

WHAT WAS SAID TO THE ROSE THAT MADE IT OPEN
WAS SAID TO ME, HERE, IN MY CHEST:
THE INFLUENCES OF JALAL AL-DIN RUMI IN SEYYED HOSSEIN
NASR'S SUFI DIAGNOSIS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

BY

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BA, St. Francis Xavier University, 2013

A Thesis Submitted to
Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia
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The Degree of Master of Arts in Theology and Religious Studies

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Abstract

What was said to the rose that made it open, was said to me, here, in my chest:

The influences of Jalal al-Din Rumi in Seyyed Hossein Nasr's Sufi Diagnosis of the Environmental Crisis

By Cory Wensley

This thesis traces the genealogy of contemporary Muslim scholar Seyyed Hossein Nasr's diagnosis of the environmental crisis. I argue that if one understands the thought of thirteenth century Sufi mystic Jalal al-Din Rumi's approach to the Quran, there are incursions of this in Nasr's diagnosis of the environmental crisis as an eco-theological crisis in the hearts and minds of human beings. These men envision nature as a signifier of the existence of God, and that all of creation is on a journey returning to its Creator. In addition, Rumi and Nasr see a dichotomy between the purposes of human knowledge and divine intuition for understanding these truths about the natural world. And, when one recognizes such evidences of nature's sacred quality, the Sufi on the path to God evolves, spiritually, into the perfect human (*insan al-kamil*). Moreover, this being is responsible for maintaining the balance and harmony of the natural world. This thesis aspires to add a notable contribution to the ongoing discussion for understanding the way human-earth relationships have been conceptualized.

November, 13, 2014

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Introduction

This thesis explicates the possible influences of Jalal al-Din Rumi's understanding of the natural environment, and humanity's relationship with it, in Seyyed Hossein Nasr's Sufi diagnosis of the environmental crisis. Nasr calls for a return to traditional religious views of nature so as to offer an alternative approach to how some people today interact and understand the qualities of the natural environment. Generally, there are influences from certain Sufi thought in the way Nasr explicates his interpretation of the causes of the environmental crisis. This is due to Nasr's lifelong study of Sufism, as well as his claim to be a practicing Sufi. When delving into Nasr's affiliation with Sufism, there are incursions from Rumi's Sufi thought and practice as Rumi, especially with Nasr's approach to the environmental crisis. With this in mind, I will discuss how the influences from Rumi's interpretation of the qualities of nature, and the interaction that humans have with it, resonate in Nasr's diagnosis. One reason that Rumi influences Nasr relates to Nasr's lifelong affiliation with Rumi's poetic works, and his advocacy of Rumi's work as a perennial wisdom for how humans relate to nature, and to God. In my view, Rumi's interpretation of human-earth relationships that are based on Qur'anic principles, perhaps make their way into Nasr's diagnosis of the environmental crisis.

With this in mind, I support Nasr's appeal for the importance of returning to religious views of nature, like those presented by Sufis, like Rumi. Nasr shares a common advocacy for changing the way humans interact with the natural world, and the importance of the place of religion in the matter. This is prominent in many scholarly approaches to environmental ethics. Many religion scholars view the relationship between religion and ecology as timeless because they go hand in hand with one another. In *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment*, editor, Roger Gottlieb, offers three general reasons that support the idea of incorporating

religious views in the study of ecology and the environment. First, he claims that religious accounts of creation explain that people have desired to understand nature in a humanly comprehensible framework. Second, religious accounts of nature are to be made sense of in a way that connects them to the fundamental values of human existence. In other words, the universe is enchanted, it is the gift from a loving God, a land destined for holy people, a setting filled with spirit forces who are to be our guardians. Third, though religions view and interpret nature in various ways, sometimes one draws upon religious understandings of the natural world in order to recover some ecological sanity.¹ Thus, religion offers a way for people to comprehend their relationship with the natural environment.

In line with those who express the importance of coalescing religion and ecology is scholar, Mary Evelyn Tucker. Tucker agrees with Gottlieb's assertions and declares that religion is playing a role in the field of ecology as a result of the environmental crisis and the need to formulate a viable human-earth relationship for a sustainable future for the planet:

Religions are being recognized in their great entirety as more than simply beliefs in a transcendent deity or means to an afterlife. Rather, religions are providing a broad orientation to the cosmos and to human roles therein. Attitudes toward nature have thus been significantly, although not exclusively, shaped by religious views for millennia in cultures around the globe.²

Due to the tribulations facing the natural environment, many scholars who study the role of religion and environmental issues declare that, for many people, this concern is not solely the result of economic, political or social factors, but is a moral and spiritual crisis.³ The concerns

¹ Gottlieb, 6.

² Mary Evelyn Tucker, "Religion and Ecology," in Peter B. Clarke, *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, Oxford Handbooks Series (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). 819-20.

³ Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, "Series Foreword," in Richard Foltz, Frederick Mathewson Denny, and Baharuddin Azizan Haji, *Islam and Ecology : A Bestowed Trust*, Religions of the World and Ecology (Cambridge, Mass.: Center for the Study of World Religions Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2003)., xv-xvi.

are looked upon from a perspective of religious understandings regarding the processes of life and humanity's place in them.⁴ In short, religious interpretations of the function and purpose of creation can be examined in light of the environmental crisis.⁵ In the same vein, Lawrence Sullivan, the director of the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard University, maintains that "religious life and the earth's ecology are inextricably linked and organically related... [Moreover], human beliefs about the nature of ecology are the distinctive contribution of our species to the ecology itself."⁶ Additionally, he states that placing religious worldviews in an environmental context propels communities into the world with fundamental predispositions toward it because such religious worldviews are primordial, all-encompassing and unique.⁷

Nasr agrees that having an eco-theological approach to the protection, conservation, and preservation of the natural environment is significant. He has studied the natural world from both secular and religious perspectives, and he does not envision the problems concerning the latter evolving from a variety of separate causes. By this he means that each problem the natural environment has experienced, such as global warming, destruction of forests, and exploitation of resources, are the cause of one hindrance. The primary cause, for Nasr, is the mindset of human beings, and how we connect with nature on a spiritual level. He argues that there is no longer a spiritual view of nature because the religious views of the natural world have been taken over by modern secular conceptions of nature's characteristics, and significance to humans. Generally speaking, Nasr calls for a return to the religious view of nature so as to offer an alternative to the current secular view of nature as spiritually empty and devoid of any sacred characteristics. His notion is based on the idea that if humans reconnect with the Creator, their perspective of

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid, xvi.

⁶ Lawrence E. Sullivan, "Series Preface," in *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*, xi.

⁷ Ibid, xii.

nature's quality could change their way of thinking about nature as an entity to be dominated and over-utilized. In his diagnosis of the environmental crisis, Nasr's promotion that religious views of nature can change the way some people perceive the sacred quality in nature goes deeper into how particular Sufi interpretations of human-earth relations offer such an alternative. Nasr advocates for traditional religious views of nature that have come from pre-Modern, pre-Renaissance, conceptions of the natural world, which includes Sufi thought, especially from Rumi's time period.⁸ Moreover, he supports certain traditional Sufi ways of life in facilitating a change in humans with regard to the ecological concerns they face. He avows that certain Sufi views of nature are important to study because of the way they promote positive interaction with nature. He upholds that the cosmological perspectives of Sufism are important for how humans shape the way they interact with nature. Moreover, Nasr argues this position because he sees how Sufism offers something more to the questions of human existence and our relationship between us and the natural world.

Sufism has become a way of life for Nasr. He is influenced by Sufi cosmological doctrine. Nasr's affiliation with Sufi thought expresses itself in his interpretation of the problems that have caused the environmental crisis. Furthermore, Nasr has always had an affiliation with, and interest in, Rumi's poetry. The metaphysical significance it expresses regarding the qualities of the natural environment have, perhaps, entered into Nasr's thought regarding his diagnosis of the environmental crisis. From my research, there are four possible themes from Rumi's thought that present themselves in Nasr's eco-theological philosophy.

⁸ This view is a traditionalist perspective that is explicated in Kenneth Oldmeadow, *Traditionalism* (Columbo: Sri Lanka Institute of Traditional Studies, 2000). In his definition, Oldmeadow claims that the traditionalist perspective is an age-long worldview of all pre-modern peoples. Those committed to the traditionalist perspective are committed to the explication of the *philosophia perennis* which is evident in many religions (viii-ix).

First, they both follow comparable Sufi interpretation of *tawhid* (oneness of God) in their understanding that nature is a sign (*aya*) of God's existence.⁹ Second, they both address the Sufi understanding of the concept of *tawhid*, and that all of creation has its own existential purpose which leads to a union with God. Third, is their criticism of relying on human knowledge and the human senses so as to define nature's sacred quality. They uphold that a dichotomy exists between what human knowledge has to offer to the study of nature and God, and the importance of looking toward the inner awareness that is inherent in all humans. The latter is the only way for a human to comprehend God's existence in nature. While both men claim that human knowledge is beneficial for ridding one's lower self of one's carnal desires, which are the product of relying on the human senses. However, only the internal consciousness of a Sufi on the path to God is plausible for the understanding that nature is a theophany. Fourth is that both men discuss the concept of the perfect human and the importance of striving to become this being. It is this person that functions as the *khalif* (sustainer, custodian) of the earth, and maintains the harmony between humans, God, and nature. This thesis, thus, aims to present the themes that are evident from Rumi's philosophy of human-earth relations in Nasr's diagnosis of the environmental crisis. In my view, this thesis offers a fresh approach to the current discussion regarding eco-theological ethics, and is one alternate method for how humans can interact with the natural environment on a more respectful and conservationist level.

⁹ This notion is understood and promoted by many Muslims because it is considered part of a standard Islamic orthodox theology. However, I believe that the way Nasr uses Rumi's poetry to communicate this message is unique. Also, he claims that Sufi ways of life promote this way of thinking to another level. It may be part of a standard orthodox Islamic theology, but the way Sufi understand this message is profound and they uphold this message in a unique and timeless fashion.

Genealogical Methodology

The methodological approach I focus on in this thesis is genealogical. Michael Foucault maintains that genealogy is “a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledge, discourses, domains of objects, etc., without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history.”¹⁰ For Foucault, this makes genealogy “gray, meticulous and patiently documentary” and operating “on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times.”¹¹ He clarifies his position on genealogy in his criticism of Paul Ree for considering the history of morality in terms of a linear development that reduces its history and genesis to an exclusive concern for utility which assumes that the words kept their meaning, that desires still pointed in a single direction, and that ideas retained their logic. For Foucault, Ree overlooked the notion that the world of speech has been influenced by invasions, struggles, plundering and ploys. And, unlike Ree’s approach, Foucault says that a genealogical understanding “retrieves an indispensable restraint.”¹² In other words, it must take into account the nuances that influenced how the world of speech has developed. As an alternative to Ree’s study, Foucault describes what a genealogical approach to a study requires:

It [Genealogy] must record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality; it must seek them in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history – in sentiments, love, conscience, instincts; it must be sensitive to their recurrence, not in order to trace the gradual curve of their evolution, but to isolate the different scenes where they engaged in different roles. Finally,

¹⁰ Michel Foucault and Paul Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader*, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984). 75-76.

¹¹ Ibid. 76.

¹² Ibid

genealogy must define even those instances when they are absent, the moment when they remained unrealized (Plato, at Syracuse, did not become Mohammed). Genealogy, consequently, requires patience and a knowledge of details, and it depends on a vast accumulation of sources. In short, genealogy demands relentless erudition. Genealogy does not oppose itself to history as the lofty and profound gaze of the philosopher might compare to the mole-like perspective of the scholar; on the contrary, it rejects the meta-historical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies. It opposes itself to the search for ‘origins.’¹³

Foucault claims that genealogy does not function as a tool to restore an unbroken connection that operates outside of a field of forgotten things, nor does it aim to identify that the past lives in the present and continues to secretly enliven it.¹⁴ Instead, for Foucault, genealogy, as a construct of lineage, functions to “identify the accidents, the minute deviations or conversely, the complete reversals, the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us; it is to discover that truth or being does not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents.”¹⁵

Foucault is not focussed on fixing the present in the past, with little room to manoeuvre. Rather, Foucault emphasizes the sometimes discontinuous and chaotic becoming of the present.¹⁶ It is about disturbing what was previously considered immobile and fragmenting what was thought to be a unified and concrete truth.¹⁷ And this understanding of genealogy has become an alternative method for how many look at topics in their field of study. For instance, Foucault has led many to problematize dominant assumptions of their own academic disciplines, and has

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Foucault, *Ibid.* 81.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ William A. “Genealogy as Methodology in the Philosophy of Michel Foucault, 2005 Paper. 1.

