

# PHILOSOPHICAL ROOTS OF OUR ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

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## ABSTRACT

Human knowledge is so powerful because of which humans are very distinct from other animals. This knowledge is generated in many ways, but philosophy is attached to every step. From the ancient world to this postmodern world philosophical perception of nature has been working as a root cause of our present environmental degradation. The present paper tries to expose what this philosophical perception of nature is and how this works for environmental problems. It also examines other potential causes of environmental destruction discovered by scholars and investigates their arguments. With a critical analysis of the causes of environmental degradation, the paper aims to draw the attention of the present philosophers for thinking about a new worldview of the environment.

**Keywords:** Alienation, Anthropocentrism, Dualism, Dominion, Cultural Transformation, Cultural Domination, Economic Affluent, Human Supremacy, Mechanistic View, Obsession of Progress, Spiritual Bankruptcy.

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The present environmental problems have reached at a serious level of danger from which it is very difficult to return until a global collective effort is taken immediately. Once upon a time when humans were busy fulfilling the basic requirement of their survival on earth, but now they are at their luxurious lifestyle and are always thinking for more comfort. The current living mode of humans is achieved, indeed, in the exploitation of our beautiful natural environment. Behind the present stage of human civilization, there are so many supporting layers crossing which humans are now at this level. It is the power of knowledge, indeed, by which humans discarded their traditional worldviews of nature and welcomed the modern scientific worldviews. Needless to say, traditional worldviews were, in most cases, so sympathetic to our natural world where people used to show their deep respect to nature, and nature is considered by them as sacred while modern humans are treating nature as a machine and they removed the sacred identity of nature through secularizing nature. Now every corner of the globe the natural environment is massively degraded by humans with the power of technology. It is true that modern scientists, through their scientific observation, have informed us about the present environmental degradation and some potential causes behind it; but have not provided any sufficient guidelines to reverse the situation. They are giving some suggestions to reduce the dependence on fossil-based energy which is considered primarily a massive way to degrade the environment. Alternatively, they are also talking about green technology to curve the present environmental problems. But our question is: can green technology be enough to reduce the present environmental crisis? Perhaps it may work to some degree, but it cannot work to reform the present worldviews of nature. Environmental problem is a vast issue, it is not only an issue for green technology. Its root goes back to the philosophical conception of human domination over the natural world. Without dealing with these root causes which gave birth to the consecutive events it is not possible to change the human mind for the positive way of environmental sustainability.

## I. FROM INTIMACY TO ALIENATION THROUGH CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

Ancient people had a deeper intimacy with nature (Pals 2006: 29). They did not separate them from the components of the natural world. They considered themselves as part of it. Though in their works of hunting for collection of foods there were some destructions in the environment (Moncrief 1970: 509), that was very limited in terms of environmental degradation and those destructions were also readjusted by the self-regulatory process of the natural world. Environmental degradation was systematically accompanied by the growth of human civilization, especially with the urbanization process. People started to cut down trees for building houses and other necessary equipment. When people began with agriculture it took another shape of degradation. The environment started to degrade massively with the industrial revolution in the West and since then it has been deteriorating. Civilized humans have been destroying the beautiful environment around us with their knowledge and technology, which implies that their way of understanding nature is not in favour of the environment. Let us investigate how such human understanding of nature causes the present ecological crisis.

## II. PHILOSOPHICAL SCRUTINY OF NATURE: DUALISTIC WORLDVIEWS

Traditional views of the natural world were supportive of the preservation of the environment but that was challenged by Thales (cr. 640-546 BCE). By his philosophical knowledge, Thales states that all things of nature are conducted by some fixed laws, i.e., natural laws which can be known by reason without the help of intuition (Azariah & Macer 1996: 126). Thales is credited with the introduction of rationalism to the body of human knowledge. In his understanding of nature, there was nothing for environmental degradation, but it worked as a potential source to remove sacredness from nature. Nature was sacred to the people of the ancient world due to their traditional understanding of it with respect and some kinds of fear to it. People tried to understand nature with their knowledge of intuition or revelation. But such traditional ways were being denied by the rationalization process starting from Thales. Plato introduced primal dualism dividing between the invisible eternal real of thought and the

