

## **Ethics Toward Nature in View of Seyyed's Ecosophy Hossein Nasr**

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### **Abstract**

This research aims to discuss the environmental crisis that occurs almost all over the world. This research uses a library research approach that contains descriptions of theories, findings and research materials obtained from reference materials to make the basis of research. The results of this study show that the cause of global environmental damage is due to the influence of the reductionist and exploitative western scientific paradigm. Descartes' philosophy that separates the spirit from the body and Newton's mechanistic physics that considers every organism can be known by separating it into small parts like a machine make science dry of spiritual things. Humans are an integral unit and cannot be separated from this nature, awareness of the position of humans in nature as caliphs who must maintain and preserve nature is the main key in handling this natural damage. Nasr provides a solution with *Scientia Sacra*, which is sacred knowledge that involves revelation which is the heart of knowledge and it is the center of this environment that includes and determines tradition.

**Keywords:** Environmental Crisis; Reductionist; *Scientia Sacra*

### **Introduction**

Humans in the history of their development cannot be separated from nature. Nature is the most important part. However, nature is seen by modern humans as a separate part of human life instead of being considered as a whole unit. Nature is only considered an inanimate object that is allowed to be exploited to meet human needs without considering the sustainability of nature itself. We can see for ourselves where today natural disasters come one after another due to the destruction of nature.

According to A. Sonny Keraf in his book *Philosophy of the Environment: Nature as a Living System*. Saying that the paradigm of dead nature (nature is seen as a separate part of life) is the result of a mechanistic

paradigm that developed starting with the coining of the analytical method by Rene Descartes, this method developed rapidly and influenced the history of science and western civilization as well as the world. The analytical method proposed by Descartes was felt to be able to describe every problem and thought in detail (Keraf & Fritjof, 2014).

The method Descartes used in his philosophy is known as methodical doubt or radical doubt. Absolute truth can be obtained by first doubting everything, traditional knowledge obtained through the five senses must also be doubted. Even the body must be doubted, until finally we come to the unquestionable conclusion that we are thinking. This absolute unquestionable truth is obtained because the fact that I am thinking is an unquestionable reality. Because it would be a contradiction for us to doubt if we were doubting. When we are doubting, it must be accepted as an absolute and certain truth, so the truth about me thinking is also a certain truth.

Descartes' method of science and philosophy changed not only Western civilization but also almost the entire world civilization. Human nature is reduced to reason as the source of knowledge that allows humans to arrive at a reality that is *Clara et distincta* (clear and precise). In this case Descartes considers the soul to be more important than the body which is material, the soul and body are radically separated. Humans in Descartes' view are beings who think rationally. This rational thinking for Descartes is superior to other abilities that humans have such as feeling with the five senses and with feelings considered inferior.

Descartes saw nature as just a big machine because he saw matter as lower than ratio or mind. Matter for Descartes has no purpose of life and no spirit, nature only works according to mechanistic laws and everything that happens in nature can be explained and predicted according to the design and motion of its parts just like a machine. Furthermore, this view applies not only to inanimate matter but also to organisms. Descartes saw organisms also as a machine where to understand them we can separate them into separate parts and then analyze them using reason. To be able to understand the organism Descartes reduces it to small parts, for him these small parts of the organism determine the whole of an organism. Descartes also argues that plants and animals are also just machines, the human body for Descartes is also just a machine. But in this case humans are seen as higher in position than plants and animals, other living things because there is intellect and soul in them (Yuono, 2019).

This perspective, which views humans as a higher position than other creatures, makes humans the determinant of all forms of life that occur in this world. This mechanistic paradigm makes humans reduce nature to the utmost for human interests without considering the sustainability of nature

itself because humans only see nature as a machine that they are free to disassemble at will (Sutoyo, 2013).

Descartes' philosophy was then continued by Isaac Newton. Newton developed a mathematical formula to explain nature using a mechanistic viewpoint and thereby perfecting the philosophical viewpoints of Copernicus and Kepler, Bacon, Galileo and Descartes as well as being the pinnacle of science in the 17th century. Newton invented a new method to explain nature called differential calculus. This method was used to examine the motion of solid objects. Newton combined Bacon's inductive empirical method with Descartes' deductive method. For Newton, inductive experiments without rational systematic interpretation and reasoning, or vice versa, rational deduction without inductive empirical evidence will not produce knowledge that has definitive truth (Keraf & Fritjof, 2014).