¹⁷ Foucault and Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader.* 82.

influenced the works of many in sociology, feminist theory, critical psychology, education, and studies involving many issues in religion.¹⁸

Cultural anthropologist Talal Asad is influenced by the genealogical approach in his own studies, especially in his work on religion. In his book, *Genealogies of Religion*, Asad investigates the emergence of religion as a modern historical object that grew out of particular period in European, or “Western,” history.¹⁹ Asad addresses the historical development of the concept of religion and identifies some of the historical shifts that have produced people’s understanding of religion as a “trans-historical essence” rather than what he believes is a historical product of western history.²⁰ By this he means that the concept of religion, and many understandings of what religion was, was defined based off of a Western historical definition. It was a result of Christian responses to understanding other human concepts of religious thinking. For Asad, there cannot be a universal definition of religion because “religion’s” fundamental elements and relationships are historically specific, and that the definition itself is the historical product of discursive processes.²¹

What is evident in Asad’s approach to religion, from a genealogical standpoint, resonates in Foucault’s argument against Ree’s attempt to discuss the history of morality in that a linear approach will not work because it does not take into account the influences that invasions, struggles, plundering and ploys have had on it. Genealogy must, in the words of Foucault, disturb what was previously considered immobile and fragment what was thought to be a unified

¹⁸ Ibid, 19-22.

¹⁹ Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion : Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993). 1.

²⁰ Ibid. 29.

²¹ Ibid.

and concrete truth.²² Asad does this by problematizing the idea of an anthropological definition of religion by “assigning that endeavour to a particular history of knowledge and power out of which the modern world has been constructed.”²³ Asad also applies the genealogical approach to his other work on religion with regard to the concept of ritual. In this essay he attempts to discover what historical shifts might have made the contemporary concept of ritual plausible.²⁴

With a genealogical approach, this thesis attempts to delineate how 13th century Sufi mystic Jalal al-Din Rumi has, perhaps, influenced Seyyed Hossein Nasr’s diagnosis of the environmental crisis as an eco-theological crisis in the hearts and souls of human beings as a result of their disconnection with God. The reason I chose this approach has to do with the fact that Sufism, generally, and Rumi’s Sufi philosophy, specifically, has been a large part of Nasr’s life, both in his scholarly work and existential participation, by which he means becoming a Sufi. Nasr’s interpretation of the environmental crisis is not a linear development, nor are the various interpretations of the environmental crisis. There are profound Sufi influences that shape the way Nasr defines it. So, when one looks at Nasr’s diagnosis of the environmental crisis, one must look at the mould that shapes his life, and how it continues to have an impact in it. In short, it has to do with his lifelong affiliations with Sufism, and with Rumi. By applying Foucault’s rendition of what genealogy means in terms of methodology, the evidence of Rumi’s influence of thought in Nasr’s philosophy are not linear in the sense that they do not occur sequentially and in order. There are many fragments of influence that come from Rumi, and these shape Nasr’s life and understanding of the environmental crisis. There are various effects from Rumi’s thought that have entered into the life of Nasr, specifically in the way he interprets the environmental crisis.

²² Foucault and Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader*. 82.

²³ Asad, *Genealogies of Religion : Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. 54.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 55.

Consequently, I aim to discuss these possible incursions from Rumi's philosophies of nature and human-earth relations that resonate in Nasr's diagnosis of the environmental crisis. Beforehand, I will offer a brief summation of the general influences of Sufi thought that have surrounded Nasr throughout his life.

Nasr comes from a long line of Sufis from within his own family tree. In addition, while growing up in Tehran, Iran, Nasr studied Sufism closely with an Iranian teacher for over twenty years.²⁵ Although, the extent of his study regarding Sufi literature and philosophy was not exhausted during this period and has continued to impact Nasr's life for over fifty years.²⁶ As I stated before, Nasr has written several books on Sufi cosmological doctrine, as well as the importance of Sufism for the environmental crisis. Also, his scholarly investigation into Sufism has evolved into an "existential participation," by which he means becoming a Sufi.²⁷ Nasr claims that Sufism answers the existential question of what we are as humans and provides guidance for humans to grow spiritually, and, to rid one's self of the bondages of all limitations in one's life.²⁸ Sufism has become a standard of living for Nasr, and his academic investigation of Sufi thought, and personal Sufi practices, are evident in the way into the way he interprets the environmental concerns of the planet.

Nasr claims that Sufism contains the most profound expressions of an Islamic metaphysics and theology of nature. Moreover, he states that Sufism expresses some of the most significant philosophical expressions of the meaning of the Qur'anic doctrine that concerns the

²⁵ Seyyed Hossein Nasr and William C. Chittick, *The Essential Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, The Library of Perennial Philosophy (Bloomington, Ind.: World Wisdom, 2007). 30.

²⁶ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Garden of Truth : The Vision and Practice of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition*, 1st ed. (New York: HarperOne, 2007). Xiii.

²⁷ Ibid. xiii.

²⁸ *The Garden of Truth : The Vision and Promise of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition*, 1st HarperCollins pbk. ed. (New York: HarperOne, 2008). 12.

cosmos and humankind's relationship to it.²⁹ Nasr sees the environmental problems of the planet as the upshot of an inner crisis in humans as a result of their lost connection with God. This has, consequently, led to a view of nature that is spiritually empty. Sufism, in accordance with Qur'anic literature is an influence in Nasr's diagnosis of the environmental crisis, and certain interpretations within Sufism aid in the process through which the view of nature and humanity's relationship to it can effect positive change. Nasr's relationship with Sufi cosmologies led him to believe that they can positively impact the eco-theological situation so as to change the way one views their existential position in the world and, specifically, the relationship they have with the natural environment. For example, he explicates, that Sufism offers a notable way for delineating the concerns of human-earth relations, as well as the possible solutions for re-establishing the harmony between them.³⁰ For Nasr, it is the metaphysical principles of Sufism that offer an alternative approach to the current, modern, view that nature is a product to be conquered and exploited. Conversely, Nasr argues that what is needed is a philosophy of human-earth relationships that is based on contemplating the sacred significance of the natural world and showing compassion towards it. Nasr contends that, if such a change in mentality is possible, the inspiration for it comes from the cosmological philosophies that certain Sufis put forth. Nasr defines these cosmological writings as sacred cosmologies of religion, and he advocates for the rediscovery of such philosophies so as to repair the connection between humans and the earth.

²⁹ Nasr, *Islam and the Environmental Crisis in Islam and Ecology*. 94.

³⁰ To clarify again, Nasr uses "Science" as a type of philosophy for understanding the earth. He also uses the term "Eastern" as well to describe religious views that come out of India, China and Japan. So, when he states "Eastern," he believes that it is also possible that religions like Hinduism or even the traditional teachings of Chinese and Japanese sages. He believes that these Eastern ways of living can counteract the dominant Western way of thinking, a way of life where he views the disconnection between God and humans to be paramount. And, this relates to his diagnosis of the environmental crisis. So, Nasr upholds the positive influence that these ways of life, like Sufism can offer for the ecological dilemma.

Nasr understands cosmology as a science that deals with the natural order of the universe that defines the characteristics of nature according to God's place in the universe. He believes that there has been a disappearance of real cosmologies due to the neglect of metaphysics. Metaphysics, according to Nasr, is a way of living that acknowledges the hierarchies of being and knowledge. The hierarchies of being and knowledge explain the levels of reality in one's life. It also means that, although everything is nothing in terms of God, everything exists to reflect metaphysical realities, just like nature does. Objects of this world, nature included, are no longer veils of reality but are sheer windows of realities that are beyond its external form.³¹ The levels of reality in a person's life are influenced by the ultimate Reality, which is God. However, for Nasr, some people tend to reduce what they see around them to a "single psycho-physical domain," and disregard the third dimension, or, the divine aspect, of what one perceives in the landscapes around them.³² Moreover, he claims that the religious view of nature, which teaches to embrace God's place in the natural world, has been lost.³³ In addition, Nasr believes that there is no modern cosmology of the universe that humans can follow. Also, there is no need to reinvent a sacred view of nature. Instead, it is the reformulation of the traditional sacred cosmologies that have evolved throughout history and are consistent in many religions, particularly, Sufism.³⁴ It is the reformulation of the traditional cosmologies of religion, placed in a contemporary context that, Nasr contends, offers an eternal wisdom for understanding the natural environment's sacredness.

³¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Reply to Archie Bahm," in *The Philosophy of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, ed. Randall E. Auxier Lewis Edwin Hahn, Lucian W. Stone, Jr. (Illinois: Open Court, 2001), 582.

³² *Man and Nature : The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1990). 23.

³³ Nasr and Chittick, *The Essential Seyyed Hossein Nasr*. 30.

³⁴ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Religion & the Order of Nature : The 1994 Cadbury Lectures at the University of Birmingham* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). 288.

The eternal wisdom that Nasr claims sacred cosmologies offer is, alternatively, known as perennial philosophy. Nasr claims that perennial philosophies offer a timeless wisdom of the earth. Huxley explains that perennial philosophy “teaches that it is desirable and indeed necessary to know the spiritual Ground of things, not only within the soul, but also outside in the world and, beyond world and soul, in its transcendent otherness – ‘in heaven.’”³⁵ The perennial philosophies that Nasr mentions, such as the wisdom of certain Sufi teachings, offer an alternative to the way humans interact with their natural environment. Nasr believes that, if rediscovered, they can aid in the transformation of the impertinent view of nature, which is the result of humanity’s disconnection with God and its understanding of God’s place in nature.

Nasr says that the whole corpus of his writings must be viewed in accordance with the fact that they have been influenced by a fundamental philosophical perspective drawn from Sufism.³⁶ Sufism, generally, impacts Nasr’s diagnosis of the environmental crisis. This thesis demonstrates, specifically, Rumi’s influences on Nasr’s Sufi diagnosis. This has to do, genealogically, with Nasr’s lifelong relationship with Rumi’s poetry. Rumi’s Sufi perspectives of nature and human ecology can be found in the way his poetry interprets the Qur’anic principles that Nasr, also, upholds. Rumi’s poetic masterpiece, the *Mathnawi*, is considered to be a Persian rendition of the Qur’an. The justification of this is due to Rumi’s skillful work on Qur’anic exegesis and commentary (*tafsir*). This is why his interpretations of Qur’anic principles about human ecology and nature are so profound and worth taking the time to investigate.

³⁵ Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*, 4th ed. (New York ; London: Harper, 1945). 2.

³⁶ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Reply to Leonard Lewishohn," (Illinois: Open Court, 2001). 679.

Throughout his life Nasr has been well acquainted with Rumi's poetry.³⁷ When he was young his parents encouraged him to read and memorize all of the masters of Persian poetry, which includes Rumi.³⁸ Moreover, Nasr says that the rhythm and rhyme of Rumi's poetry has left a permanent imprint upon his soul, an imprint which was never erased.³⁹ When he went to the United States to study at Harvard and MIT, Nasr became even more interested in classical Persian poetry. After a long period of study in both English and Persian poetry, Nasr tried his hand at writing his own poetry. He, often, did renditions of other poetry including one to the introduction of Rumi's *Mathnawi* which, Nasr asserts, was full of metaphysical and mystical themes.⁴⁰ Even after he left the United States in 1958, Nasr maintains that Sufi poetry, in Persian and Arabic, remained a very prominent part in his life.⁴¹

To return to Nasr's notion of perennial philosophies, Nasr sees a connection with the poetry of Rumi and wisdom because he sees, in Rumi's poetry, everlasting teachings in eco-theology.⁴² Nasr upholds that Rumi's poetry is a perennial philosophy which, due to its potentiality, has the ability to be a global philosophy that people can reflect on.⁴³ The mystical quest that Sufis, like Rumi, are on in order to find out who they really are, and what their

³⁷ Often, in Iranian practices, they put a copy of Rumi's *Mathnawi* on the table either next to the Qu'ran or in its place. This is not considered disrespectful but, rather, it exemplifies the importance Rumi's commentary of the Qur'an, as well as his poetry relating to many Qur'anic teachings and themes, in Iranian lifestyle. Also, in Iran, there are countless festivals and days of reverence that homage to the profound part Rumi's plays in Iranian history and contemporary life. Nasr is an Iranian, and has discussed the importance of Rumi in Iranian culture.

³⁸ "Intellectual Autobiography of Seyyed Hossein Nasr," in *The Philosophy of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, ed. Randall E. Auxier Lewis Edwin Hahn, Lucian W. Stone, Jr. (Illinois: Open Court, 2001). 7.

³⁹ "Reply to Luce Lopez-Baralt " in *The Philosophy of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, ed. Lucian W. Stone Randall E. Auxier Lewis Edwin Hahn, Jr. (Illinois: Open Court, 2001). 423.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 425.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.* 427. Nasr discusses both perennialist philosophy and perennial philosophies about nature. In this context I am discussing how Nasr believes that Rumi's thought offers an eco-theology that is perennial, or, timeless wisdom that can be applied to everyday situations regarding how humans interact with nature. This is what Nasr means by a perennial philosophy. It is a wisdom about how humans can live harmoniously with nature. I want to clarify that perennialist philosophy is a different category in itself, and is separate from what Nasr means by perennial wisdom.

⁴³ "Reply to Ashok K. Gangadean," in *The Philosophy of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, ed. Randall E. Auxier Lewis Edwin Hahn, Lucian W. Stone, Jr. (Illinois: Open Court, 2001). 544.

relationship is with the natural environment, is perennial because it lies in the nature of things.⁴⁴ For Nasr, humankind's quest after the Divine is part of their very existence.⁴⁵ Moreover, the way humans can change their perspective of the natural environment entails a rediscovery of their relationship with God. Therefore, for Nasr, humans must set off on the mystical quest for God to learn the sacred significance of the natural world around them.