visible temporal real of corporeality (Sahinidou 2016: 291). Because of this division between thought and body “the interrelatedness and interdependence of all cosmic beings” are exposed in dual identities – soul and body. According to Plato’s hierarchical understanding, the mind carries supremacy over the body. Thus he proves the lower status of the natural environment in relation to humans, arguing that humans consist of both body and mind, while nature carries only corporeality. Plato’s philosophy is further supported and reinterpreted by Aristotle. Aristotle uses Plato’s hierarchical metaphor extensively in measuring each and everything. Thus the natural world becomes alien or foreign to civilized humans by such rational thought of Plato and Aristotle. Such philosophical understanding of both classical Greek philosophers is known as the dualistic worldview (Sahinidou 2016: 292).

### III. DOMINION WORLDVIEWS OF NATURE IN RELIGIOUS FLAVOR

In the then academic world, the philosophical thought of Plato and Aristotle was so pervasive that even some Christian theologians were highly influenced by it. Christian scholars interpreted the biblical verses related to nature with the Greek philosophical and scientific understanding of the natural world. Origen Adamantius (185- 254 C.E.), a famous philosophical theologian of the early Christian era, seems to be highly influenced by Greek philosophical understanding of nature. Though he recognizes that creatures are closer to one another (Santmire 1985: 45), but all creatures are not equal in terms of their position. He shows the differentiation among the creatures accepting the Greek concept of “the Great Chain of Being” and “the hierarchy of Beings” (Santmare 1985: 49). He states that the world of spirit is indeed higher than that of the world of matter showing the basic distinction between them. In his statement, it is explicit that the natural world is alienated from human spiritual understanding and experience. Before Origen, Bishop Irenaeus (d. 202 C.E.) expressed many positive ideas about the natural world from a Christian perspective. For Irenaeus, nature is God’s given home for human beings (Santmire 1985:35), so nature should not be looked down. God, as he notes, is not alien to the world of matter and life (Santmire 1985: 39). He argues that as God contains the whole creation at His hand, the creation cannot be foreign to God (Ibid.). In his view, God is the ruler, but He is not a distant ruler (Sntmire 1985: 43), He is always very close to His creatures as the most beneficent for them and therefore the whole

creation is full of goodness, harmony, beauty and life at all times (Ibid.). For Irenaeus, God and humans are not ontologically set apart from nature; rather both humans and God are at home in the world (Santmire 1985: 44). Such a positive and supportive understanding of Christian theology toward the natural world, as explained by Irenaeus before Origen, could not flourish in the Latin West perhaps it was not ready to accept it due to pervasive Greek philosophical knowledge.

St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE) is considered a highly influential and authentic theologian of the Christian world (Santmire 1985: 55). He was not free from influential Greek knowledge. Through his works, *Civitas Dei* (City of God) and *Civitas Terrea* (earthly city), St. Augustine shows the distinction between spirit and matter using the Greek philosophical arguments (Marangudakis 2001: 248). In *Summa Theologia*, Augustine mentions God as a pure Being of pure actuality and humans as corporal entities, and therefore he argues that it is not possible to comprehend the eternal essence of God for human beings (Marangudakis 2001: 250). In his view, humans can comprehend the natural world by their perception and through knowing the sensible objects of the world they can know God (Ibid.). In these benchmark works, Augustine also distinguishes secularity from spirituality arguing that secularity is attached to the natural environment while spirituality deals with God. His such philosophical understanding creates “a firm dichotomy between matter and spirit”, which works in Latin Christianity as a basis for creating absolute dichotomies between God and World, and humans and the natural world (Marangudakis 2001: 249). Perhaps St. Augustine’s theological recognition of secularity with the natural world worked for the development of secularism in the West. Thus, after spirituality is separated from the natural world, Christian people began to see the natural environment as the less important thing for religious purposes considering it only for earthly benefits. Augustine’s interest is mainly theocentric where God is put at the center and the rest of His creation works around the center (Santmire 1985: 69). Then he focuses on humanity’s excellency (Ibid.) over animals and other creatures giving higher dignity of humans over the rest of the creation. However, his negligence to nature keeps the natural world away from human concentration. So, his theological understanding of nature is a disfavor of the environment (Santmire 1985: 73).

