crisis and Solutions to It”, “The Contemporary Philosophy” directly in relation to the subject of this paper.

The difference between the present paper and previous works is that in this paper it has been tried to study all speeches of Dr. Nasr in his works. Focusing on a specific subject, puts this paper in the place of *second-class* works. But the relation of this paper with the works that represent Dr. Nasr’s viewpoints in the realm of environment is that here it will be tried to study in a systematic manner the political features of Dr. Nasr’s thoughts.

## **1. Conceptual Framework**

### **1-1. The Concept of Ecology**

The science of ecology was used first by Ernest Haecke, the German biologist in 1886 (Kaviani Rad, 1392: 16). The term *ecology* gradually became a concept. It began its new age about half a century ago that specifically was related to the second half of the 20th century and after the second world war. According to post-materialistic approaches in the analysis of this case it should be said that extensive welfare conditions in that period of time creates the possibility to keep aloof from acquisitive viewpoints and deal with the quality of life according to post-materialists, focusing on such concepts as morality, political justice, happiness, as well as formation of movements like freedom of women, universal peace, racial coexistence, ecology and animals’ rights are all in this direction (Heywood, 1379: 480). In other words, man at first pursues economic betterment of his life in order to escape from the pressures resulted from the first and second world wars and then follows the super-material features of human life. The new age of environmentalism can

be considered as impacted by two processes: firstly the critical attitude of the left course in the West, criticizing the civilization and culture resulting from capitalism, and secondly, studies conducted about destructive impacts of development of industrial and capitalistic world on environment. These attempts during the modern period of environmentalism turned to politics at the end of 1970s with the formation of Environmentalist parties and participation in elections. Of course, this period was preceded to a previous record and two viewpoints existed before the new period of environmentalism. The first one emphasized that the history of environmentalism is linked to the history of primitive man and the manner of his interaction with the nature. The study of these viewpoints reveals that they were more sensitive to and more careful about the environment (Vincent, 1378: 294). This viewpoint that belongs more to the Green Movement and Romantics of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, considers the primitive people with ancient wisdom, as rational, having a pattern, tolerable with the nature. Within this pattern, the nature has an inherent value and man exploits the nature as much as he needs. The second viewpoint also begins with the scientists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century who frequently warned about the scarcity of energy resources. According to the popular argument of Thomas Malthus, the population of the world increases in geometrical progression form while food production increases in arithmetic progression form, and this imbalance leads to famine (Dorakhshah, 1389: 161-162). The realm of environment is very extensive and here, we consider this amount of discussion sufficient. Speaking about common principles and ideology of environmentalism is not easy and the owners of such intellection also admit it. Andrew Dobson begins the first part of his book. "The Green Political Concept" with this speech of Porritt: "Although I have written the statements of environmentalist party during two previous public elections, yet I can hardly say what our ideology is" (Dobson, 1995: 14), but Jalal Dorakhshah in his study on environmentalistic intellection suggested that some common principles and components can be found in the literature of environmentalism. In his viewpoint, the common principles and components

are: criticism of industry, protection of environment, and foresight, decrease in population, and globalism (Derakhshah, 1384).

### **1-2. Environmentalism and Politics**

The study of human history shows the impact of the nature and biological origins on increase or decrease of the power of the political units. Specifically the new approaches which are today known as ecopolitics is about this bilateral relationship between environmentalism and politics and deals with the study of relationship between political issues and arising from economy, and environmentalism (Kaviani Rad, 1392: 33). Regarding that environmentalism is a common title given to a diverse range of advocates of environment, in the field of political viewpoint of environmentalism, focus should merely been the common and agreed-upon subjects of this extensive group. Accordingly, the political system suggested by environmentalists can be called a non-centralized community, in which the pressure on the universe declines. In fact, if we can encourage human societies to use local resources rather than using far away (from point of view of place), resources, many environmental problems will solved because along with the reduction of transportation and commerce, to a great extent, the level of destruction of environment also will decrease (Dorakhshah, 1384: 175). Also many other issues such as social democracy, non-violent activities, equality, environmental justice, ecology, and struggle for limited resources, are observed in the agenda of Green Practitioners within the framework of Parties, (Kaviani Rad, 1392: 34). Environmentalists have tried to criticize the present system as well as to represent an alternative for it and this, is a positive feature in their viewpoint. Yet there are some ambiguities in their thinking as follows: The idea of decentralization in policy is a general one, and a clear political idea should be developed and represented.