As a perennial philosophy, Rumi's perspective of nature and eco-theology is important for human beings to contemplate. For Nasr, there is a connection with Rumi's perspective of nature and eco-theology and how people can develop a positive relationship with their natural environment. Nasr supports Rumi's philosophy on ecology despite not writing direct metaphysical expositions.⁴⁶ He states that Rumi serves "as a beacon of light to dispel the shadows which prevent modern man from seeing even his own image in its true form, and from knowing who he really is."⁴⁷ In addition, one sees the importance of Rumi in Nasr's work based on the noteworthy books Nasr writes on Rumi and his importance as a Muslim sage and contemplative. Accordingly, this thesis, presented through a genealogical lens, aims to unpack the influences of Rumi's philosophy on human ecology and nature on Nasr's Sufi diagnosis of the environmental crisis.

⁴⁴ *Sufi Essays* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1972). 27.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 26.

⁴⁶ "Foreword," in *The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi*, ed. William Chittick (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2005). vi.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* viii.

Chapter One: Literature Review

The sources used in this literature have an important role in this thesis for several reasons. The initial inclusion of the sources regarding religion, ecology, and eco-theological ethics are significant for explicating the impact that many scholars of religion have in offering various interpretations of environmental ethics within the field. They understand that there is a profound, intrinsic, relationship between humans and the natural environment, and they are advocates for a change in the way many people interact with nature. Moreover, they see an important connection between religion and environmental ethics. The incorporation of such sources, and the discussion of them in the early sections of this chapter, is noteworthy because they share a common thread with Nasr's understanding of the environmental crisis, and the way he envisions it as an eco-theological crisis in humans. Nasr shares a comparable advocacy for how humans should alter their mentality toward the natural environment. Moreover, he explicates that, like the scholars mentioned here, religion can aid in the transformation of some human's view of nature that is based on a disrespectful and destructive mentality, which is a product of a greed, selfishness and the pursuit of economic advancement over environmental sustainability. Hence, this is the rationalization behind including some of the sources in the opening section relating to Nasr and the environmental crisis.

In addition to those scholars who support an eco-theological position relating to environmental ethics, the structure of this thesis is based upon Qur'anic principles of human-earth relations. I focus on Rumi's influences solely within a Qur'anic context. Therefore, the scholars examined in this section provide a foundation for explaining that the Qur'an promotes an eco-theological position, and this position is demonstrated in the work of Nasr and Rumi.

Furthermore, both men share a common Sufi understanding of the Qur'an. This requires a discussion of Rumi's interpretation of what the Qur'an says regarding human-earth relations. Moreover, the sources included in this section are doubly important because this thesis emphasizes the role that Sufism plays in Nasr's life. This is essential when one discusses any probable influences from Sufism in Nasr's life. It expounds my claim that Sufism has, generally, impacted Nasr's life and has made its way into the way he interprets the environmental crisis. Additionally, the portion of this section relating to the importance of Rumi in Nasr's life is, basically, the underpinning for the genealogical methodology of this paper. A dialogue of the relationship that Nasr has with Rumi's poetry, and Nasr's appeal for Rumi's metaphysical teaching is essential. The scholars included in this segment are included because they give explanations of the importance of Rumi in Nasr's life, in addition to the examination of Nasr's writing that relates to the latter. They also support Nasr's argument that Rumi has a timeless, eternal, wisdom for how humans should interact with the natural environment around them. Thus, having a discussion on certain scholar's view that Rumi's poetry communicates a timeless wisdom for how humans understand their place in the universe is key to supporting Nasr's claim that this is a genuine reality in Rumi's poetry.

Subsequently, I have arranged this thesis into four major Qur'anic themes and Rumi's explication of each. These themes provide the basis for the possible incursions of Rumi's thought in Nasr's life. Each theme discussed is profound, and those who provide a dialogue on Rumi's interpretation of each theme help to answer the question of this thesis, that is, are there possible fragments of Rumi's thought in Nasr's diagnosis of the environmental crisis as an eco-theological dilemma. The most significant theme deals with Rumi's understanding of *tawhid* (unity of God). This is a staple in the formation of his thought regarding nature as a self-

disclosure of the existence of God, as well as the notion that all things, eventually, return to God, and are in a constant struggle to return to God. By breaking down Rumi's understanding of this concept, it allows me to explain the commonality between his explanation of how the world functions as an interrelated whole, and that each entity on this planet is an expression of the Divine. This is important in Nasr's diagnosis of the environmental crisis because he sees nature as, essentially, this. It functions for purposes beyond humanity's immediate needs, and can be an aid in providing spiritual education to those who contemplate this reality. In addition, I discuss Rumi's understanding of the dichotomy between human knowledge and divine intuition. This is notable in the sense that Rumi claims that a person can only know the truth about nature's sacredness by accepting the fact that it is a product of the Divine and an expression of the Creator. This relates to an aspect of Nasr's diagnosis of the environmental crisis when he criticizes those who think they can know the truth about the natural world by using reason and intellect. Therefore, it is imperative that I discuss Rumi's interpretation of the place of human knowledge in relation to divine intuition because this resonates in Nasr's criticism of those who continue to facilitate the environmental problems of the planet. This also shows the common Sufi thread in both men's approaches to life and human existence. The last theme presented is the notion of the perfect human (*insan al-kamil*). The perfect human is the one who encompasses all of the proper traits on the Sufi path. They also see themselves as the guardian of the natural world. I aim to expound Rumi's understanding of this because Nasr argues that what is needed in the world today is a rebirth of this type of human. Hence, I focus on Rumi's construal of the human because I need to identify what it is about the ultimate human that is consistent in Nasr's elucidation of the universal human in his diagnosis of the environmental crisis. In short, there needs to be discussion of Rumi's philosophy relating to the Qur'anic themes I present so as to

have a groundwork to begin from. In addition, I discuss these themes as they relate to Nasr's philosophy of eco-theological ethics. The purpose of this is to show the correlation between Nasr and Rumi's interpretation of each Qur'anic theme. Before I go into detail about the Qur'anic themes discussed in this thesis, I will include some of the works I examined from both Nasr and Rumi. These sources were, for the most part, the substance for understanding these men's interpretation of the Qur'anic themes in question.

Works Used by Nasr

The works by Nasr that I will draw from include his *The Encounter of Man and Nature* (1968),⁴⁸ *Science and Civilization in Islam*,⁴⁹ *Ideals and Realities in Islam*,⁵⁰ *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man*,⁵¹ *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrine*,⁵² *Knowledge and the Sacred*,⁵³ *Religion and the Order of Nature*,⁵⁴ *The Heart of Islam*, and *In Search of the Sacred*. I examined other sections in edited works such as, "The Spiritual and Religious Dimensions of the Environmental Crisis,"⁵⁵ "Islam and the Environmental Crisis," "Islam and the Problem of Modern Science," and "Islam, the Contemporary World, and the Environmental Crisis."⁵⁶ Most of these books by Nasr include references to Rumi's poetry as well. These sources, as well as many others, are the foundation for understanding Nasr's position on the environmental crisis of our planet, as well as the possible solutions to it.

⁴⁸ *The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1968).

⁴⁹ *Science and Civilization in Islam* (New York: New American Library, 1970).

⁵⁰ *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, 2nd pbk. ed. (London: Allen and Unwin, 1975).

⁵¹ *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man* (London ; New York: Longman, 1975).

⁵² *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines : Conceptions of Nature and Methods Used for Its Study by the Ikhwan Al-Saf'a', Al-B'Ir*Uni, and Ibn S*in*A*, Revised ed. ([London]: Thames and Hudson, 1978).

⁵³ *Knowledge and the Sacred*, Gifford Lectures (New York: Crossroad, 1981).

⁵⁴ Nasr, *Religion & the Order of Nature : The 1994 Cadbury Lectures at the University of Birmingham*.

⁵⁵ This article is in Barry McDonald's collection of essays on nature entitled *Seeing God Everywhere: Essays on Nature and the Sacred* (2003).

⁵⁶ The articles can be found in the books *Spirit and Nature* (1992), *Islam and the environment* (1997), *Islam and Ecology: A bestowed trust* (2003).

Translated Work by Rumi and Biographical References

There are historical descriptions of Rumi in Leonard Lewisohn's, *The Heritage of Sufism*.⁵⁷ There is also a bibliographical account of Rumi's life in Carl Ernst's book, *The Teachings of Sufism*, by the Persian Sufi author 'Abd al-Rahman Jami (d. 1492). This includes an account of his life, but it also includes an overview of his teachings and his remarkably direct way of conveying spiritual truths.⁵⁸ There are several relevant poems and other literary works in E.H Whinfield's book, *Teachings of Rumi*,⁵⁹ A.J Arberry's *Discourses of Rumi*,⁶⁰ Reynold Nicholson's, *A Rumi Anthology*,⁶¹ *The Essential Rumi* by Coleman Barks,⁶² and Carl Ernst's, *Teachings of Rumi*.⁶³ Franklin D. Lewis also offers a considerable amount of information on Rumi's life, his poetic works, and the life teachings that extend from his poetry.⁶⁴ These sources provide the core of Rumi's thought relating to the four themes that influence Nasr's interpretation of the environmental crisis.

Nasr and the Environmental Crisis

This section deals with books and articles that discuss Nasr's interpretation of the environmental crisis, and how it has spiritual and religious roots. He claims that the Islamic view of nature "presents a precious reminder of a perspective mostly lost in the West today and based

⁵⁷ Leonard Lewisohn, *The Heritage of Sufism*, 3 vols. (Oxford ; Boston, MA: Oneworld, 1999).

⁵⁸ Carl W. Ernst, *Teachings of Sufism*, 1st ed. (Boston ; London: Shambhala, 1999). 170-78.

⁵⁹ Râumâi Jalâal al-Dâin and E. H. Whinfield, *Teachings of Rumi : The Masnavi of Maulâana Jalâalu-D-Dâin Muhammad I Râumâi* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1975).

⁶⁰ Râumâi Jalâal al-Dâin and A. J. Arberry, *Discourses of Rumi* (London: J. Murray, 1975). I am currently waiting for some works by Anne Marie Schimmel which will be delivered in due time.

⁶¹ Reynold Alleyne Nicholson, *A Rumi Anthology : Rumi: Poet and Mystic, Tales of Mystic Meaning* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000).

⁶² Râumâi Jalâal al-Dâin and Coleman Barks, *The Essential Rumi*, new expanded ed. (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 2004).

⁶³ Andrew Harvey, ed. *Teachings of Rumi*. (Shambhala Publications, 1999). This book is a reformulation of Rumi's writings along with some information by Rumi's biographer.

⁶⁴ Franklin Lewis, *Rumi : Past and Present, East and West : The Life, Teaching and Poetry of Jal Al Al-Din Rumi* (Oxford ; Boston: Oneworld, 2000).

upon the sacred quality of nature in a universe created and sustained by the one God of Abraham.”⁶⁵ Furthermore, Nasr argues that by refusing to separate man and nature completely, Islam has preserved an integral view of the Universe and sees in the arteries of the cosmic and natural world order the flow of divine grace (*barakah*). Moreover, man can learn to contemplate nature, not as an independent domain of reality but as a mirror reflecting a higher reality.⁶⁶

In his doctorate from the University of Birmingham, Tarik Quadir (2013) outlines the traditional Islamic environmental approach in Nasr’s literature and includes a discussion on all of the themes that will be touch upon. He discusses Nasr’s Sufi influences and includes large sections on both Rumi and Nasr to explain their understanding of *tawhid*, the natural order of life as becoming in union with God, and the various types of knowledge that contrast the humanist views of knowledge. Quadir also provides a valuable exposition on the differentiation between the orthodox and Sufi understandings of the Qur’an’s eco-theological significance, and provides comparisons between Nasr and Rumi’s methodologies.⁶⁷

Kavah Afrasiabi addresses Nasr’s environmental awareness in his article about the need for an Islamic eco-theology. He claims that Nasr possesses a significant non-utilitarian, ecological wisdom that others must investigate. Moreover, Nasr’s argument that there is no need to redress the wrongful neglect of nature has led authors to question the key implications of

⁶⁵ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “Islam and the Environmental Crisis,” in A. R. Agwan, *Islam and the Environment*, 1st ed. (New Delhi: Institute of Objective Studies, 1997), 16.

⁶⁶ Nasr, *The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*. 95.