While Latin Christianity was busy making a vivid distinction between the material world and the heavenly world with the philosophical-theological understanding of Origen and the theological interpretation of Augustinian, the Eastern form of Christianity ignored such materialistic and secular views of nature rejecting the views of Irenaeus and Augustine in terms

of theological interpretation (Ibid.). Both Origen and Augustine were not accepted in Greek theology because of their naïve and superficial theological understanding (Ibid.). At that time, Eastern Orthodox Christianity emphasizes on the mystical and spiritual relationship between God and humans, where the natural world is not seen as foreign to humans. They never think of dualistic reality as a very much focusing issue as it is seen in the Latin West. Instead, the Eastern world is more interested in seeking the metaphysical relationship of human beings with God and His creation. On the other hand, the Latin West articulates the rationalization process in Christian theology and because of which we see the development of scholasticism at the hands of Christian scholars and theologians of the Latin world. Scholastics prefer reason over theology even in proving the existence of God. It is explicit that while the Eastern world remains with metaphysical issues, the Latin West heads toward more rationality.

Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109 CE) develops ontological arguments to prove the existence of God and his contemporary Peter Abelard (1079-1142 CE) introduces a rational explanation of the atonement (Marangudakis 2001: 250). In the meantime, Europe restored the lost Aristotelian knowledge during the twelfth century through the Arab scholars who use Aristotelian logic extensively in their works and it also get the same popularity among the rising European scholars of that time (Ibid.). Aristotelian knowledge is frequently used in investigating the works of nature and it also dominates theology (Ibid.). Being highly influenced by Aristotelianism Thomas Aquinas (1225-1275 C.E.) articulates Aristotelian philosophy into Christian theology for justifying the revealed truth by rational arguments (Ibid.). It is a really terrible situation for theology that the divine truths are put under rationality for validity. Some theologians attempted to respond to the initiatives of Aquinas, but their answer is not satisfactory, and they are also not free from the influence of Aristotelian philosophy. In response to Aquinas they recognize the distinction between faith and reason limiting faith with God and attaching reason with the natural world, they argue that faith is used as a means to seek God while reason is a method to investigate the functions of nature. They also accept the established dichotomy between faith and reason and support that it is impossible to make communion between them. In this way, the faith-reason based dichotomy creates a further crisis to the Christian theological understanding of nature. Though Aquinas was so fond of natural beauty, his views of nature were not supportive of the preservation of the natural world. He accepts Aristotle's statement that human is a rational animals and he applies this in theology in the way that this rationality is God's special gift which is given to any creature (Azariah & Macer 1996: 127), and because of this rationality other creatures are

created to serve humans (Marangudakis 2001: 252). Then he argues that actually "animals have no moral status" (Ibid.) in relation to human necessity as their existence is for fulfilling human demands. For him, all material and vital creatures are created by God to serve humans and so they are subordinate to human needs (Santmire 1985: 90). Furthermore, he argues that the life of animals and plants is preserved by God not for themselves rather for humans (Ibid.). Though Aquinas does not support any cruelty to animals in killing them as food, his doctrine "animals have no moral status" relieve humans of their taking care mind and responsibility to animals (Marangudakis 2001: 252.). His view, the other creatures have no intrinsic value at all, gives a massive misunderstanding of Christian theological views regarding the natural world. For Azariah & Macer (1996: 127), Aquinas applies Aristotelian logic in Christian theology with his own personal understanding and thus he misinterpreted the biblical view of humans in creation.

#### IV. MECHANISTIC WORLDVIEW OF NATURE AND RADICAL ANTHROPOCENTRISM

Rene Descartes (1596-1650) argues that humans are created in a state of grace but the whole nature is not created in a state of grace (Santmire 1985: 91). Nature, as he states, is soulless and mindless, but it moves mechanically (Sahinidou 2016: 293). In his view the mind belongs to God and humans in the form of thought (Ibid.); therefore, it is superior to matter. For more clarification about the natural world, he uses the metaphor of the machine. To him, nature is like a machine, it does not possess anything which requires to be respected by humans. Descartes's methodical interpretation of the natural world is known as the mechanistic worldview (Sahinidou 2016: 293).