In Newtonian mechanics, everything is reduced to the motion of particles caused by mutual attraction, called the force of gravity. Newton also viewed nature as a machine that, to explain it, must be separated into smaller parts to see the interactions between them. The parts move according to a law that has existed since God created. With this law of cause and effect, this mechanistic view becomes rigid.

Nature is explained in a series of definite causal laws. For Newton, nothing in the universe is accidental or random. Everything can be explained and predicted based on laws with certainty (Maftukhin, 2016). The mechanistic paradigm of Descartes' philosophy and Newtonian physics did not only influence the natural sciences but also the social sciences. John Locke viewed humans or society atomistically like Newtonian physics, Locke viewed society as observable by referring to each individual as part of society. This is the very root of why there is now a massive change in nature that has resulted in the emergence of various disasters in all parts of the world. The problem of natural disasters needs to be addressed and seen from the most basic things, namely the reductionist mechanistic paradigm, we must formulate a new paradigm that is able to solve this problem of natural destruction so that nature will continue to have sustainability for our next generation (Said & Nurhayati, 2020).

Research related to Seyyed Hossein Nasr's ecosophy has been done before. As stated in Supian's article (2014) entitled "Eco-Philosophy as a Blueprint for Environmentally Friendly Philosophy" explains that

It can be witnessed for what humans have done to nature. Environmental pollution that occurs throughout the world whether on land, water or air has resulted in the extinction of various species and humans themselves. These various natural events are not without cause, it is human negligence towards the perennial truth (Nasr, 1997). A space

where humans have desacralized nature. Nature is no longer seen as something amazing to humans and is seen as just a machine.

### **Research Methodology**

The author uses a library research approach in making this research. Library research contains descriptions of theories, findings and research materials obtained from reference materials to make the basis of research. The description in this library research is directed to compile a clear framework of thinking about solving the problems that have been described in previous research in accordance with the formulation of the problem (Latipah, 2012).

The research began with a literature search related to the object of research. Literature search is the first step to collect relevant information for research. Literature search is useful to avoid duplication of research implementation. By searching the literature, it will be known that research has been carried out (Sugiyono, 2017).

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **1. Human and his Nature**

Basically, humans are always dealing with three universal problems; these problems do not depend on a certain period of time or historical background. These three issues concern the relationship between himself who is an autonomous being and other realities, this also shows the nature of humans who are dependent beings. Humans will also not be separated from the fact that humans are no different from other creatures in the fulfillment of physical needs, such as eating and drinking, the need to maintain offspring and protect themselves from threats and pain (Charris, 2015).

Basically, humans and nature are a unity that cannot be separated from each other. Nature and humans need each other, complementing each other according to their respective roles. The role of humans for nature in particular is the representative of God and the leader of the earth (khalifah) which makes it different from other components of nature.

The role of humans as caliphs on earth is an Islamic view, this is stated in the holy book of Muslims, the Al-Qur'an. Humans who are God's creatures have an obligation to serve and serve their creator (Josianta, 2020). The concept of tawhid is the basis of human servitude to Allah and servitude to other than Allah is not allowed. Tawhid ultimately becomes the first value and ethics in the relationship between God, humans and nature.

The maintenance of nature (environment) is a very important role for humans. The next stage after the subjection of all elements to be within the scope of humans, then humans must interact properly in real applications

in accordance with the laws that have been made by Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala, to maintain this nature (Al-Qaradhawi, 2002).

According to Imam Ar-Raghib Al-Asfahani, what is the role of humans is wisdom and can be categorized as a very noble goal in the midst of human life. The wisdom is divided into three purposes: the first purpose, to worship Allah in the form of devotion. This devotion is done by doing everything that Allah likes and is pleased with both in words and deeds. It can be said that this form of worship covers all aspects of life. The second purpose is to uphold truth and justice, as well as to broadcast the benefit and goodness on earth, which is the duty of man as God's representative (*khalifah*). The third goal is to always keep away from destructive things and always try to build civilization by planting, building, repairing and living, this is a perfect effort in building civilization on earth.