Some environmental problems such as nuclear poisoning and acidic rains are beyond an specific area because they involve all humans; therefore, it is

wrong to assume that the problems of a country can merely be solved within the frontiers of that country.

As mentioned before, environmentalists are a extensive range of people some of whom have a central look at man, and consequently, they confirm the modern civilization, while some others do not agree with this centrality, and give a new definition of man. Regarding this contrast, environmentalism has been able to come to an agreement about modernism and the present world.

In spite of all emphasis of environmentalists paying attention to the nature and their criticism of the industrial system, it is noted that nowadays it is considered as a modern thinking way among many political parties through which they can attract public votes, while feasibility of this thinking needs individual and collective attempts, either at national or at international level.

Regarding the ideal that environmentalists have assigned for their movement, this movement should be done at a level far above individual; it is necessary for all humans, especially for the future generations, regardless of racial tendencies and regional intolerance, but what the background of environmentalism shows is different (Dorakhshah, 1384: 177-172).

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

What explains theoretically the subject matter of this paper, is a set of theories with value-related orientation that are counted within moral approaches in environmental realm. These theories can be classified in different types according to what is considered by moralities. In the article "Value Orientation and Islamic Environmentalism: Quiddity and Consequences" that was published in the book "Morality and Environment (Islamic Procedure)" it has been pointed to four types of theories: human-centered bio-centered,



ecosystem-centered, and God-centered,, that, with a little change, can be fitted in the following form:

### **2-1. Human-Centered Theories**

According to this theory only man deserves the attention of morality. For this reason, protection of environment is important merely to that degree that meets human requirements. Some scholars point to the ability of man to intellect as the reason for this claim (Abedi Sarvestani and ShahVali, 1389: 59). According to such a theory on environment, human shouldn't be considered as responsive to this issue.

### **2-2. Ecosystem-Centered Theories**

As opposed to traditional human-centered theories, some new viewpoints were represented giving value to ecosystem. The early generation of these theories known as bio-centered theories doubted that only human has inherent value; they gave value to other living creatures beside man (Abedi Sarvestani and ShahVali, 1389: 59-60). Thus they attributed morality to non-human living creatures too. But the new generation of these theories focused on the whole ecosystem. According to ecosystem-centered approaches all creatures, from animate to inanimate, are under attention. Today's definition of environment and ecosystem also point to this concept. Based on that definition, man is only part of the nature and morality flows in all creatures, (Fogg, 2000: 209).

### **2-3. God-Centered Theories**

Based on this theory a challenge has happened in the realm of environment that can be solved and managed through religious teachings in order to focus on morality beside development and welfare across the world (Mohaghegh Damad, 1373: 80). These theories suggest that the present crisis within the environment is the product of spiritual and religious crises, (Abedi Sarvestani and ShahVali, 1389: 60). According to God-centered theories the reason for



attention to environment is the emphasis that religion puts on this issue, rather than the value of humans and ecosystem.

Limit	If not Fulfilled	Responsiveness	Unity of Man and Nature	Theory
Limited to Human	Endangers Man Interests	Merely Man is Important	Separation of Man from the Nature	Human-centered
Limited to Ecosystem Components	Endanger Stability of Ecosystem	Responsiveness of Human to All Ecosystem	Man and Ecosystem are Part of the Nature	Ecosystem-centered
Without Limitation	Endangers Creatures	Responsiveness of Man toward God and Creatures	The relation of Man with All Creatures	God-centered

*Table (1): Characteristics of Theories on Environment (Abedi Sarvestani and ShahVali, 1389: 64).*

#### 2-4. Islamic Viewpoint

The Islamic viewpoint as the most comprehensive and complete religion is remarkable in different individual and social realms. Therefore in the environmental realm also referral to the Islamic viewpoint can be problem solving. Familiarity with the Islamic viewpoint about environment is necessary for several reasons. In addition to necessity of comprehensive look of Islam toward human. Life issues including environment, “the awareness of general public of destruction of environment can play a good role in reducing

the degree of destruction of environment and all creatures, in the case that it originates from the Islamic teachings” (Ahmadi Tabatabaee, 1389: 35). There can be seen several hints to the case of environment represented by the Islamic scientists and such individuals as Ayatollah Javadi Amoli has expressed opinion about this subject. In fact, classic and traditional discussions of morality are based on man, but regarding the expansion of concerns, those discussions have spread to several subjects such as animals, human populations, herbal populations, ecosystems, lakes, streams, mountains, and so on (Islami, 1391: 80). According to Islam, since man has the ability to become the successor of God on the earth; therefore, he has superiority upon other creatures. (Javadi Amoli, 1390: 20). This means that the domination of man upon the nature is accepted to some extent, but what is the extent of this domination?