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804 CE) goes to a further extent through philosophical analysis that humans have no direct duty to animals because they are merely meaning to an end and this end is humans by virtue of their rational nature (Rachels 1986 cited in Azariah & Macer 1996: 127). Kant does not recognize any value of animals of their own, they are only instrumental to the value of humans. In such an approach, animals are not generally considered for having extra care from humans. Like Aquinas, Kant removes human's moral responsibility to animals (Azariah & Macer 1996: 127). Both Kant and Aquinas let human reason play a vital role in creating an unhealthy desire for showing human mastery over nature (Ibid.). Thus, a

highly radical anthropocentric approach to nature is developed both by Thomas Aquinas and Immanuel Kant. Through such a philosophical analysis between humans and animals, Kant finally proclaims human mastery over the natural world. In fact, such triumph of humans over nature as a result of Thomistic-Kantian (Azariah & Macer 1996: 127). Therefore, the comment of Azariah & Macer sounds relevant whereas they state: "(T)here is no justification for ecological malpractice or selfish and destructive exploitation of nature. ... the fault lies not with Christianity but with the so-called enlightenment" (1996: 127).

It is evident that due to a philosophical understanding of nature, traditional religious views of the natural world are changed over the centuries. Even it affects seriously religious or theological approaches nature. Renaissance humanism and secularism are developed in the Latin West, which helps the growth of a radical anthropocentric approach to nature through the secularization of nature and separating it from its sacredness (Santmire 1985: 125-130). Modern scientists, Galileo (1564- 1642 C.E.) and Newton (1642- 1727 C.E.) for instance prove an anthropocentric approach to nature through their scientific methods. Nature is considered just a machine-like structure without any value and is detached from both God and humanity (Ibid.). After the industrial revolution in the Western, Europe technology is used massively for more production and comfort of human life, but this technology exploits the natural world in an unprecedented way causing the present ecological crisis. So, the industrial-mechanical view of nature is undoubtedly a prime cause of the current environmental degradation.

## V. WHITE'S THESIS ON THE INVOLVEMENT OF CHRISTIANITY IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS AND SOME COUNTERARGUMENTS

Now let us see whether religion, especially Christianity, works as a historical root of the present environmental crisis as Lynn White argues. In his paper (1967: 1205) White mentions the Western form of Christianity as the most anthropocentric religion. He argues that after the advent of Christianity, paganism starts to decline. Paganism, in his view, is supportive of the environment, because it gives natural phenomena an important position in religious beliefs and practices. As pagans worship nature, it is not possible for them to destroy what they respect. White notes that some missionary people cut down the trees that pagans consider sacred. In medieval Christianity of the Latin West, showing respect to trees and

animals were considered an act of heresy or anti-religious. White also refers to the creation story of the Bible (Gen. 1: 28) where humans are given the authority to rule over the earth on behalf of God, as a result of which humans can get a mandate from God to exploit the natural world. Then he talks about the background of modern scientific worldviews of nature. In it, he attempts to prove that the Christian faith as a dominant cultural force in the European continent also influences the mindset of the then scientists and philosophers. In his view, though later thinkers were not so affiliated with religiosity or religious ideology, they could not free themselves completely from that mindset Christianity had already created. He states that over the centuries European philosophers and scientists emphasize anthropocentrism that is actually produced by Christian scholars in terms of environmental approach. Some thinkers of the Enlightenment age, Kant and Descartes for instance, are so enthusiast that they turn the traditional human-centric view of nature into radical anthropocentrism.

Finally, technology gets nature as a raw material for exploitation to make human life more comfortable and happy. White argues that all these respective events are interrelated and interconnected to one another up to the Christian anthropocentric view of nature which, in fact, affects all other causes. That is why White's conclusion is: "Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt" (1967: 1206) due to its historical role-playing as a root cause for the present environmental crisis. Brennan and Lo interpret White's argument further: "(W1)-Christianity leads to anthropocentrism, (W2)-Anthropocentrism is very harmful to the environment, (W3)-Hence, Christianity is the intellectual origin of environmental crisis" (2010: 165). After Christianity is criticized by White for the present ecological problem, secular environmental scholars, ethicists, and activists are vehemently blaming Christian faith through their works. But if we carefully investigate history we will not see any strong evidence that Christianity works as the sole influencing authority to degrade our natural environment. White's thesis (1967) is rigorously criticized by Christian scholars for misinterpreting the biblical status of humans in relation to the natural world (Soneson 1994: 155). White develops his argument on the basis of the first creation story in a wrong way and he overlooks the second creation story of the Bible (Gen. 2: 15), where humans are put at the gate of the garden to take care of animals and plants. Therefore, biblical scholars reject White's partial and superficial analysis based on the first creation story. They argue that human supremacy given by God on animals does not necessarily give an open license to mistreat and misbehave with other animals; rather the very special status is given to them due to their responsibility to God's creatures. Being a representative of God on earth humans cannot show disrespect or cruelty to other animals