The maximum implementation of the human task as *khalifah* is to carry out these objectives in the meaning of worship to Allah. So that there will be harmony between God, nature and humans.

## **2. The Need for Scientia Sacra**

Today, more and more people are realizing that the application of modern science that has spread from the western world to all corners of the globe has caused direct and indirect environmental disasters. If we look at the Islamic world today, we will see that environmental crises are also occurring in countries where the majority of the population is Muslim, such as air pollution in Cairo and Taheran, erosion in the hills of Yemen, deforestation in Malaysia which is also happening in our country Indonesia.

In fact, the Islamic world today is not truly Islamic; many Islamic values are hidden in the veils of ideas and practices of Western culture, science and civilization. The attitude of Muslims towards nature is not much different from the attitude displayed by the Buddhists in Japan and the Taoists in China. The influence of secular western civilization has devoured nature without respecting its balance (Mahmudi, 2020).

Nasr argues that *Scientia Sacra* is the solution to the problems of Muslims today. *Scientia Sacra* is the sacred knowledge contained in every revelation and is the core of this environment and includes determining the traditions (Nasr et al., 2022). *Scientia Sacra* in the Islamic tradition is called *al-'ilm al-huduri*, present knowledge. *Scientia Sacra* is the culmination of the metaphysics of real knowledge. However, it should be underlined here that metaphysics in Nasr's sense is different from metaphysics in the view of western science.

Metaphysics in the view of Western science is only a mental activity and does not involve physical activity at all. In addition, metaphysics in the view of Western science is seen as knowledge that transcends the physical, it is also interpreted as a form of knowledge after the physical, while in

Nasr's view metaphysics is superior and fundamental knowledge that contains the principles of all sciences (Nasr, 1997).

Through *Scientia Sacra*, Nasr wanted to enrich the very complex science with sacredness and spirituality. Thus human beings will not experience a vacuum of spirituality and sacredness that makes them inclined to destroy nature, which has led to the crisis in the modern world today. The principles of the cosmological order in *Scientia Sacra* make it more than just a thin and opaque fact that cannot see the higher truth (Nasr, 2003).

In his concept of ecosophy, Nasr divides humans into two types, namely holy humans (primordial) and promethean humans. The first type of human (primordial) in its existence always shows an attitude as a caliph by always maintaining and controlling nature as a form of obligation as well as authority in utilizing natural resources to fulfill their needs by always maintaining the sustainability of nature (Supian, 2014).

Then the second type of human (promethean) is described as a human who denies his existence as a caliph by constantly manipulating the inner world that causes damage. This is due to the loss of sacredness that is dissolved in the world of their own creation. This type of human has emerged since the renaissance era until today.

The destructive nature of nature carried out by most humans today will not occur if God (Allah) is placed as the central point in viewing the reality of the universe. So that in every human action and thought God is always present to fill his consciousness. This must be done because God (especially in Islam) "Allah Swt." is the core of the religious experience (Irwandra, 2011).

Nasr argues that God's form appears in everything that exists in the world and is a reflection of Him on His throne. These appearances are in the form of God's names, attributes and deeds in the form of natural phenomena. To a certain extent, God also manifests like His creatures (*musyabbah*). This appearance is to a small degree and not the real thing. To a certain extent, God is similar to His creatures (*musyabbah*). This appearance of God is only to a small degree, not to a large degree or even to the truth (Nasr, 1987).

## **Conclusion**

The current destruction of nature is a common problem for humans around the world. The root of this destruction of nature is the great influence of western science, especially the influence of Descartes' philosophy and Newtonian physics which makes human perspectives on nature become reductionist and exploitative. Nature is only seen as a big machine that can be disassembled at will without regard to the impact and sustainability of nature itself.

Humans should be aware of themselves as caliphs on earth who are obliged to protect and preserve nature, as well as the awareness that humans are an inseparable part of nature. With this awareness, humans will be more wise and prudent in utilizing natural resources. This awareness will be awakened if humans return to sacredness (in this case religion). God must be positioned centrally in every human action and God exists in every form of natural phenomena. This research is expected to provide benefits in the treasury of knowledge, especially for Muslims on how to behave towards nature. This research has limitations because the methodology used is only based on library research. This research is expected to provide an overview that can then be developed again in further research.

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