According to the Islamic viewpoint, and regarding the Koranic verses such as Asra’: 44, (All creatures in the world have consciousness and praise to God). If these creatures didn’t have consciousness, how could they give witness in the Resurrection Day? (Islami, 1391: 84). Regarding such an importance that Islam gives to all non-human creatures in the world, it seems that the Islamic attitude toward the nature is not an instrumental one and it doesn’t allow man to exploit the nature unlimitedly.

### **3. Research Methodology**

This research is based on data gathered through library study. Concerning the analysis method, data related to political realm, necessitate specific method based on their characteristics. It can be said that the best method to analyze data within the Islamic realm is the qualitative type that is used very frequently in this branch nowadays. One of the most implemented qualitative types of analysis in the realm of new Islamic thoughts is the theory of discourse analysis that came to political, social, and cultural subjects since 1970s with a critical approach. The discourse analysis viewpoint can specifically be considered as impacted by scholars such as Foko, Habermas, Gramshi and

Altoser (Mohseni, 1391: 64). Among several thinkers working on discourse analysis there are the names of such people as Van Dike, Kanter Cress and Van Livoon, Lakle and Moof and Fairclough and others (Mohseni, 1391: 65), each of whom looking at the discourse analysis from a different viewpoint. In these conditions, representation of an accurate and agreed-upon concept of the discourse is difficult and even impossible, nevertheless, in order to give an approximate instance it can be said that discourse means the semantic systems and the demonstrative ways of ourselves and our world to others, through which we not only express what we think and do along with our ideas and enthusiasms, but also, we create our “identification objects” and reproduce them within our conversations and reasoning. The etymology of reproduction of a discourse includes the molding of data in models and linking them to new conditions .” (Moeeni Alamdari, 1380: 70). Some have accepted discourse analysis as a theory, while others use it as a technique. If we consider discourse analysis as a theory, it will be placed as a subgroup of social philosophical structuralism. In this viewpoint, as opposed to physical tangible and subjective realities, the social reality origins and is made by human mind (Mohseni, 1391: 71). Discourse analysis theory criticizes Marxism for some reasons and criticizes structuralism for other reasons. They doubt economy’s being the basis of Marxism and consider the political element as having a part in the awareness of *working class* against capitalism. They used the term “hegemony” in this direction which was first used by Antonio Gramshi. Gramshi believes that there is a satisfactory organization through which the awareness of obedience is created without resorting to force. He considers organization as originated from an element known as hegemony, (Yurgensen, Philips, 1389: 65). On the other hand, their serious criticism is focused on structuralism. Contrary to structuralisms which believes that signals are like fishing nets end up in conceptual stability through correlation and difference with each other, discourse analysis theoreticians suggest that concepts cannot be established for ever without ambiguity, because conceptual networks are constantly being challenged and new concepts are regularly created (Yurgensen & Philips, 1389). They suggest that lingual understanding and