or co-creatures. The second creation story imposes stewardship on the shoulder of humans to take care of God's creation on behalf of God. If humans are bound to be careful about all creation, how is it possible for humans to destroy the natural environment? According to the biblical story, it is evident that humans are commissioned by God to improve the environment not to destroy it by any means. Human dignity is balanced by the responsibility of stewardship which White has missed in his thesis (1967).

Some Christian scholars question the English translation of the Bible. They argue that the creation story of the Christian Bible originally comes from the Hebrew Bible (Torah) which is not translated properly in English. People usually translate foreign literature as per their established cultural norms and flows. People cannot be completely neutral and free-minded when they translate; anyway, biased works in their minds influence the work in their cultural eye. Bible is not directly translated from the Hebrew language; it came to English translation through many European languages. When Bible is translated into European languages, the concept of human domination over nature is very common in their literature (Azariah & Macer 1996: 127); therefore, translators kept this influential idea in their mind while they translate. According to the English translation of Gen. 1: 28, it is understood as human domination over nature, but this meaning does not properly correspond to the actual Hebrew word *Radah*. For Azariah (1995), the translation of *Radah* as human domination is not fully correct; it has other meanings (Leavitt 1995 cited in Azariah & Macer 1996: 127). Strong (1890) discovers some meanings of *Radah* as "to tread down", "to crumble off", "have dominion", "prevail against", "reign", "take" etc. (Azariah & Macer, 1996: 127).

All these meanings can be applied to *Radah* depending on the context. As the second creation story (Gen. 2: 15) deals with the garden, the word *Radah* (actual Hebrew word in corresponding verse no. Gen. 1: 28) should be translated as "takeover" instead of "rule over" considering the next circumstance of caring. Azariah & Macer (1996: 127) argue that if the Hebrew word *Radah* is translated as a takeover, it means that "human beings are to take over God's creation and be a partner in the creative work of God". "It is a positive and not a negative term, i.e. to develop and not to destroy" (Ibid.). The idea of exploitation in a sense of subjugation does not appear. However, the challenge to the English translation of the Hebrew word "*Radah*" does not seem illogical. In this regard, there should be some deep study for more exploration. As for White's allegation against Christian missionary works it can be sufficient to say that if Christian preachers would have done something wrong with nature, for instance cutting down the trees that were considered sacred by pagans, in the name of the

Christian religion, due to such activities those specific people should be addressed for blaming, Christianity should not be blamed for their offensive behaviors to pagans and trees. Nowhere the Bible allows Christians to convert anyone against his/her will. It is very unfortunate that in the medieval period, veneration to any natural phenomena is compared with paganism and there is a sanction for punishment by the Holy Inquisition (Keith 1983 cited in Marangudakis 2001: 253). Even Biblical verses revealing sympathy to animals (for instance, Deuteronomy 22: 6-7) were interpreted by medieval Christian scholars just mentioning no cruelty to them (Serpell 1996 cited in Marangudakis 2001: 253).

All these were misinterpretations and misunderstandings of Christian scholars and institutes, but because of such wrong ideas and activities done by medieval Christians is it wise to blame the Christian faith as White and others attempt to do? Similarly, some Christian theologians like St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and Anselm among many others were highly influenced by the then dominant philosophy of human domination which was reflected in their theological works. With their own perception of the prevailed knowledge, they interpret the biblical verses related to the natural world where human domination gets supremacy over animals and nature is seen as the means for human utilization. It was a very common cause for the scientists, socio-political thinkers, and philosophers of the time that all of them were focusing on a human-centric approach to nature. In their view, nature was a means for fulfilling the ends of humans. For them, not nature only humans have intrinsic value. If these are the cases, how can White criticize only Christian tradition for deteriorating the environment? He should consider, for blaming, the dominant concept of human supremacy whose roots go back to the ancient Greek philosophy, and in which Christianity was only interpreted. He recognizes that philosophers and scientists of the time were free minded to think, but he sees that they were attached to the socio-cultural impact of the time from which they were not completely free. For him, European culture at that time was dominated by Christian faith tradition, so as an influencing cultural source, Christianity of medieval Europe cannot get escape from the degradation of the environment. This argument may have some logic, but it fails to address the root cause which is indeed rooted in Plato-Aristotelian philosophical understanding of the dualistic worldviews. We are surprised to see, White has not touched this issue in his thesis (1967) even for a while. This is inconsistent in his statement that he cannot correlate the European dominant culture of human domination over nature, though nurtured by Christian faith tradition in medieval Europe, with the philosophical roots of human domination.