⁶⁷ Tarik M. Quadir and Ebooks Corporation., *Traditional Islamic Environmentalism the Vision of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, (Lanham: University Press of America,, 2013), <http://msvu.ebib.com/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=1400974> Access restricted: MSVU users only. The section is chapter three of the book. I found this book extremely helpful for my paper. Also, an interesting, maybe ironic, or simply a coincidental statement by Quadir is that in his acknowledgments he thanks Rumi, in particular, whose life and vision has inspired him to look, every day, at the world with wonder.

ecological criticism, namely, that there is no need to rethink the Islamic theology in radically new ways.⁶⁸

Richard C. Foltz states that Nasr “made the connection between the West’s spiritual and environmental crises since the 1950s and anticipated White’s 1967 argument in his own lectures given at the University of Chicago earlier the same year.”⁶⁹ Also, in the book *Green Deen: What Islam Teaches About Protecting the Planet*, Ibrahim Abdul-Matin includes a section on environmental regulation and protection where he discusses the significance of Nasr’s work *The Encounter of Man and Nature* for the ecological world. Following this discussion, Abdul-Matin concludes by stating that Nasr became known as the father of the modern Muslim environmental movement.⁷⁰

William Chittick edits a book entitled, *The Essential Seyyed Nasr*, which divides Nasr’s philosophy into three sections. This includes his understanding of the place of nature in existence and the existential relationship the natural world has with humans and God. The book discusses Nasr’s evaluation of the traditionalist perspective for understanding of religion in contemporary life, the traditionalist perspective to Islam and its relevance to spiritual and intellectual life, and deals with themes of the traditionalist school such as metaphysics, cosmology, spiritual psychology, art, pre-modern science, and the short-comings of modern science.⁷¹ In the foreword, written by Huston Smith, one gets a sense of how prominent Nasr is in the environmental ethics sphere. Smith commends Chittick for including Nasr’s, “Religion and the Environmental Crisis,” because he reminds the reader that “we are standing on a trap door

⁶⁸ Afrasiabi, “Toward an Islamic Eco-theology,” in *Islam and Ecology* (2003), 282-3.

⁶⁹ Richard C. Foltz, “Islam,” 208.

⁷⁰ Ibrahim Abdul-Matin, *Green Deen : What Islam Teaches About Protecting the Planet* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2010), Book., 42.

⁷¹ Nasr and Chittick, *The Essential Seyyed Hossein Nasr*. xiv.

which, if we are not very careful, could open beneath our feet and eliminate humanity, and possibly all life, from the face of our planet.”⁷² A significant source that outlines Nasr’s understanding of the environmental crisis is his book, *The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*.⁷³ In it he outlines the majority of what he has to say regarding the problems of the environmental crisis. Also, this is the main source I have used to show where Rumi’s Sufi influences resonate. Osman Bakar offers a review of this book by Nasr and claims that “Nasr bemoaned the destruction of the sacred and the spiritual vision of nature at the hands of the modern world in the name of progress and development. Nasr saw in this destruction of the spiritual dimension of nature the roots of its physical destruction.”⁷⁴ Moreover, according to Mary Evelyn Tucker, Nasr has been “calling since the late 1960s for a renewed sense of the sacred in nature, drawing on perennial philosophy.”⁷⁵

Nasr, Sufism and Rumi

Nasr’s approach to understanding the environmental crisis is influenced, generally, by Sufi thought and philosophy. Rockefeller and Elder declare that “profoundly influenced by Sufism, which forms the inner and mystical dimension of Islam, Nasr believes that only a spiritual rebirth of the individual, involving a reawakening to the Divine Center, will bring about an enduring solution to our current [environmental] problems.”⁷⁶ Nasr agrees, claiming that “Sufism possesses teachings concerning the nature of man and the world about him which

⁷² Huston Smith, “Foreword,” in *Ibid.* vii.

⁷³ Nasr, *The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*. 14.

⁷⁴ Osman Bakar, *Environmental wisdom for planet earth: The Islamic heritage* (2007).

⁷⁵ Mary Evelyn Tucker, “Religion and Ecology,” in Clarke, *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion.*, 819.

⁷⁶ Steven C. Rockefeller, and John C. Elder, eds. *Spirit and nature: why the environment is a religious issue: an interfaith dialogue.* (Beacon Press, 1992)., 86.

contains keys to the solutions of the most acute problems of the modern world, such as the ecological crisis.”⁷⁷

Editor Charles Malik’s book, *God and Man in Contemporary Islamic Thought*, includes an article by Nasr entitled, “Sufism and the Integration of Modern Man,” where he declares that Sufism is the “marrow of the bone or the inner dimension of the Islamic revelation.”⁷⁸

Furthermore, Nasr discusses the importance of Sufism for the spiritual needs of western humanity in his *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man*.⁷⁹ In, *The Ways of Religion*, it also includes the article by Nasr entitled “Sufism and the Integration of Man.”⁸⁰ Additionally, Nasr edits a book entitled *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations*⁸¹ where he includes a prelude on the spiritual significance of the rise and growth of Sufi orders. The Sufi view of the cosmos resonates in his book *Religion and the Order of Nature*, where Nasr theorizes that the solution to the ecological crisis requires a return to the sacred cosmologies of Islam. For Nasr, these sacred cosmologies help to rediscover a science of nature that deal with the existence of natural objects in relation to Being, their interrelatedness to the rest of the cosmos and to humans, with their symbolic significance of the cosmos and to us, and with their nexus to higher levels of existence leading to the Divine Origin of all things. Moreover, in order for humans to understand the significance of nature there must be a “rebirth of man as the guardian of the sacred. . .It does not mean the ‘invention of a new man’ as some have claimed, but rather the resurfacing of the true man, the pontifical man whose reality we still bear within ourselves.”⁸² In *Spirit and Nature: Why the*

⁷⁷ Nasr, *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man*. 62.

⁷⁸ Charles Habib Malik and American University of Beirut., *God and Man in Contemporary Islamic Thought; Proceedings*, American University of Beirut Centennial Publications (Beirut1972). 144.

⁷⁹ Nasr, *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man*. The section on Sufism is from pages 47-66. He refers to returning to the sacred cosmologies in this section, along with a recovery of a vision of the Centre (the centre, being God).

⁸⁰ Roger Eastman, *The Ways of Religion* (San Francisco: Canfield Press, 1975). Nasr’s article begins on page 476.

⁸¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Spirituality : Manifestations*, World Spirituality (New York: Crossroad, 1991).

⁸² Nasr, *Religion & the Order of Nature : The 1994 Cadbury Lectures at the University of Birmingham*. 287.

Environment is a Religious Issue (1992), editors Rockefeller and Elder comment on Nasr, saying he urged a return to a sacramental view of the universe such as one finds in classical Islamic thought and in other traditions as well.⁸³ In the edited book by Nasr, *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations*, there is a large section on Sufism that includes four articles on the origins of Sufism and Sufi science of the soul. There is also a section on knowledge of reality that includes an article by Nasr on the cosmos and the natural order. In this short chapter Nasr discusses Sufi perspectives of human ecology.⁸⁴

Nasr's argument for a return to the sacred metaphysical cosmologies is influenced, generally, by Sufi thought. Yet, more specifically, he expresses the importance of Rumi's perspective on the matter of nature and human ecology. According to A. Reza Arasteh, "Rumi, like many other great students of human nature, discovered that man's central existential problem arose from his separation from nature and from his contradictory character."⁸⁵ Seema Arif claims that what has been cracked is the human bond with life and with nature, and what has been strengthened is the contact with material objects. Consequently, we need Rumi to lead and to teach us to discover and unveil hypocrisy, to avoid flattery, to be sensible with our tongues, to defeat envy, and ultimately to free ourselves from the slavery of our lower selves.⁸⁶ Adnan Karaismailoglu composes a biographical article on Rumi. He asserts that during his life, Rumi, dealt closely with everyday social problems, propounding convincing solution to the predicaments of the human soul.⁸⁷ In Nasr's book *The Heart of Islam*, he discusses how there can be no peace on earth without peace with heaven. Here, he quotes a poem by Rumi to exemplify

⁸³ Rockefeller and Elder, *Spirit and Nature* (1992), 4.

⁸⁴ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Spirituality : Foundations*, Vol 19 of *World Spirituality : An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest* (New York: Crossroad, 1987). Article by Nasr on page 345.

⁸⁵ A. Reza Arasteh, *Rumi the Persian, the Sufi* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1974). 158.

⁸⁶ Seema Arif, in *Rumi and His Sufi Path of Love*, ed. Citlak and Bingul (Somerset: The Light, 2007), 25-33.

⁸⁷ Adnan, Karaismailoglu, "Mawlana Jalaladdin Muhammad Rumi," in *Ibid*.

that our actions here on earth and the problems of our internal selves are the result from the disequilibrium between humans and God.⁸⁸

Before concluding, it is important that I shed light on two concerns with comparing Nasr's cosmological understanding with a Sufi such as Rumi. First, many Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims do not accept Rumi's interpretations of Islam, and do not consider them authentic. By this they mean that Rumi's views are not consistent with many other Muslims. His eccentric Sufi mysticism does not always attract the mainstream orthodox interpretations of the Islamic cosmology that some Muslims follow. For example, Carl Ernst maintains that Sufism is a highly contested subject, and while its origins lie in the Islamic religious tradition, aspects of Sufism have been strongly criticised by reformist and fundamentalist Muslim thinkers in recent years. Moreover, Ernst claims that Sufism has been regarded by scholars who uphold a certain understanding of Islam as a non-Islamic borrowing. Additionally, some modern Sufi teachers view Sufism as a universal teaching apart from Islam.⁸⁹ As a result, one can see the difficulty in attempting to develop an Islamic environmental ethic by utilizing a Sufi figure's understanding of Islam that may or may not be regarded as an authentic interpretation of Islam, including Qur'anic themes about human ecology.

On the other hand, Nasr has no quarrels with interpreting different Islamic schools of thought and applying them to an overall Islamic principle. For instance, in his discussion on the Doctrine of Unity, and the various interpretations of it from several schools of Islamic thought, Nasr argues that the common goal is to demonstrate the Unity of Divine Principle (*tawhid*), the

⁸⁸ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam : Enduring Values for Humanity* ([San Francisco]: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002). 221.

⁸⁹ Carl Ernst, *The Teachings of Sufism* (Boston & London: Shambala, 1999), ix.

consequent unicity of nature and the interrelatedness of all things, and finally the absolute dependence of nature and the natural order upon the Divine Will. And, despite where these views originated from, they are conformable to the Islamic point of view.⁹⁰

So, keep in mind that this thesis follows, specifically, Sufi interpretations of Qur'anic principles regarding human ecology. The reason I clarify this is because, often, certain Sufis draw from various religious traditions for how they interpret and understand their place in the cosmos. Both Nasr and Rumi do this, but, I aim to narrow my focus regarding what they share in common based on Qur'anic themes about human ecology and nature.

Another concern is that during Rumi's life the environmental crises that exist today, simply did not exist then. However, there are several scholars who argue the timelessness of Rumi's thought throughout history and the ability to apply it to modern-day societal ills. For instance, M. Fatih Citlak and Huseyin Bingul claim that Rumi speaks directly to the heart and transcend the boundaries of time, and we need Rumi to shed light on the interrelationships within the universe because his words address all humans and all of humanity.⁹¹ Also, even though Rumi's views about nature were not, strictly, formed from environmental concerns, how does one know that he did not see destruction of nature the same way Nasr does. Destroying forests, or, disrespectfully killing an animal has no boundaries of time. Just because it is on such a larger scale now does not make Rumi's claims about nature erroneous. Also, if one looks at the history of Rumi's life, his experience with the Mongol raids during his lifetime could have influence the way he understood human-earth relations. Often when there is war there is destruction of the earth, and I do not believe that Rumi's view of nature is tame and pristine. The Mongol armies

⁹⁰ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Life and Thought* (Albany: New York University Press, 1981), 98-100.

⁹¹ M. Fatih Sitlak and Huseyin Bingul (ed), *Rumi and His Sufi Path of Love* (Tughra, 2007), xi-xii.

coming into Balkh during Rumi's lifetime did not leave the natural environment untouched. And like any war resources are used, and used by large quantities of moving armies. So, perhaps Rumi's poetry reflects his experiences with those raids.

When living according to a certain doctrine or standard of living, Rumi's philosophy is timeless. Nasr and Rumi share a certain philosophy that upholds a respectful view of nature, and human interaction with it. Like Citlak and Bingul, Andrew Harvey maintains that Rumi will help lead the West out of its materialist manifestation of ego-over-everything. Rumi is an essential guide to the new mystical renaissance that is struggling to be born today, and is the spiritual inspiration for the twenty-first century.⁹²

In, *Rumi and His Sufi Path of Love* (2007), Mehmet Seker claims that in the face of turmoil, unrest, and conflict in our world, we need Rumi to shed light on the relation of human beings to their Creator, as well as to other humans. Seker argues that Rumi leaves a powerful trail of inspiration that nurtures millions of souls. In the same book, M. Fethullah Gulen, in his article "Jalaladdin Rumi," upholds that despite the vast amount of time that separates his life from ours, Rumi continues to hear and to listen to us, to share our feelings, to present solutions to our problems. According to Gulen, Rumi blows life into dead spirits, and provides spiritual irrigation by providing the water of life to barren hearts.⁹³

In Nasr's book, *Islam in the Modern World*, he discusses how many educated Muslims are greatly drawn to Sufi literature, not only because these writings contain the greatest literary masterpieces in Islamic languages, but also because they provide answers to questions posed by

⁹² Andrew Harvey, *The Way of Passion: A Celebration of Rumi* (Ca: Frog Ltd, 1994).