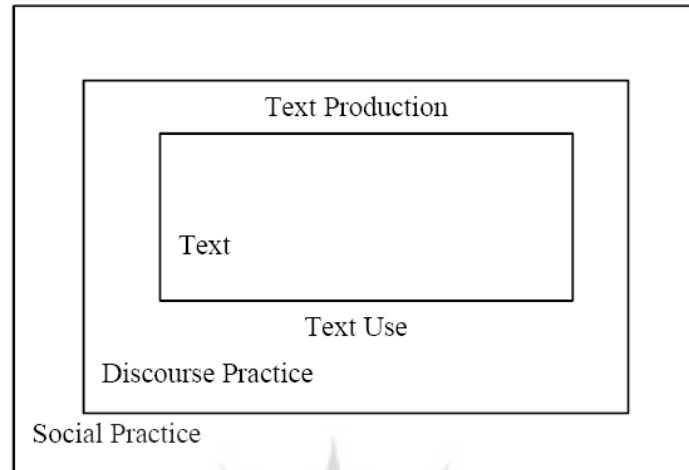
realization of conceptual system depend on social affairs and a set of social factors make this understanding possible. Of course this theory doesn't reject the reality, rather, considers meaningfulness of things as dependent on discourse. For example, running of floods is an event that happens independent of individuals' thinking, but it is people's mentality that gives meaning to it weather as God's anger or lack of governmental management or impairment of floodgates and so on, (Kasraee and Pooresh Shirazi, 1388: 340). They believe that through discourse analysis it should be showed how the phenomena come to stability even though temporarily through social struggles, (Yurgensen and Philips, 1389: 70-71). They maintain an important role for ideology to explain production and reoroduction of dominance, and power in the process of stabilization of concept, and suggest that ideology beside language are the tools for maintenance of unequal relation in any society. The popular interpretation by Fairclough saying that "language is the product of ideology" explains this matter that language contains a specific ideology, (Mohseni, 1391: 67-68). And thus, discourse comes to stability by its conceptual system, or as Gramshi says, "It becomes hegemonistic".

Investigations are indicative of several criticisms to the philosophical viewpoint of discourse analysis. It directs the researcher to the scope of relativism, and considers the truth and reality as temporary, changing and dependent on social issues and backgrounds. In addition, there are some internal contradictions in this philosophic viewpoint; on one hand, they suggest that there is nothing foundational outside the discursive atmosphere while from the other side believe that authentic discourse is the discourse whose principles do not have any incompatibility with the principles of society. The meaning hidden in the validity of discourse shows that there is a truth outside discourse, known as principles of society, and this concept rejects its first claim (Khajeh Sarvi, 1392: 130). Moreover. Creation of a discourse cannot be considered as merely internal because sometimes it happens that external structures such as ethnicity, class, gender, and... also can impact on discourse. Regarding these criticisms, if we assume discourse analysis merely as a technique to analyze data, then it should be said that this method is

attributed to a set of techniques that help us to clarify understanding, belief, value, and faith structure. Basically, method is attributed to a set of procedures and inventions that are used to realize the truth and avoiding mistakes, (Haghighat, 1391: 624). The viewpoint of Norman Fairclough is one of the most frequently used methods common in discourse analysis. He points to three levels of understanding discourse and text, according to which three methods of analysis are produced. They are as follows: 1) text, speech or written, 2) use of discourse that is to produce text and interpretation, and 3) social and cultural function. According to the above-mentioned levels in the discourse theory of Fairclough, three levels of analysis are formed as follows: 1) description level, 2) interpretation level, and 3) clarification level (Fairclough, 1995: 97).

Description level is said to a kind of internal level of discourse in which the internal suggestives and articulations of the discourse are dealt with and merely, the relations and identities in the discourse are investigated. At the interpretation level the proportion existing between discourse and speeches, and other discourses is studied, and at the third level the effectiveness of discourse within social changes is analyzed, (Haghighat, 1391: 541-545). One of the advantages of this method is that according to Fairclough's model, the discourse can be studied both, in relation to social-cultural process, and in internal form.

Fairclough's analytical structure can be represented in the following figure:



*Figure (1) Three Dimensional Model Discourse Analysis of Fairclough*

### **3-1. Text Analysis; Description Level**

At this level, focus is on the social relations, and the practicality of the discourse. A discourse consists of a set of signs or, in other words, evidence, getting meaning in the conceptual framework of that discourse (Haghighat, 1391: 603). These signs and evidence are not essentially lingual; rather they can be nonverbal, with behavior quality (Kasraee, and Pooresh. Shirazi, 1388: 343). The adapted evidence and signs in a discourse, form some kind of articulation and composition that make a new conceptual network. This evidence may form a different conceptual network within another conceptual system with a new articulation, (Behrooz Lak, 1385: 41). Among diverse evidence adapted by a discourse, the concept of central evidence is of a high importance. This concept that is considered as the central core of the discourse system is an evidence that other ones are regulated around it. (Haghighat, 1391: 605).