It is worthy to note that White mentions St. Francis of Assisi as a radical patron of ecology (1967: 1207) at that time. St. Francis belonged to Latin Christianity which is vehemently criticized by White for the present ecological crisis. It is evident that White's criticism is self-contradictory, because he criticizes the Latin form of Christianity on one hand, and on the other, he also praises a saint possessing that form of Christianity. According to his argument, if the Latin form of Christianity is dangerous for the ecological problems, St. Francis should also be the same, but he is not like this rather he is a patron for environmental preservation. Perhaps, St. Francis was not influenced by the then dominant European culture rather he used his own spiritual knowledge and understanding to understand the Bible and Christian faith. That is why he could develop a very positive approach to the natural world from a Christian perspective (White: 1967: 1206-1207) being resided in a period where everyone was busy proving human excellency over the natural world. His voice for the right of animals was not mostly heard at that time by scientists, philosophers, and even by the established religious authority, but he continued to work for this purpose until his death. Sometimes, he was even considered a heretic and his early accounts were suppressed by some Christian saints, St. Bonaventura for instance (White: 1967: 1206). So, we argue, if Christian scholars and theologians were not influenced by Plato-Aristotelian dominant philosophy there would be no rise of a dominant theology in the Latin form of Christianity. The Eastern form of Christianity, Christian orthodox for instance, did not allow a dominant theology of so-called human excellence over nature possibly because of their rejection of a dominant philosophy (Azariah & Macer 1996: 125-128). So, Christian tradition should not be considered the root cause of the present environmental crisis.

## VI. CULTURAL DOMINATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

Contrary to White's argument, Lewis Moncrief, John Passmore (1914-2004), Robin Attfield (1931-present), Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965), Seyyed Hosein Nasr (1933-present), John B. Cobb (1925-present), and so on, address other issues as potential causes of the current environmental problems. Albert Schweitzer (1988) argues that over the centuries the dominant human culture was not properly complied with the "reverence for life" of other animals, rather it was always attached with the concept of human domination over the natural world, and for

proving this supremacy, humans are using philosophy, religions, and science and technology. Schweitzer (1988) states that cultural focus on materialism has suppressed the application of spirituality in human thoughts, so religious teaching or theological understanding cannot work to change the present materialistic worldview. For him, humans are more extremely interested in evaluating the materialistic achievement of civilizations and they have almost zero attraction to the issue of a spiritual accomplishment (Ibid.). By giving over emphasize on a materialistic achievement, humans have become more familiar with an all-pervasive culture of materialism, and culture of spirituality has become alien to them. In Schweitzer's view, philosophy is responsible for the origin and growth of a culture of materialism, because it could not work to grow a deeper sense of responsibility to nature and a deeper spiritual feeling for others. General philosophical understanding of nature, as Schweitzer views, could not guide humans in the right direction, but rather its mistaken worldview has kept humans in a dangerous situation, which can be compared to an uncontrolled boat with a damaged machine heading toward an unimaginable dangerous destination. Therefore, he thinks, human civilization cannot be saved from an unprecedented environmental catastrophe without developing ethics showing respect to all lives. This sort of ethics, he suggests, must articulate moral teachings of religions integrating human life with the life of animals. In this regard, Schweitzer proposes to control human will, power and scientific understanding for serving the better purpose of all lives; otherwise, it is not possible to revitalize a culture of respect to life. For him, it is an urgent need to quickly revive a comprehensive worldview for rightly directing humans to a culture of "reverence for life", where ethical behavior is given utmost priority over an economic affluent. His innovative thought in terms of respecting animal life is credited with the global development of the animal rights movement and the environmental movement. Environmental ethicists, for instance, Aldo Leopold (1949) and Holmes Rolston (1988; 2012), express the same thing in their works. However, according to the view of many scholars like Schweitzer and Passmore among others, it becomes clear that behind the present environmental crisis cultural attitude of humans to nature worked as a root cause of the crisis, but he cannot explain how this bad culture was created. It seems that he overlooks the rational thinking of the human mind, which generally influences human attitudes and thus human culture. Culture cannot be ignored as a product of the human mind, and the human mind is influenced by human thought and understanding, so philosophy is related in every step.