⁹³ M. Fatih Citlak and Huseyin Bingul, *Rumi and His Sufi Path of Love* (Somerset, NJ: The Light, Inc., 2007). The article by Seker is titled "Rumi's Path of Love and 'Being Freed,'" and Gulen's is named "Jalaladdin Rumi."

the challenges of modernity. Here he refers to Rumi and offers a further discussion on the importance of Sufi metaphysical and doctrinal works in Islamic spirituality.⁹⁴ Nasr also provides auto-biographical accounts of his own experience with Rumi's poetry and lifelong affiliations. In

In addition, Nasr writes a few books on Rumi's life and the metaphysical significance of his poetry. For example, Nasr writes a book entitled, *Supreme Persian Poet and Sage*, where he offers a short exposition of Rumi's life and works, his teachings and some translated selections of his poetry. In this book Nasr emphasizes that Rumi's Sufi doctrine encompasses the whole of human existence and the problems that humans face on their quest for Truth, a quest of the soul to return to its Creator.⁹⁵

Rumi has a timeless and universal message that one can draw upon for inspiration in order to understand the world's modern-day environmental problems. The focus of this thesis is to, first, delineate Rumi's philosophy regarding the natural environment and human ecology, which is founded upon Qur'anic principles. Secondly, it is Rumi's understanding of the Qur'an and what it says about the natural environment and human ecology that resonates in Nasr's understanding of the environmental crisis. I have divided the use of sources into the four themes I will discuss.

Rumi and *Tawhid* (Unity)

Both Rumi and Nasr are influenced by the Sufi understanding of the Qur'anic concept of *tawhid*. Richard Foltz maintains that "this concept has historically been interpreted by Muslim

⁹⁴ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam in the modern world: challenged by the west, threatened by fundamentalism, keeping faith with tradition* (HarperCollins, 2010), 103.

⁹⁵ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Jalal Al-Din Rumi: Supreme Poet and Sage* (Teheran: High Council of Culture and The Arts, 1974).

writers mainly in terms of the oneness of God (in contradistinction to polytheism), but some contemporary Islamic environmentalists prefer to see *tawhid* as meaning ‘all-inclusive,’ a notion that finds its greatest resonance in the Sufi mystical tradition.”⁹⁶ As a Sufi, Rumi sees the key to achieving harmony with nature, body and the world, is holistic understanding. In other words, a vision of unity (*tawhid*).⁹⁷ Because Rumi sees the world as a unifying principle, he also see the essence of its Creator in it as well. This poem illustrates his position on the matter:

The world is frozen: its name is jamad (inanimate): jamid means ‘frozen,’ O master.
Wait till the rising of the sun of Resurrection, that thou mayst see the movement of
the world’s body.
Since God hath made Man from dust, it behoves thee to recognize the real nature
of every particle of the universe,
That while from this aspect they are dead, from that aspect they are living: silent
here, but speaking Yonder.
When He send them down to our world, the rod of Moses becomes a dragon in
regard to us;
The mountains sing with David, iron becomes as wax in his hand;
The wind becomes a carrier for Solomon, the sea understands what God said to
Moses concerning it.
The moon obeys the sign given by Mohammed, the fire (of Nimrod) becomes a
garden of roses for Abraham.
They all cry, “We are hearing and seeing and responsive, though to you, the
uninitiated, we are mute.”
Ascend from materiality into the world of spirits, hearken to the loud voice of the
universe;
Then thou wilt know that God is glorified by all inanimate things: the doubts raised
by false interpreters will not beguile thee.⁹⁸

Nasr discusses Rumi’s reverence for nature in a segment on the study of natural history in the Islamic world. He says that one must include Sufi texts like Rumi’s because they are as a source of natural history. They study the life and qualities of plants and animals with the aim of learning a moral and spiritual lesson from them. In addition, Nasr discusses Rumi and the

⁹⁶ Richard Foltz, “Islam,” in Roger S. Gottlieb, *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology* (New York ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). 210.

⁹⁷ Lynda Clarke, “The Universe Alive: The Mevlana of Jalal au-Din Rumi,” In *Islam and Ecology*. 53.

⁹⁸ Jalāl al-Dāin and Barks, *The Essential Rumi*. 119-120.

pertinence of studying Islamic philosophy today because it can aid one to regain those principles which alone can render our existence and activity meaningful.⁹⁹

William Chittick outlines Rumi's historical setting and spiritual message in his essay discussing Rumi's famous poem the *Mathnawi*. Chittick maintains that Rumi sees the mistake of humanity being its inability to perceive that all things of this world are but shadows of the true Beloved. Moreover, Chittick makes constant references to Rumi's poem the *Mathnawi* which exemplifies the reverence he gives to nature.¹⁰⁰ Chittick again discusses Rumi, but about the vision of God in all creation and how it takes place in infinite variety and never-ending joy. He also quotes Rumi in his discussion that if people loves things in this world it is because God has made the world lovable by filling it with his beauty.¹⁰¹ In a translated anthology of Rumi's poems, Reynold Nicholson outlines the Sufi pantheistic or monistic approach that are themes in Rumi's poetry. The themes include the notion that there is only one real being, which may be viewed either as God or in the world as phenomena by which the hidden essence of God is made manifest. The second theme indicates how God created the creatures so that he may be known, which is objectified in the universe and in humans. Moreover, the divine mind as a rational principle displays itself completely in the perfect human who has realized his oneness with God.¹⁰² In addition, Jane Eshots adds a short explication on why Rumi's poem, the *Mathnawi*, is

⁹⁹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Life and Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981). 130 and 150.

¹⁰⁰ William Chittick, "Rumi and the Mawlawiyyah," in Seyyed Hoessin Nasr, *Islamic Spirituality : Manifestations*. 105-126.

¹⁰¹ William C. Chittick, *Sufism : A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2000). 99 and 103.

¹⁰² Nicholson, *A Rumi Anthology : Rumi: Poet and Mystic, Tales of Mystic Meaning*. The themes section is on pages 23-4. The poems that express these themes are "The Purpose of Creation," "Divine Providence," "The divine factory," "God in Nature," and "Universal Love." They are easily found in the contents page.

considered the “shop of oneness.”¹⁰³ This explains how Rumi sees the world as an interrelated whole but, at the same time, a vast mechanism of multiplicity that is an expression of the Divine.

In *Islam and Ecology*, Lynda Clarke writes an article on Rumi’s understanding of the “universe as alive,” in his poetry. She structures her writing on three themes: the universe; animals; and love of nature. She outlines Rumi’s understanding of *tawhid* and discusses animals and plants as the bearers of knowledge for humans.¹⁰⁴ In the same vein, Ibrahim Ozdemir writes an article on Rumi’s deep vision of the earth and the place of humanity in it. He claims that Rumi attracts environmentalists and provides them with a new perspective to see the deeper dimension of reality, and gives us a better perspective from which to develop an environmental awareness of nature. In this short piece Ozdemir points out Rumi’s vision and thoughts on nature and ecology, including sections on Rumi’s life, his understanding of the interconnection of everything, his love of nature and animals, and humanity’s relationship to God which is ultimately a relationship with nature as a sign of God.¹⁰⁵

Nasr and *Tawhid* (Unity)

In Nasr’s diagnosis of the environmental crisis, he shares, with Rumi, a common interpretation of *tawhid*, and the notion that nature is a sign of the existence of God. Nasr argues that nature has been transformed into a “prostitute” for modern man to be benefited from without any sense of obligation and responsibility toward her because of humanity’s inability to see that the natural environment is a sign of God’s existence and the interrelationship of all things.¹⁰⁶ For

¹⁰³ Seyed Ghahreman Safavi, Institute of Islamic Studies (London England), and London Academy of Iranian Studies, *Rumi's Thoughts* (London: Salman-Azadeh Publication, 2003).

¹⁰⁴ Lynda Clarke, “The Universe Alive,” in Foltz, Denny, and Azizan Haji, *Islam and Ecology : A Bestowed Trust*. 33.

¹⁰⁵ Ibrahim Ozdemir, “Creative love, nature and Mevlana Jalal al-Din Rumi,” *Interreligious Insight* 4, no. 2 (2006).

¹⁰⁶ Nasr, *The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*. 18.

Nasr, the very stuff of the universe has a sacred aspect and contains a spiritual message for humans. Moreover, it is a revelation coming from the same source as religion itself.¹⁰⁷ S. Gulzar Haider claims that beauty is an ethic of perfection and fundamental. He says that Nasr claims that beauty is an intrinsic dimension of truth and is, therefore, a component of every legitimate artistic creation. He quotes Nasr in a section of nature's purposes as a sign for humans to reflect upon and to embrace his faith, a book of knowledge to be eternally deciphered, and a gift whose value is in its utilisation towards the enhancement of the art within the coordinates of the Islamic ideal. Haider uses Nasr here to confirm that while various schools of thought have different views of nature, it is quite evident that they agree on the unicity of nature and the interrelatedness of all things, and the absolute dependence of nature and the natural world upon the divine will.¹⁰⁸

In a discussion on the integrity of creation and nature as the manifestation of God as an ultimate theophany that both veils and reveals Him, A.R. Agwan uses Nasr's understanding of Islamic phraseology to define the whole universe as a book in which the phenomena of nature are written in the form of signs (aya).¹⁰⁹ According to Agwan, Nasr underlines the Islamic love of nature as manifesting the signs of God.¹¹⁰ In his book *Environmental Wisdom for Planet Earth: The Islamic heritage*, Osman Bakar compares and contrasts the origins and developments of environmental and ecological consciousness in the modern West and in traditional Islamic civilization. He includes a discussion of Nasr's, *The Encounter of Man and Nature: A Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*, and corresponds with Nasr's argument for a holistic approach to

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 21.

¹⁰⁸ S. Gulzar Haider, "Habitat and Values: A conceptual formulation of an Islamic City," in Ziauddin Sardar, *The Touch of Midas : Science, Values, and Environment in Islam and the West* (Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia: Pelanduk Publications, 1988). 176.

¹⁰⁹ A.R Agwan, "Towards and Ecological Consciousness," in *Islam and the Environment*, ed. A.R Agwan, 1-14 (New Delhi: Institute of Objective Studies, 1997) 3.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, xiii.

contemporary environmental and ecological problems that would give due recognition to the importance of a spiritual vision of nature.

Ali Zaidi offers a review of Nasr's project of re-enchanting nature. He says that by having a formidable grasp of both modern scientific principles and traditional Islamic cosmology this allows Nasr to stake out a very distinctive path in his defense of the traditional legacy against the onslaught of modernity. Furthermore, Zaidi expresses that Nasr emerges as a radical critic of modernity because he draws upon the internal Western critique in the philosophy and history of science, and connects it to the Islamic criticism of materialism and secularism.¹¹¹

Arthur Saniotis explores western and eastern Muslim thinkers who have written on Islam and the environment and calls for a re-examination of the different aspects of Muslim environmentalism. He addresses Nasr's argument that the root cause of the current environmental malaise began with the European Renaissance which heralded the age of humanism. In a small section, Saniotis provides a summary of Nasr's concerns with nature as an object of exploitation, and briefly discusses six of Nasr's works that deal with nature as a visible icon that points to a higher reality, the re-discovery of nature's primordial sacredness, and his anti-Cartesian approach that saw nature as devoid of any inner meaning.¹¹²

Rumi and Union with God as Principle Goal in Sufism

According to Foltz, the Qur'an describes Islam as the religion of *fitra* (the very nature of things), and humans are considered to muslim by nature but they can be distracted from this path of submission to God's will. Yet, in Sufism, the human aim is seen as a quest to re-establish this

¹¹¹ Ali Hassan Zaidi, *Islam, Modernity, and the Human Sciences* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). 53-80.

¹¹² Arthur Saniotis, "Muslims and ecology: fostering Islamic environmental ethics." (*Contemporary Islam* 6, 2012): 165-66.

primordial union with God.¹¹³ One way to re-establish this connection is by looking to the natural world for guidance. Rumi's poetry exemplifies this quest to be reunited with God. For instance, in a poetic metaphor regarding a reed longing to return to the reed bed, he states that "anyone pulled from the source longs to go back."¹¹⁴

In the same vein, and in response to the environmental crisis, Nasr argues that one must take seriously the religious understanding of the order of nature as knowledge corresponding to a vital aspect of cosmic reality [and] their nexus to higher levels of existence leading to the Divine Origin of all things."¹¹⁵ In other words, the natural order is significant for explaining human connection with God. Moreover, because Nasr sees the environmental crisis as a problem with humankind's connection with God, the order of nature can extrapolate the method through which humankind may re-establish their relationship with the Divine.¹¹⁶ This relates to Rumi because Rumi's poetry gives reverence to the natural order as exemplifying a higher reality and discusses how the natural world, like animals, teach humans certain universal truths.¹¹⁷

In Afzal Iqbal's book *Life and Work of Rumi*, he quotes one of Rumi's poems explaining the natural order of things:

I died a mineral and became a plant.
I died a plant and rose an animal.
I died an animal and I was a man.
Why should I fear? When was I less by dying?
Yet once more I shall die as a man, to soar
With the blessed angels; but even from angelhood
I must pass on. All except God perishes.
When I have sacrificed my angel soul,

¹¹³ Richard C. Foltz, "Islam," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, ed. Roger Gottlieb, 210. In Islam and Ecology: A bestowed trust, Chisti writes an article on *fitra* and this will be important for this section.