### **3-2. Process Analysis, Interpretational Level**

Discourse constantly tries to arrange its several evidence with especial coherence, and stabilize the meaning. At interpretation level of a discourse, the manner of changing a text to discourse is studied. In fact, at this level, it is tried to show which reasoning action and which conventions have been effective in changing text to a discourse and the evidence in a discourse has been articulated, (Fairclough, 1995: 97). There are several ideas about which factors are effective on the change of a text to discourse and its dominance in the society, for example, sometimes the evidence existing in a discourse is defined based on its contrasting concepts. In this relation, Saussure believes that concepts in all languages are formed based on a positive thing and not based on its negation, (Saussure, 1986: 120). Therefore, in the process of changing a text to a discourse, articulation plays a remarkable role, because, in a discourse, articulation is an action that arranges a set of evidence beside each other in a manner that it finds a single identity. In other words, articulation forms the relation between elements in a way that their identity becomes improved, (Jamalzadeh & Kazemi, 1394).

### **3-3. Social Analysis; Explanation Level**

Social analysis level is a level that in which a discourse is looked at completely and regarding the impact it receives, as well as the impact it has on the society. According to Fairclough, discourse is generally like a social action, (Mohseni, 1391: 65). At this level, the meaning of the evidence in a discourse is understood based on its correlation with social evolutions and other discourses. In other words, the social structure of knowledge is studied.

Accordingly, it can be said that creating non-uniformity in discourses plays an important role in discourses, for this reason, change of opposites in a discourse has a remarkable influence on the change of its evidence. For example, when Fairclough speaks about the role of language, and ideology in explanation and production of dominance and power, he is, in fact, showing how some factors outside a discourse and inside the social structure, impact on dominance and stabilization of discourse meanings.



#### **4. The Foundations of Seyyed Hossein Nasr's Traditionalism**

Seyyed Hossein Nasr is among those who, beside deep familiarity with the quality of Western science, are specialists in history of science, philosophy and theosophy. In the field of knowledge, he represents his most important work under the title of "Knowledge and the Sacred" which is the collection of his lectures, published in 1981. This work was translated and published once by Enshaallah Rahmati under the title of "Knowledge and Sacred" and once by Farzad Mirzaee with the title of "Knowledge and the Holiness", among which, the first one seems to be more accurate. In his "Knowledge and the Sacred" Dr. Nasr suggests that in the modern age, the intellectus was separated from ratio and wisdom was limited to the second concept, (Nasr, 1380: 40). His criticism to the paradigm concerning the concept of science during the modern age also is this separation, through which, the West, rejecting metaphysics, disregarded the traditional values that were the center of theophany, (Nasr, 1380). Dr. Nasr suggests the revival of tradition as the resolution to this deviational viewpoint. He is basically known as a traditional thinker in scientific communities. Traditionalism which sometimes is referred to as "announces of the transcendental unity of religions" is among the religious enlightenment courses that emerged in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The term "eternal philosophy" conveys that there is a philosophy whose principles do not change during the history and it is so unchangeable that doesn't accept any criticism to its principles, (Bagherinia, 1394: 106). "Reneu Geonon", with the Islamic name of Abdolvahed Yahya, is the French thinker and first traditionalist figure. He became familiar with mysticism and the Islamic theosophy when he was studying mathematics and philosophy, and became a Moslem in 1930. Traditionalism became a specific thinking course by "Anenda Kentish Komara Soomi" from Srilanka and others such as "Titus Bourkhart", and "Martin Lingz", "Marcopolis". Today, Seyyed Hossein Nasr is considered as salient traditional figure in the world of Islam who represents this ideology in most of his works, (Khosrow Panah, 1390: 8). It seems that in Dr. Nasr's opinion, tradition has a wider meaning than Islamic. He gives two

meanings for tradition in his book “The Islamic Tradition in Modern World”: the holy subject originating from afflatus, and the spread of the holy, revelational message along human history, (Nasr, 1987: 13). In fact, in his opinion the sacred issue of the very religion can act as the creator of tradition, but tradition is not limited to a single religion, because it involves the spread and function of the sacred issue during the history, He suggests a Godly origin for tradition, that has been extensive and complete along the history, for this reason it should be noted that Godly religions have some unity in common and all of them are noteworthy. He believes that religion is not restricted to a set of writings, rather, its essence involves the decline of Divine realities from the world of Divinity to the hearts of humans; these realities have been clarified by famous characters such as messengers and the like, across the world. Thus, tradition involves religion, and the realized and performed religion is tradition; but religion is not all of tradition. (Nasr, 1380: 155-156). According to traditionalism of Dr. Nasr and his colleagues all traditions have a single origin and they call it as “eternal intellect”. (Agha Hoseini and Rouhani, 1391: 16). What Dr. Nasr calls as *eternal intellect* is in the first stage the realities represented through afflatus, and then involves theosophical intuitions and relation reasoning, (Nasr, 1380: 157). Factors creating the traditional discourse of Dr. Nasr can be summarized in the following principles:

- Putting forward the universal wisdom against the partial wisdom;
- Belief in the internal universality of religious;
- Criticism toward the West, subjectivism and humanism;
- Supporting the mystical and illuminated approaches;
- Contrast toward jurisprudential, radical religious and political perception of Islam. (Aghahoseini, and Rouhani, 1391: 16).

### **5. Environmentalistic Thinking in Dr. Nasr's Discourse**

It is, to some extent, difficult to derive Dr. Nasr's specifications. May be one reason for his refraining from entering the realm of politics is the way and reason for martyrdom of his maternal grandfather, Sheikh Fazlollah Nouri that

caused his family to avoid politics. Nevertheless, we cannot accuse him of avoiding political thinking within intellectual system, because part of his thoughts has a political and transindividual quality. Thus some political features can be specified to his viewpoint about ecosystem; therefore, the study on his viewpoint will be conducted focusing on this quality.

### **5-1. Dr. Nasr's Environmentalism**

Dr. Nasr is aware of the importance of paying attention to environment and illtreatment of man toward ecosystem. He considers this case so serious that gives the title of "the enemy of the earth" to modern man. He believes now that such scholars as [Arnold] Twin Bi accuse the Christian world of destruction of the environment, some part of this accusation which is attributed to Islam, should be removed. In fact, he wants to find a resolution to this crisis at the same time showing the sufficient importance that Islam gives to the environment, (Nasr, 1377 and 1388: 102). Meanwhile, Dr. Nasr's focus on this subject is for the reason that he wishes to differentiate between the original Islamic tradition and radical and fundamental stand points such as Vahabiat, (Nasr, 1987: 12). In his perspective, focus on the realm of environment has several signs and evidence, knowledge and arrangement of which differentiates this viewpoint from others. In fact he believes that it is highly remarkable for the following reasons:

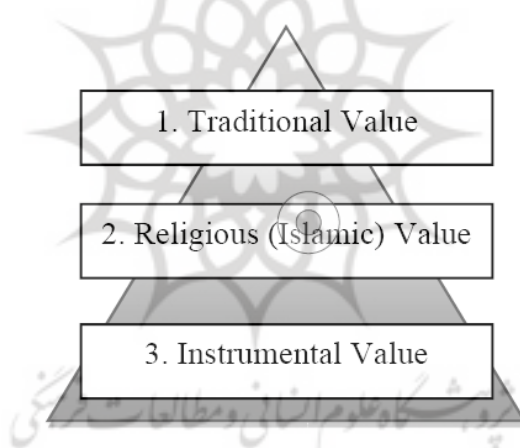
a) *Religious value*: Regarding Dr. Nasr's religious and Islamic attitude, his focus on the environment has a religious and revelational origin. For this reason, he represents a resolution to the crisis of the environment with a religious inspiration so that it creates a spiritual and traditional insight. He believes that a spiritual attitude toward experience in traditional civilizations is the product of religious stand points, and in the present time world, human civilization has come to progress through irreligiousness, and thus it has created so much destruction in the environment, (Nasr, 1389: 33).

b) *Traditional value*: In addition to his frequent pointing to the case of religion, Dr. Nasr uses the term "tradition" and this shows that his perception

of the environment has roots in its inherent sacredness of tradition. In fact, he believes that man should respect the environment, not merely because it meets all his needs, rather, because of its inherent importance, (Ghasemi, 1390: 87).

*c) Instrumental value:* In an introduction to the article “Religion and Crisis of Ecosystem. Dr. Nasr considers part of importance of paying attention to the crisis of ecosystem as being related to the danger that threatens human lives, (Nasr: 1387: 88). This shows that part of his focusing on the environment is not merely because of its inherent value; rather, it is because of man and his life.