## VII. SPIRITUAL BANKRUPTCY AND ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

Seyyed Hossein Nasr states the present environmental problems as a spiritual crisis of modern humans (2000:18). He has given a chronological development of how the present crisis comes to the current level. After then, he concludes that a spiritual bankruptcy of modern humans worked as a root cause for the ecological crisis (Nasr 1993:85-86). He argues that spirituality – spiritual feeling and spiritual experience – is an essential part of humanity without which human life cannot go smoothly, but this essential character of human life was separated from human thought and acts by so-called rationality, secularity, renaissance humanism, scientific discoveries, the industrial revolution, and finally rapidly use of technology. In his view, a remedy of the present unprecedented environmental damage is not impossible but difficult. For him, it is not possible without going back to the traditional worldviews of nature, where spirituality lies at the highest level. He vehemently criticizes the modern scientific mechanistic worldviews for brutally exploiting nature (Nasr 1976: 21). He also criticizes White's article (1967) for its one-sided and partial analysis of the ecological crisis. For him, White could not touch the root cause of the crisis rather he deals with secondary causes of the crisis. Nasr recognizes that medieval Christian tradition along with its institutional resources and resource persons may be responsible to some extent for their silence and support to the then influential and dominating views of nature (Nasr 1976: 55-67), but these should not be as root causes as White mentions. However, Nasr's analysis is praiseworthy for understanding another angle of the environmental crisis, but his argument seems to miss also the root cause like other scholars. He frequently talks about the significant role of spirituality in the sustainability of the environment, but he fails to deeply integrate it with the human mind, i.e. human thought. Can spirituality be isolated from the human mind? If the human mind is full of rational thought, how is it possible for humans to divert their attention to spiritual feeling or thought? Rational thought cannot be ignored in denouncing spirituality from human life, so it worked as a prime cause of environmental problems.

## VIII. ECONOMIC AFFLUENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

John B. Cobb, Jr. also supports White's argument to some degrees, and in some ways, he also makes the medieval Christian faith responsible for the current ecological crisis (Cobb 1972: 33). For Cobb, it was the failure of Christian theologians that they could not timely respond to the issue from a Christian faith perspective (Ibid.). In his view, Christianity has some divine guidelines to deal with the issue, but Christian scholars could not articulate Christian moral teachings in dealing with the natural world (Cobb 1972: 55-56; Cobb 1992: 2, 93). Therefore, he takes an initiative to develop an eco-theology to address the ecological crisis from a Christian theological point of view (McCall 2008: 711). He studies biology for knowing more about how ecology works (Birch 1982). It is true that without basic biological knowledge it is not properly possible to understand the environment and the ecology. Then he studies the modern economic system (with Daly & Cobb 1994) for having a clear idea of how modern economic functions work for the environmental problems. When he understands that behind the present ecological destruction economic affluent works as a root cause (Cobb 1992: xii), he deploys his time on how to present a sustainable economic system for saving the natural world (1994; with Daly 1994). In his works, he proposes a green technology, locality-based market system, local values, and ecology-based agriculture. However, from his statement, it is clear that he claims the economic interest of people as a root cause of the present ecological destruction because he argues that humans always use rational thought along with their technology for economic interest (Ibid.). That is why he addresses the economic issue in relation to the ecological crisis. But the question remains the same as earlier: how can economic interest come in the human mind without philosophical understanding behind it? Humans can proceed for a more economic interest only when they are convinced enough by their mindset through philosophical argument. So, Cobb also misses addressing the prime cause of the ecological crisis.