¹¹⁴ Jalāl al-Dāin and Barks, *The Essential Rumi*. 18. I extracted just one line from Rumi's poem "The Reed Flute's Song," but there is majority of other statements I can pull out of Rumi's poetry.

¹¹⁵ Nasr, *Religion & the Order of Nature : The 1994 Cadbury Lectures at the University of Birmingham*. 287.

¹¹⁶ *The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*. 20

¹¹⁷ Lynda Clarke, "The Universe Alive," in *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*

I shall become that which no mind ever conceived.
O, let me not exist! For Non-Existence proclaims,
'To Him we shall return.'

He outlines how matter is a foundation-stone for the evolution of humans, and that each process is vital for living a higher and fuller life.¹¹⁸ In *Nature's Web: Rethinking Our Place on Earth* (1994), Peter Marshall discusses various outlooks on nature in Islam, and provides a section on the general position held by Sufis, narrowing it down to Rumi's conceptions such as his bringing of science and religion neatly together, and, the process of spiritual evolution towards ultimate union with God by way of the ladder or chain of being. Marshall also quotes the same poem by Rumi about the created world with God at the top, followed by the angels, humanity, animals, plants and minerals.¹¹⁹

Coleman Barks mentions Rumi's poems about the struggle and process of divine unity, as well as the natural world teaching humans the elements of what it is to be *muslim*. Barks offers commentaries on each section to explain the basis of the poems and their underlying message, which most include some type of required love for the natural world and God.¹²⁰

Franklin Lewis provides a biography of Rumi's life and outlines his poetic teachings including a discussion on all three themes of this thesis and one, in particular, is Rumi's notion of the evolution of spirit. Lewis claims that Rumi sees all of creation, within both the metaphysical and physical worlds as a great upward spiral of metamorphoses.¹²¹ Richard C. Foltz quotes the same poem to demonstrate how Rumi is a source for contemporary Islamic

¹¹⁸ Afzal Iqbal and Rāumâi Jalāal al-Dāin, *The Life and Work of Muhammad Jalal-Ud-Din Rumi*, 2nd rev. ed. (Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1964). 168. There is also a various amount of literature on Rumi's philosophy of knowledge, as well as the concept of *tawhid*.

¹¹⁹ Peter H. Marshall, *Nature's Web : Rethinking Our Place on Earth* (New York: Paragon House, 1994). 131.

¹²⁰ Coleman Barks. *Rumi: The Book of Love: Poems of Ecstasy and Longing*. HarperCollins, 2003.

¹²¹ Lewis, *Rumi : Past and Present, East and West : The Life, Teaching and Poetry of Jal Al Al-Din Rumi*. The teachings section begins on 394 and prior to that is an account of Rumi's life, influences, and poetry.

environmentalism. Moreover, in the wake of new technology and progress, Foltz claims that Muslims must find ways of living that are compatible with their value systems and cultural heritage. Here, he quotes this poem to express how Rumi “dealt with the notions of cosmic hierarchy [as exemplified in the poem above] for pedagogical purposes.”¹²² In other words, the natural world can act as a tool for humankind’s quest for God.

Nasr and Union with God

Almut Beringer relies on Nasr’s writings to explore the notion of a religious order of nature and, in extension, sacred cosmology as an alternative worldview on the pathway toward sustainability, while also reclaiming environmental ethics embedded in timeless metaphysical, epistemological, and ontological understanding of the cosmos and validating non-scientific ways of knowing. He condemns the acceptance of the current worldview, and says it is limiting changes in sustainability and, in contrast, there needs to be a space for exploring and validating types of knowledge and ways of knowing to support a “post-postmodern” resacralized, spiritualized and sustainable world.¹²³ Tariq Quadir discusses Nasr’s Sufi understanding of the hierarchies of reality and how the Qur’an speaks of not only a hierarchy of reality but also a large degree on concealed hierarchy in which the visible world is dependent on the natural world.¹²⁴

Rumi and Knowledge (*‘ilm*)

In his article, “The Concept of Knowledge in Rumi’s *Mathnawi*,” M. Este‘lami explains Rumi’s approach to knowledge (*‘ilm*) in the Qur’an. In this article, Este’lami explains that, for

¹²² Islam and Ecology: a bestowed trust, 560.

¹²³ Almut Beringer, “Reclaiming a Sacred Cosmology: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, the Perennial Philosophy and Sustainability Education,” (*Canadian Journal of Environmental Education (CJEE)* 11, 2006): 40.

¹²⁴ Quadir and Ebooks Corporation., Traditional Islamic Environmentalism the Vision of Seyyed Hossein Nasr.72.

Rumi, there is another way of learning and understanding through which we attain spiritual satisfaction.¹²⁵ He maintains that Rumi sees two types of knowledge (*'ilm*): a visible and material one, and one that testifies to an awareness of the invisible world which is the only real and eternal aspect of existence.¹²⁶ The visible form is a kind of internal knowledge that comes from within a person. The alternative is knowledge that is formed through processes of the rational human mind.

Nasr discusses Rumi's standpoint on the differentiation between intellect and reason. He also talks about reason, considered in its ultimate form, rather than its immediate form, can bring humanity to the gateway of the intelligible world. Nasr also quotes Rumi about the goal of the Sufi seeing that the knowledge of each particular being and each domain leads to the knowledge of its ontological cause.¹²⁷

A. Reza Arasteh notes Rumi's profound insight into the nature of human existence. In the book, Arasteh outlines the Renaissance humanist approach to life and the importance of human development. However, he address how humanism and humanist rational mysticism have met with ever-increasing interest, especially Islamic mysticism. A large section outlines Rumi's approach to human thought and knowledge. Arasteh believes that Rumi sees reason helping humans reach the door of wakefulness. However, true wakefulness of the ultimate human cannot be attained from books or from listening to others.¹²⁸ Chittick also relies on Rumi for the

¹²⁵ M. Este'lami, "The Concept of Knowledge in Rumi's Mathnawi," in *Classical Persian Sufism: From Its Origins to Rumi*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (London: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1993). 401.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* 402-403

¹²⁷ Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam*. 26 and 352-3.

¹²⁸ Arasteh, *Rumi the Persian, the Sufi*. 167.

reconstruction of thought in his book. He discusses the different types of knowledge and Rumi's understanding of knowledge via one's relationship to the universe.¹²⁹

Nasr refers to poems by Rumi in his book, *Knowledge and the Sacred*. He claims that the realization of a knowledge, which being itself is sacred consumes the whole being of the knower and, as the sacred, demands of humans all that they are. That is why it is not possible to attain realized knowledge in any way except by being consumed by it. Here he quotes Rumi:

The result of my life can be summarized in three words;
I was immature, I matured, and I was consumed.¹³⁰

The collection of essays in *The Heritage of Sufism* includes an essay by Muhammad Este'Lami about the concept of knowledge in Rumi's *Mathnawi*. The aim of the article is to offer another way of learning and understanding through which humans may attain peace and spiritual satisfaction. Este'Lami claims that Rumi can serve as a guide to humans on this journey toward inner peace by offering spiritual education.¹³¹

In Renard's *Knowledge of God in Classical Sufism*, there is a small outline of Rumi's understanding of knowledge and his unique contribution to issues relating to knowledge. It states that he accords a very important role to knowledge, and how he observes that appealing to human intellect is like asking for a ladder after one has climbed to the roof.¹³²

¹²⁹ William C. Chittick, *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul : The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007).

¹³⁰ Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*. 154. The Section is quite large and Nasr makes other references to Rumi's poetry. He also quotes Rumi in his section on the Man, Pontifical and Promethean. This is a great reference for this section. It shows resonance in Nasr's methodology by Rumi's. He also includes Rumi in a section on knowledge of the sacred as deliverance (313).

¹³¹ Lewisohn, *The Heritage of Sufism*. The article by Este'Lami can be found on page 401.

¹³² John Renard, *Knowledge of God in Classical Sufism : Foundations of Islamic Mystical Theology*, *The Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 2004). 55.56.

Nasr: Reclaiming a Sacred Science and the Limitations of Human Knowledge

One of Nasr's main concerns with why the environment continues to be destroyed has to do with where religion, and religious views of human ecology, fit in with secular scientific explanations. He calls for a return to a sacred science of nature that incorporates a place for God in how humans interpret the function and processes of the natural environment, as well as theories about its origin. Nasr makes this claim by looking at the dichotomy between secular human knowledge and metaphysical knowledge. He explains this in his book, *The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*:

Although science is legitimate in itself, the role and function of science and its application have become illegitimate and even dangerous because of a lack of a higher form of knowledge into which science could be integrated and the destruction of the sacred and spiritual value of nature. To remedy this situation the metaphysical knowledge pertaining to nature must be revived and the sacred quality given back to it once again.¹³³

In, *The Touch of Midas*, Ziauddin Sardar talks of the pursuit of all knowledge and includes essays by several scholars who discuss the need that pursuing knowledge requires cultural and value considerations. In addition, Sardar examines whether a synthesis can be achieved between the growing awareness of a crisis in science in the West and the various attempts to rediscover the spirit of Islamic science in the Muslim world. He bases his study on two assumptions. One, there is no dichotomy between Islam and Science. Two, it is untenable to argue that science is neutral and value-free. In the book, there are two articles discussing Nasr's approach to modern science. James Counelis discusses questions and issues of knowledge and looks at the common understandings between scholars of different cultural and religious

¹³³ Nasr, *The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*. 14.

backgrounds. He discusses Nasr's book, *Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, and claims that theories of the origins of the universe and the ultimate purpose of man will ever be the points where world-views and disciplines mutually inform each other, working, collectively, over time.¹³⁴ The second article by Glyn Ford attempts to demonstrate the importance of having an intrinsic value in science, and that there must be a way for humans to understand that science about the natural world is not "objective truth." He calls upon Nasr to exemplify what a re-evaluation of Islamic science would look like. Although, he asserts that Nasr's Sufi theological background does not make him an ideal example. Ford follows many other scholarly criticisms about the place of Sufism in the Islamic world, and how this makes it difficult for Nasr to offer an authentic interpretation of Islamic science. Although, from studying Nasr's explanation of the umbrella of Islamic science and cosmological doctrine, he does not have an issue with Sufism as part of the grand Islamic explanations of science and cosmology. Ford's article is, however, useful for it delineates the Sufi aspects of Nasr's philosophy of science and the different types of knowledge.¹³⁵

In chapter three of *The Good in Humanity: Connecting Science, Religion and Spirituality with the Natural World*, Calvin Dewitt shows the complementary qualities between Islam and science in the sense that Islamic doctrine recognizes creation's order and integrity, is committed to addressing human arrogance, ignorance and greed, and is dedicated to protecting and caring for creation. He quotes Nasr from his article, "Islam and the Environmental Crisis," on the notion of human protection of the environment as its trustee.¹³⁶ In another chapter by Jeremy Benstein,

¹³⁴ James Steven Counelis, "Knowledge, Values and World Views: A Framework for Synthesis," in Sardar, *The Touch of Midas : Science, Values, and Environment in Islam and the West*. 222.

¹³⁵ Glyn Ford, "Rebirth of Islamic Science," in Ibid. 36.

¹³⁶ Calvin DeWitt, "Spiritual and Religious Perspective of Creation and Scientific Understanding of Nature," in Stephen R. Kellert and Timothy J. Farnham, *The Good in Nature and Humanity : Connecting Science, Religion, and Spirituality with the Natural World* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2002). 36.

he writes about the crisis within humans, of one's world-views, values, and spiritual situation. He quotes Nasr claiming that the secular exploitative side of science must correspond to something in nature, otherwise it would not be so efficacious in destroying the world, but, at the same time, it must be missing something essential for that same reason. Benstein bases his argument on limits and limitations, both of the physical world and humanity.¹³⁷

The realization of the true human is evident in Qorban Elmi's attempt to show that the Islamic world-view is indeed comprehensive and that it can adapt itself and live up to the new challenges that face humanity because protecting the environment is its major concern. In this paper, Elmi makes constant references to Nasr's *The Encounter of Man and Nature: The spiritual crisis of modern man*, and "Religion and the Environmental Crisis" to argue the significance of humanity's role not only in the environmental crisis, but, its role in environmental protection and its relationship with nature. Elmi's argument revolves around the change in human attitude toward the world including humanity's function as responsible and effective members of the universe, whose direction in life should always point to God.¹³⁸

In Fazlun Khalid's article, "Islam, Ecology, Modernity: An Islamic Critique of the Root Causes of Environmental Degradation," he looks at the development of a secular scientific ethic in Europe at the expense of traditional worldviews, followed by an analysis of the modern approach and its evolution to our present day ecological crisis. He agrees with Nasr and hypothesizes that prior to the advent of modernity, the natural order functioned within its own limits and that the seeds of the ecological crisis that breached these limits were sown during the

¹³⁷ Jeremy Benstein, "The World That is Coming: Reflecting on power, knowledge, wisdom and progress," in *Ibid*, 124.