Regarding the above-mentioned evidence, and referring to Dr. Nasr’s idea about this case, discourse components can be represented in the following figure:



*Figure (2): Components of environmental discourse of Dr. Nasr*

## **5-2. The Analysis of Environmental Process of Dr. Nasr**

In Dr. Nasr’s perspective the factor creating concern about the environment, more than other things, is the unlimited exploitation of it by man. Use, or in more accurate words, misuse of the nature by man, and his unlimited dominance on the environment, which in Dr. Nasr’s viewpoint is the product of lack of metaphysics in man’s life style, has contributed to his deviation in many dimensions. In fact, he gives an explanation about lack of metaphysics

in the thinking way of Western thinkers to conclude that the origin of difficulty is the modern philosophy and not the modern science, this type of man's worldview has led to the destruction of everything and philosophy is more guilty here than science. Dr. Nasr reminds that even scientists in the field of experimental sciences showed resistance against the mechanical theory about the nature which lacks a celestial look toward the universe, (Nasr, 1386). He suggests to investigate on the viewpoint that has recently caused man to move toward domination on the nature; it is more urgent than studying the function of tools that are destroying the nature, (Nasr, 1379: 13). He frequently insists on contemplation in traditional and relational framework and believes the eternal intellect should be revived in order to find the mistakes of the contemporary philosophy. He suggests that some factors have been effective in the formation of the contemporary viewpoint of man around himself that doubles attention to the environment as follows:

#### **A. Decanonization of the nature and knowledge**

In spite of impressibility of Christian teachings by the Greek cosmology or as Dr. Nasr says the *Aristotelian* discourse of Christianity, there seemed a reaction against the Greek cosmology during 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. He believes that the result of attempts of Galileo, Newton, and Kepler was the formation of a science that no more had to behavior toward the nature as a holy creature, (Nasr, 1378: 92). Thus he claims that the decanonization of the nature is another reason why man obtained the permit to exploit unlimitedly the environment.

#### **B. Rationalism**

Wisdom or rationalism is a familiar term during the modern age, and Dr. Nasr attributes its new stage to rationalism of Ibne-Roshd, (Nasr, 1379: 73-74). He believes that replacement of rationalistic discourse and the disintegration of internal system of Christianity by the Cartesian revolution led to the start of a new stage in philosophy. "This philosophy was separated from religion and

based on an intellect, putting aside both, inspirations of revelation, and illumination originated from superior intellect”, (Nasr, 1378: 92). In other words, rationalism in the West is parallel to the marginalization of the Church as the religious authority; thereafter, knowledge an human recognition finds a new source, called rational reasoning and is limited merely to wisdom and experience. In such conditions, the sacred and intuitional wisdom is denied and the outcome of such a thinking way is nothing except desolation of spiritual viewpoint, and complete authority of man to exploit the nature. Dr. Nasr clearly states in his “Man and the Nature (the spiritual crisis of modern man)” that for the modern natural sciences to come to existence, first of all the universe should lose its holy features and change to a completely mundane phenomena, and this event of course happened. At present ,the secular natural science has separated man from the nature as the beauty of God, and considers itself as the only legitimate science. He adds that the quantitative nature of new sciences, which are constantly seeking to reduce qualities in quantities and materialize all affairs, have been playing roles within this change of viewpoint, (Nasr, 1379: 11-14).

### **C. Humanism**

Giving centrality to science, after the scientific revolution, has another important quality in addition to lack of spiritually and its dependence on man according to humanism which emerged during the new age in the West. In this way the nature acts as the servant of man. Here, Dr. Nasr blames the modern man as “the enemy of the earth” and suggests”,... thus the denial of intuitive wisdom, and rationalism toward nature during the modern age leads to the separation of natural principles from morality and humanization of morals and gradually the mysteriousness of the nature disappears, (Ghasemi, 1390: 91).

### **5-3. Social Analysis of Dr. Nasr’s Environmentalism**

Social function of Dr. Nasr’s viewpoint consists of a few parts including the criticism of modern discourse, criticism of insufficient religious viewpoints

and revival of celestial knowledge of the nature, each of which will be discussed as follows:

*a) The criticism of modern discourse:* Social revival of traditional discourse of environmentalism in Dr. Nasr's thinking has intellectual and decisive roots. He criticizes the new science for its lack of spiritual and holy perspective, and believes that modern science has not been able to obtain legitimacy, (Nasr, 1968: 13). Accordingly nothing is more important than the criticism of modern science. It should be clarified that this scientologic and empiricist viewpoint has gradually decanonized the nature and has even impacted on philosophy.