## IX. MODERN CULTURE OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WITH POLITICAL FORMATION

In his work (1970: 508-512) Lewis Moncrief criticizes White for separating Christianity from the influential culture accompanied by philosophers and scientists of the Enlightenment era. He shows that in every culture there is a concept of hierarchy and human domination (Moncrief 1970: 509). For him, a “desire for a better life” is a common universal phenomenon in every culture (Ibid.). He goes on to add, no culture has sufficiently grown an eco-centric human approach (Ibid.). Therefore, in Moncrief’s view, White’s thesis is “based on fad than on fact” (Ibid.). Then he argues that actually, the modern environmental crisis starts from the political and socio-economic developments of the modern world order, which is a result of the French revolution and industrial revolution. For him, these two revolutions play a vital role to change the world in a new direction, which is very harmful to nature (Moncrief 1970: 509; Dobson & Lucardie 2002: 215). In his view, after these two so-called great revolutions, humans get complete freedom to exploit the natural world for their earthy benefits. From then on, they have no consideration for nature in terms of human economic interest. But Moncrief fails to mention the philosophical background behind these two revolutions. Needless to say, a strong philosophical ideology triggers these revolutions to happen in the soil of Western Europe. So, the philosophical root cannot be discarded from all consecutive causes.

## X. HUMAN ATTITUDE AND CULTURAL PATTERN FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEM

John Passmore sees the basic problem lies in human attitude toward the environment, so he suggests changing urgently such human perception and treatment of the natural world (Passmore 1974: 195). In Passmore’s view, the human culture of domination is responsible for the present environmental crisis. He also criticizes White for particularly focusing on the Christian view of human domination in terms of nature arguing that it is commonly found in all cultures that humans are the ultimate goal of the natural world and all other creatures are for human service; so it is not Christianity but rather all cultures are responsible for the environmental problems. Therefore, he suggests quickly reversing such a cultural pattern (Passmore 1974: 186). But it cannot be denied that behind the formation of cultural patterns

and human attitude philosophical understanding works as a basic ingredient. So, Passmore misses articulating this point with his proposed guideline.

## XI. OBSESSION WITH PROGRESS AND ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

Robin Attfield argues that the present ecological crisis starts when humans become obsessed with a belief in progress (Attfield 2014). This sort of obsession in human life drives humans to earn more resources in the price of the environment. This is, indeed, an ill mentality that is, of course, a result of a materialistic worldview. In a materialistic view of nature, there is no space for solidarity with nature. It does not consider any traditional social norms for showing a soft mind and mercy to other animals and plants. It aims to how quickly get richer in exploiting the natural world. Behind such an obsessed mind a kind of utilitarian philosophical view works, according to which nature is nothing but a means of human needs. So, without dealing with a proper philosophical understanding, it is not possible to address this obsessed mind.

## CONCLUSION

It becomes explicit that behind the environmental problems there are many causes that are interconnected and interrelated to one another. If we just list these causes we can mention as a dualistic world-view, dominion world-view, mechanistic world-view, materialistic world view, cultural domination of humans over nature, religious/theological views of human supremacy, utilitarianism, radical anthropocentrism, renaissance humanism, the industrial revolution, scientific world-view, modernity, human progress, spiritual bankruptcy, economic affluent, curiosity for exploration to the natural world, human luxurious lifestyle, dependence on technology, etc. Perhaps no research is done so far integrating the above-mentioned reasons for properly analysis to give a holistic guideline to prevent our most essential ecological system from further natural disaster and catastrophe.

Every scholar has emphasized on a particular cause which is meant to him as the most serious one to the present environmental problems and therefore s/he has attempted

to present his/her findings considering that specific event, though they have missed other potential issues in their discussion. However, the common point is seen in most cases that the majority of scholars cannot refuse the potential connectivity of philosophical roots of the present environmental problems. If it is the case that environmental problems connect the philosophical roots of causes, it will be no exaggeration to state the present ecological crisis as a philosophical crisis. Without addressing the philosophical roots of causes, the present environmental problems cannot be properly dealt. As the current environmental problems related to the ancient Greek philosophical perception of nature especially developed by Plato-Aristotelian views of dualism, the solution should come from philosophical understanding. So, philosophers should come first for doing serious works in order to reverse the present worldviews to a positive or a very sympathetic worldview of nature and the environment.

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