¹³⁸ Qorban Elmi, "The Role of Divine Religion in the Protection of the Environment (*Islam: Past, Present, Future*, 2004): 534.

period that followed the Renaissance. This occurred from the sixteenth century onwards, when what we know as modernity began to evolve.¹³⁹ In his paper, “Islam and the Environment – Ethics and Practice: An Assessment,” Khalid attempts to explain how Islam defines human connections with the earth and how one may be kinder to it as the source of the generous gifts that sustain all our lives. He calls upon Nasr to shed light on the disequilibrium between modern man and nature on behalf of the Renaissance and the challenges it brought to the traditional Islamic world.¹⁴⁰

William Chittick writes on the differentiation between intellectual (‘aqli) and transmitted (naqli) knowledge and discusses the implications of different ways of knowing. He discusses the orthodox Islamic, and Sufi, interpretations of learning. In it he defines Nasr’s position about the nature of man in a section on the unseen man in Sufi interpretations of knowledge. He quotes Nasr from his book, *Religion and the Order of Nature*, to demonstrate how the masters of intellect recognize the meaning behind the signs (*ayat*) of God. According to Chittick, this is the unseen man’s solution to the impasse that modern humanity has constructed for itself, and promotes the resurfacing of the “true” man.

Rumi and the Ultimate Human (*insan al-kamil*)

In the Qur’an it states that “verily, I am about to place a Khalifah or Vicegerent on Earth” (2:28). Moreover, there are several verses that outline the special position that the *khalifa* has with regard to creation (2:29, 14: 32-34, 67:15). Rumi acknowledges that God is the ultimate King of kings, but God has set up a *khalifah* to serve as a mirror to reflect His sovereignty.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Fazlun Khalid, “Islam, Ecology, Modernity: An Islamic Critique of the Root Causes of Environmental Degradation,” in *Islam and Ecology* (2003).

¹⁴⁰ Fazlun Khalid. "Islam and the Environment–Ethics and Practice an Assessment" (*Religion Compass* 4, 2010): 708.

¹⁴¹ Nicholson, *A Rumi Anthology : Rumi: Poet and Mystic, Tales of Mystic Meaning*. 300-301.

Thus, as a mirror of God's sovereignty, humans have a special role in existence. Like Rumi, Nasr claims that the Qur'an speaks of humans as both servants (*'abd Allah*) and viceregents of God (*khalifat Allah*). Furthermore, one has the right to practice their viceregency on earth only on the condition that one follows the former role because the as servant of God one must follow God's will, and God wills humans to protect and not dominate over nature.¹⁴² The human who possesses all the right qualities to become the protector of the earth is known as the ultimate human (*insan al-kamil*).

William Chittick explains the concept of the ultimate human in Rumi's poetry. He notes that while Rumi's poetry does not go into extensive detail regarding the term, there is evidence of the concept throughout his poetry. The exposition the term *insan al-kamil* (perfect human) is, according to Chittick, more explicitly explained in the thought of Ibn Arabi.¹⁴³ Afzal Iqbal commentates on Rumi's interpretation of the ultimate human. He explains what Rumi thought made a person into an ultimate being and the guidelines for how humans should act and strive for in their lives.¹⁴⁴ In his English translation of Rumi's works, *Fihi ma Fihi*, A.J Arberry offers a notable translation of Rumi's discourses. This, along with Rumi's poetic works, is a main source for understanding Rumi's interpretation of the concept of the ultimate human. This source allows for more of a straightforward understanding of the term and how Rumi defines it.¹⁴⁵ Nasr's book, *The Garden of Truth: The Vision and Practice of Sufism*, provides a two-part importance to this thesis. First, it demonstrates Rumi's profound influence on Nasr and the attention that Nasr gives to Rumi's thought. This typifies the intrigue and importance of Rumi in Nasr's life. Second, Nasr

¹⁴² Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Islam and the Environmental Crisis," in *Islam and Ecology*, ed. Foltz, Denny, and Baharuddin, 97.

¹⁴³ William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi*, Illustrated ed., Spiritual Masters East and West Series (Bloomington, Ind.: World Wisdom, 2005). 49.

¹⁴⁴ Iqbal and Jalāl al-Dāin, *The Life and Work of Muhammad Jalal-Ud-Din Rumi*. 181.

¹⁴⁵ Jalāl al-Dāin and Arberry, *Discourses of Rumi*. 26/

makes countless references to Rumi's poetry when he explains many concepts of Sufi thought, especially with the notion of *insan al-kamil*.¹⁴⁶ Lynda Clarke also provides an exposition on how Rumi's interpretation of the ultimate human plays out in the role that they have in maintaining the balance and harmony with the earth.¹⁴⁷

Nasr and the Ultimate Human (*insan al-kamil*)

In his lecture on the spiritual and religious dimensions of the environmental crisis, Nasr outlines humanity's function as guardians over nature as a regal and pontifical responsibility. This entails being a bridge between heaven and earth. For Nasr, humans all have this function within us which we have now cast aside. He claims that "the religious point of view means that our relation to nature, the very fact that we accept nature is the locus of God's Presence, imposes upon us the necessity to fulfill that vice regal function."¹⁴⁸

Yet, for Nasr, somewhere along the way humankind lost their understanding of this role and their ultimate spirit. He alleges that it was Renaissance humanism that led to the destruction of humanity's pontifical essence: "Renaissance man ceased to be the ambivalent man of the Middle Ages, half angel, half man, torn between heaven and earth. Rather, he became wholly man, but now a totally earth bound creature."¹⁴⁹ In other words, humans became solely reliant on their own knowledge of the world instead of the sacred knowledge that understands nature to be more than an object for scientific study. Nasr asserts that the secular view of nature is due to a reliance on human knowledge and reason to explain natural phenomena without an

¹⁴⁶ Nasr, *The Garden of Truth : The Vision and Practice of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition*. 23.

¹⁴⁷ Lynda Clarke, "The Universe Alive: Nature in the Masnavi of Jalal Al-Din Rumi," in *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*, ed. Frederick M. Denny Richard C. Foltz, and Azizan Baharuddin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003). 52.

¹⁴⁸ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Spiritual and Religious Dimensions of the Environmental Crisis*. (London: Temenos Academy, 1999), 21.

¹⁴⁹ Nasr, *The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*. 64.

understanding that all knowledge stems from Divine knowledge.¹⁵⁰ For Nasr, nature is a divine revelation. However, only a person who is endowed with sacred knowledge can “read the gnostic message written in the most subtle manner upon the cliffs of the high mountains, the leaves of the trees, the faces of the animals and the stars of the sky.”¹⁵¹ And, in the Qur’an it alludes to varying capacities of perception of the signs of God according to humankind’s understanding or levels of wisdom.¹⁵²

Conclusion

The sources incorporated in this chapter are important for several reasons, beginning with those who understand the importance of having an eco-theological position regarding the environmental issues of our planet. The scholars mentioned in this literature review promote a fresh outlook on how one should approach environmental ethics, and they see the significance in what having a religious perspective of environmental ethics brings forth to a discussion of the environmental problems of our planet. This relates to this thesis because these scholars share a commonality with the way Nasr approaches his own definition of the environmental crisis. Many of these scholars whom I discuss early in this literature review stand behind what Nasr discusses vis-à-vis the environmental crisis. Hence, this is the logic behind including some of the sources in the section relating to Nasr’s approach to the environmental crisis. I want to show that many scholars promote a religious perspective of environmental ethics, and they all add something to the ongoing dialogue pertaining to eco-theological perspectives of the environmental crisis.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. This assertion is made by Nasr all throughout this book.

¹⁵¹ *Knowledge and the Sacred*. 192.

¹⁵² Quadir and Ebooks Corporation., *Traditional Islamic Environmentalism the Vision of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*. 72.

In addition to those who discuss the importance of an eco-theological position in environmental ethics, there are those who provide source material for the question matter regarding this thesis. The initial discussion with respect to this thesis is on the importance of the Qur'an for offering an Islamic interpretation of environmental ethics. This relates to this thesis because I am limiting the possible commonalities between Nasr and Rumi to their Sufi understanding of certain Qur'anic themes. Therefore, I found it important to briefly identify those scholars who uphold that the Qur'an expresses a positive and respectful viewpoint of the natural world and how humans should interact with it. Both Nasr and Rumi follow similar Sufi interpretations of the principles behind the eco-theological message of the Qur'an. Consequently, I examine what certain scholars have to say about how Nasr and Rumi interpret each Qur'anic theme. Moreover, each theme discussed in this literature review is done so in order to communicate that there is a commonality between how Nasr deliberates the problems of the environmental crisis and how this thought stems, possibly, from an influence from not only Sufi thought, but, particularly, the thoughts of Rumi.

I see a common thread with respect to Nasr and Rumi's philosophy of human-earth relations. Their approach to life, the way they view nature as a divine reality, their notion of the interrelatedness of the universe with God, their concerns with relying on human knowledge for understanding nature's sacred quality, and their promotion of refining the human being so as to become the perfect, universal, human, who protects and guards the natural world, communicate a paralleled construal of a certain Sufi way of life. One focus of this thesis is that Nasr and Rumi adhere to a similar Sufi way of life, although they live in completely separate time periods. With this in mind, the purpose of this literature review is to communicate to the reader that Rumi has influenced the way Nasr interprets the environmental crisis of the planet, as well as the possible

solutions to it through Nasr's close relationship with Rumi's poetry, as well as his pursuit of the same goals in the Sufi path of life.

Chapter Two: Jalal al-Din Rumi's Understanding of the Natural Environment and Humanity's Relationship with It

The mystical poetic works of Rumi's view of nature and human-earth relations is what possibly influences Nasr's Sufi diagnosis of the environmental crisis. Poetry is the primary source of communication for Rumi, and is replete with metaphysical teachings about human ecology. Also, the possible influence that Rumi has on Nasr stems, explicitly, from the Qur'an. In the following chapter I will outline four Qur'anic themes that Rumi discusses in his Sufi writings on eco-theology. In my opinion, these themes are paralleled in Nasr's Sufi diagnosis of the environmental crisis. Both men follow a similar Sufi understanding of nature as a self-disclosure of God. This is due to his holistic vision of the universe. Nature is a living attribute of God's existence which demonstrates that nature has an intrinsic element of divine presence.¹⁵³ The result of Nasr and Rumi's interpretations of *tawhid* leads them to believe that everything is on a path to restore union with God. Rumi postulates that because everything is created by God it is, hence, an expression of His Reality. All things strive to return to the One who created them. Rumi believes that anything that is separated from its source longs to go back, just as everything in this world longs to re-establish a lost connection with God because it is, like humans, *muslim*, and on a spiritual path back to God.¹⁵⁴ Also, there is, perhaps, an influence in Nasr's diagnosis from Rumi's position regarding the significance of true thought over reason, or, intellect. True thought, for Rumi, is a vision, an intuition, which enables human beings to better understand their world around them, who they are as people and, consequently, how they know God. For,

¹⁵³ As Rumi is writing at the same time as Ibn Arabi, he is not necessarily influenced by his interpretations of *tawhid*. They were contemplating the same thing but at different parts of the Islamic empire.

¹⁵⁴ This section of the chapter does not aim to restate Rumi's understanding of *tawhid*. Rather, it is focussed on expressing that, through Rumi's understanding of *tawhid*, the natural world seeks to return to God. Therefore, the natural world has a process of its own, and not only acts as an expression of God's attributes, but is a living entity that functions to fulfill God's universal notion of salvation for all beings.

Rumi, only when a person enters the path to God will they be delivered from the limitations of rational knowledge. Moreover, because of the fall of humanity, humans constantly forget that the natural world demonstrates a manifestation of God's existence. Although, Rumi does uphold the importance of reason but only as it aids humanity in furthering themselves on the spiritual path to God. Rumi claims that strictly focussing on human knowledge does not get a person to such a state of awareness where they can develop into the ultimate human. Consequently, this leads into the final theme of Rumi's understanding of the universal human, or, perfect human (*insan al-kamil*). The perfect human is, for Rumi, the prototype for understanding that the natural environment is a self-disclosure of God, and that everything exists is on a journey back to its Source. In addition, the ultimate human does not solely rely on human knowledge to explain the truths in life, but, rather, focusses on God's significance for how we understand the world. In short, the perfect human separates his or her self from his or her human ego in order to understand God's place in the world. The themes presented from Rumi's Sufi view of nature and human-earth relations are possible influences in Nasr's Sufi diagnosis of the environmental crisis.

Tawhid (Unity) and The Self-Disclosure of God in Creation

Some Sufis have argued that the world we live in is no more than a distraction from the authentic world we should strive to get to, which is the domain of heaven, or, where God resides.¹⁵⁵ Certain Sufis have viewed the world as a temporary form of existence to be endured only until they die.¹⁵⁶ However, it is also a fundamental assumption that the world is considered a manifestation of God that reflects God through its various processes and entities.¹⁵⁷ Therefore,

¹⁵⁵ Paul L. Heck, "Sufism - What Is It Exactly?," *REC3 Religion Compass* 1, no. 1 (2007). 155.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

in some Sufi views, the world has a theological value that expands Islamic notions beyond prophetic foci to contemplate the divine presence in the natural world.¹⁵⁸ All of the natural world is considered a revelation, just like the verses of the Qur'an. Nature is an *aya* (sign) of the existence of God:

Hā, Mīm.

The [gradual] sending down of the Book is from Allah, the All-mighty, All-wise.

Indeed in the heavens and the earth there are signs for the faithful.