*b) The criticism of insufficient religious viewpoints:* Dr. Nasr believes that all guidelines represented within the realm of attention to environment, are based on environmental engineering, and this is not sufficient by itself. For Dr. Nasr, all religious affairs lie in the scope of environmental ethics, while the celestial science of the nature should be revived, (Ghasemi, 1390: 86). In his opinion, environmental ethics doesn't have religious quality; rather, it is related to human.

*c) The revival of celestial knowledge of the nature:* In Dr. Nasr's belief, revival of correct attitude toward environment is possible only through canonization of the nature. He suggests that since the present challenge in the realm of environment is a spiritual one, this revival should take place through attention to tradition and celestial issue. For example he states, "We have to return to our origins; Hindus to their Hinduism, and Moslems to their Islam, and so on", (Nasr, 1378: 98). Therefore, Dr. Nasr believes that the resolution to manage the present challenge in human life, part of which involves the destruction of environment, lies in the revival of the celestial knowledge, the knowledge that in the environmental realm needs the revival of religious recognition of the nature which is fading in the modern world. This perception of his attitude, is not going to deny the modern science and its accomplishments, rather, it wants to show the spiritual relationship between man and the nature to modern man, and at the same time to reveal derivations



in the present world. According to this theory, traditional sciences that need improvement have ideal characteristics including: (1) cosmology, (2) transcendental study of the nature, (3) Formation based on deep relationship between man and the nature, and (4) non-humanistic, (Nasr, 1389).

### **Conclusion**

Dr. Nasr is among contemporary thinkers who, in spite of refraining from directly dealing with politics, his diverse political perceptions are found in different cultural, religious and natural traditions involving his teachings about different subjects. One of the most remarkable topics, that with the expansion of the modern world civilization is in urgent need of investigation, is the problem of domination of man upon the nature and difficulties resulting from man's greediness. Dr. Nasr considers this quality of modern man as harmful and gives him the title of "the enemy of the earth". In relation to his viewpoint about environment, since it contains both, internal explanation of environmental discourse, and social functions, the three-dimensional viewpoint of Fairclough can be an ideal framework for the analysis of this case; it is a framework that internally explains the problem and, at the same time, interprets the factors impacting on the formation and evolutions of the discourse, and pays attention to its social function. Dr. Nasr considers three major elements as involved in arrangement of discourse components of the environment: religious values, traditional values, and human values. In addition to importance that he gives to religious as well as human values in relation to the environment, Dr. Nasr introduces traditional values as the central evidence in his environmental discourse due to his specific attitude toward tradition. In fact, in his opinion, tradition is higher than religion, but within the realm of interpretation of environmental discourse, several factors can be considered as impacting arrangement of such a discourse. Among different factors within this realm, Dr. Nasr focuses on three factors of decanonization of the nature and knowledge, rationalism, and humanism. He believes that in the formation of the common discourse which needs improvement, these three factors have been influential. In fact, regarding the

literature of discourse analysis, these three factors have contributed to the formation of a competent discourse against Dr. Nasr's discourse. In relation to explicate social functions also, Dr. Nasr attempts firstly to criticize the social function of the modern viewpoint. He suggests that some religious approaches, in spite of correctly finding out the problem, have given insufficient resolutions, and have reduced such an important issue to insignificant resolutions. Finally, he has suggested the improvement of human attitude toward the nature and the revival of celestial sciences of the nature as the main resolution to overcome the challenge of the environment. The revival of this viewpoint necessitates the establishment of a spiritual relationship between human and the nature, as well as canonization of the world around. Of course, it seems that Dr. Nasr's viewpoint has some ambiguities in spite of being valuable. The major ambiguity in his attitude is concerning an ideal interaction with the nature. In fact, this question should be answered in this regard: "In the material and profiteering worldview of modern man concerning the extreme exploitation of the nature which is clearly visible in its massive form within anti-naturalistic policy of governments, how can we establish a celestial approach toward the nature" "In fact, what Dr. Nasr has identified as the cause of this "illness" is reasonable, but the path suggested by him to cure it, should have involved middle-term and short-term operations to control this challenge although in a contemporary and sectional form, and then to hope to see long-term consequences.

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