And in your creation [too], and whatever animals that He scatters abroad, there are signs for a people who have certainty (45:1-4).

It must be understood that these particular Sufis, like Mansur al-Hallaj, do not claim nature is God but, rather, a type of knowledge, or, expression of God that humans can contemplate on.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, some Sufis do not see any difference between the existence of the world and the existence of God because they understand that because all things come from God, the only existence is through God Itself.¹⁶⁰ Therefore, whatever exists, exists through God.¹⁶¹ For instance, Rumi states:

We are non-existence, displaying the illusion of existence;

You are our Absolute Being and our only existence.¹⁶²

In Sufism, the Creator (*al-Khaliq*) is understood to be transcendentally incomparable to God's creation, while also immanently resembling it. The former indicates that God is distinct from all beings and is incomparable to anything of this world or in creation. The latter indicates that because all things are created by God, nothing has a reality beyond God's Reality. This is

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Javad Nurbakhsh, "Foreword," in *The Legacy of Mediaeval Persian Sufism*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (London: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1992). X.

¹⁶¹ Ibid. ix.

¹⁶² Quoted in Ibid.

based on the notion that God knows the reality of things before they are created.¹⁶³ This interpretation is based on the Qur'anic notion of the immutable archetype.

In certain Sufi views, everything before it existed was known by God, and that it subsided in God's mind prior to creating it.¹⁶⁴ Sufis call the ideas of God *al-a 'yan al-thabita*. They are the Latent Realities, Fixed Prototypes, or the Essence of Things.¹⁶⁵ This conception originated from the Qur'an's affirmation that Allah knows the reality of things before He brings them into existence.¹⁶⁶ For example, when God says "Be!" this becomes the "locus of manifestation" for knowing God.¹⁶⁷ One example for how Sufis understand God's purpose for creation is expressed in the *hadith qudsi* that states, "I was a hidden treasure; so I loved to be known, hence, I created creatures in order that I may be known."¹⁶⁸ Rumi refers to this *hadith* often in his works.¹⁶⁹ For instance, Rumi states, "now God most High possessed no opposite. He says, 'I was a hidden treasure, and wanted to be known.' So he created this world, which is of darkness, in order that His light might become manifest."¹⁷⁰ For most Sufis, and Rumi, God is considered absolutely separate from all created existence, although the reality that anything possesses is only from God. Therefore, it must ultimately belong to God.¹⁷¹ Certain Sufis follow

¹⁶³ Chittick, *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*.

¹⁶⁴ Valiuddin Mir, *The Quranic Sufism*, 2d rev. ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977). 45.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 46.

¹⁶⁶ Tarik M. Quadir, *Traditional Islamic Environmentalism: The Vision of Seyyed Hossein Nasr* (Lanham, MA: University Press of America Inc., 2013). 74.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 75.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.* The Hadith Qudsi (Sacred Hadith) are the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, which were revealed to him by Allah. The reason the Hadith Qudsi have such a significant authoritative position is due to the fact that these Sayings of the Prophet (Hadith) are traced back to the sayings revealed by Allah, and not Muhammad. This differs from many other Hadith which are categorized as the latter. Therefore, Hadith Qudsi are considered by some Muslims to be the closest expression of the word of God, and almost at the level of the Qur'an. So, sub-Qur'anic. They are not worthy of being the Qur'an, but have a significant position for authenticity that is the highest apart from the Qur'an itself.

¹⁶⁹ Chittick, *The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi*.

¹⁷⁰ Jalāl al-Dāin and Arberry, *Discourses of Rumi*. 92.

¹⁷¹ Chittick, *The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi*. 27-28. Chittick defends Sufis from Orientalist attempts to misrepresent Sufism by attempting to isolate one of the two understandings of God to claim that they contradict one another. And, if there is a difference of opinion between Sufis on this topic or any other one, it is, according to Chittick, usually

such interpretations that all things are similar (*tashbih*) to the Divine, because they derive all reality from God.¹⁷²

Because the natural world is considered to have no reality other than God, some Sufis understand that all God's created things are, thus, manifestations, or, self-disclosures, of God (*tajalli*), just like the Qur'an. The self-disclosure of God in all things includes both the oral, composed Qur'an and the Cosmic Qur'an. So, just as the Qur'an is the linguistic form of a theophany (self-disclosure of God) that demonstrates God's attributes, the world is considered the Cosmic Qur'an in the same self-disclosing fashion.¹⁷³ Because God is present in the essence of things, nothing could exist without the omnipresence and companionship of God Almighty.¹⁷⁴

It is said that the natural world, as a gigantic machine of various mechanisms and causal "processes is the prime 'sign' (aya) of proof of its Maker."¹⁷⁵ This understanding of nature as a sign of God's existence has been elucidated in Sufi Persian poetry like that of Rumi's. Rumi recognized God everywhere, and he wrote passionately about God manifesting Himself in all forms of the world.¹⁷⁶ There is, according to certain Sufis, a harmony exists in creation, and can be found in the immense sky that stretches above our heads, in the earth that gives us nourishment, in the flowers, trees, plants and life in the sea. It is a harmony that exists in all of creation.¹⁷⁷

because they are aimed at guiding disciples on the spiritual path and not at explaining a philosophical system to orientalist (28-9).

¹⁷² *Sufism : A Short Introduction*. 25

¹⁷³ Quadir, *Traditional Islamic Environmentalism: The Vision of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*. 75-6.

¹⁷⁴ Mir, *The Quranic Sufism*. 56.

¹⁷⁵ Fazlur Rahman and Ebrahim Moosa, *Major Themes of the Qur'an*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009). 68.

¹⁷⁶ Annemarie Schimmel, *As through a Veil : Mystical Poetry in Islam, Lectures on the History of Religions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982). 59-60.

¹⁷⁷ Shams, Friedlander, 22.

Moreover, Rumi is one of these Persian poets who understood the signs of God manifested in this harmony.¹⁷⁸

It is the Quranic doctrine of *tawhid* that shapes everything that Rumi says.¹⁷⁹ German scholar of Islam, specialist in Islamic mysticism, and world-renowned interpreter of Sufi poetry, Anne Marie Schimmel, elaborates on how the doctrine of *tawhid* shapes Rumi's life and literary works. She states that "one may say without exaggeration that Rumi's poetry is nothing but an attempt to speak of God's grandeur as it reveals itself in the different aspects of life."¹⁸⁰ This is the essence of Rumi's interpretation of *tawhid*, which shows that everything sings the praises of God, since all multiplicity is, in actuality, unity.¹⁸¹ The following poem is an example of Rumi's understanding of the principle of *tawhid*:

The Unique God has manifested His signs in the
Six directions to those with illuminated eyes.
Whatever animal or plant they behold, they
Contemplate the gardens of divine Beauty.
That is why he said to them,
Wheresoever you turn, there is His Face (Q 2:115).¹⁸²

Rumi's most significant poem, the *Masnawi-ye ma'navi* (The Meaning of All Things), represents the totality of the interrelations of organisms, which includes everything around us.¹⁸³ Rumi's poetry is an example of the admiration that many Sufis gave to nature because they saw

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 22.

¹⁷⁹ William Chittick, "Rumi and the Mawlawiyyah," in *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1991). 118.

¹⁸⁰ Annemarie Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun : A Study of the Works of Jalāloddin Rumi*, Persian Studies Series (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993). 225.

¹⁸¹ Chittick, "Rumi and the Mawlawiyyah." 118.

¹⁸² Quadir, *Traditional Islamic Environmentalism: The Vision of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*. Quadir quotes this from Chittick's *Sufi Path of Love* page 306, and it is located in Rumi's *Mathnawi*, VI 3640-3642.

¹⁸³ Clarke, "The Universe Alive: Nature in the Masnavi of Jalal Al-Din Rumi." 40.

it as an admiration of God's beauty.¹⁸⁴ Rumi often uses a mirror as a symbol to represent the reflection of God in the created world. And, because Rumi sees our world as a mirror of the reality of the Divine, he understands that God is closer to us than our jugular veins.¹⁸⁵ For Rumi, the natural world is a signifier of God's Attributes that points to the source of its existence.

However, there are concerns about how Sufis, such as Rumi distinguish between the transcendent and immanent qualities of God. In the Qur'an, *tawhid* declares that God is one, while at the same time claiming that the world is many.¹⁸⁶ In Islamic theological doctrine, many aspects deal with this issue of how to correlate unity with multiplicity.¹⁸⁷ Because the world is viewed as an interconnected whole, but uniquely diverse, many Sufis often manage this approach through the doctrine of unity of being (*wahdat al-wujud*). This principle implies that whatever people observe in the world is a manifestation of God.¹⁸⁸ Think of God as an Ocean and creation as the waves. The true reality is the ocean but, within it is a multiplicity of individual entities.¹⁸⁹ To clarify, God's Essence (*dhat*) is unknowable, therefore, God becomes known only through God's Attributes.¹⁹⁰ Tarik Quadir claims that this doctrine does not imply that multiplicity is false. Rather, it understands that God is One, while existents are many.¹⁹¹ Moreover, all entities are neither separate nor independent of God but exist of the Ultimate, from which rise the multiplicity of what we see in the world.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁴ Ozdemir.

¹⁸⁵ Ibrahim Ozdemir, "Ozdemir, I. "Creative Love and Nature, Mevlana Jalal Al-Din Rumi." *Interreligious Insight* 4, No. 2 (2006): 61., " *Interreligious Insight* 4 (2006). 2

¹⁸⁶ Chittick, *Sufism : A Short Introduction*. 25.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Nurbakhsh, "Foreword." Xi.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.x

¹⁹⁰ Quadir, *Traditional Islamic Environmentalism: The Vision of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*. 75.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid. 76- 77.

Qur'anic Sufism scholar, Valliudin Mir, also remarks that God is manifest in the form of things and that these things are existent on behalf of the real existence of God.¹⁹³ He claims that it is necessary to distinguish between the essence of God and that of God's created things. Mir argues that if one does not make this distinction, then that person is ill-mannered, unwise, a heretic, and unwary.¹⁹⁴ For Mir, "things are just the mirrors of the manifestation of Existence. Therefore, as essences, the natural environment is definitely other than God, and Existence in its real aspect is definitely God Himself."¹⁹⁵

The notion that everyone and everything is considered one (*wahdat al-wujud*) was paramount in the way Rumi understood the natural order.¹⁹⁶ For example, in Rumi's *Mathnawi* he states, "We and Our existences are non-existent: Thou art the Absolute appearing in the guise of mortality."¹⁹⁷ Here Rumi emphasizes that nothing exists but God, but, because God created the mortal things that consist in his creation, there is a manifesting multiplicity. Sefik Can notes that according to this belief, Rumi understands that Existence is One, but that it is displayed as many separate expressions. In short, everything is part of one existence, which is God, and the world is the expression of this existence in multiplicity. It is also not a false representation that everything is God Itself. Rather, Rumi's way of life is considered a Shop for Unity, and anything that one sees except the one God is an idol.¹⁹⁸ Rumi does not consider things to be divine, that title and essence is held for God only.

¹⁹³ Mir, *The Quranic Sufism*. 66.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. 115.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Sefik Can, *Fundamentals of Rumi's Thought : A Mevlevi Sufi Perspective* (New Jersey: Light, 2005). 102.

¹⁹⁷ Quoted from Quadir, *Traditional Islamic Environmentalism: The Vision of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

According to Quadir, we can conclude that this Sufi understanding of *tawhid* “points to an inseparable ontological bond between God and the created order that cannot be explained by an understanding of God in God’s transcendent aspect alone.”¹⁹⁹ He states that the transcendent aspect of God is complemented by suggestions in the Qur’an that God is Near (*Al-Qarib*), Most Loving (*Al-Wudud*), and that all of nature points to God (Quran 2:115).²⁰⁰ Therefore, Quadir maintains that *tawhid*’s theme is that the natural world functions as a means to know God’s qualities and, ultimately, God’s Unity.²⁰¹ It is evident that Rumi’s understanding of *tawhid* is that the world is a reflection of God’s Unity, while at the same time expressing such Unity through multiplicity.

Union with God

The Qur’an emphasizes that everything was, and is, made from God and points to the One who has created everything (Qur’an 22:16).²⁰² This is supported by the Qur’anic expression of the names for God as *al-Khaliq* (the Creator), *al-Wali* (The Manager), *malik-ul mulk* (the Real Owner), *al-Razzaq* (The Sustainer), *al-Muquit* (The Nourisher), and *al-Hafiz* (The Preserver).²⁰³ These names express the superlative nature of God and all that He is. Not only did God create everything, the Qur’an states that everything praises God as well: “The seven heavens and the earth, and all beings therein, declare His glory: there is not a thing but celebrates His praise; and yet ye understand not how they declare His glory! Verily He is Oft-Forbear, Most Forgiving!”

¹⁹⁹ Quadir, *Traditional Islamic Environmentalism: The Vision of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*. 95.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.96

²⁰² The Qur’anic literature I am using is an online version by Yusuf Ali on the website www.thequran.com. I use this continuously throughout the thesis. The online version also has translations by six other authors, and before I implemented Qur’anic passages into my thesis, I looked at the other English translations to confirm the accuracy of the statements.

²⁰³ Janardan Kumar, “Islam and Ecology,” in *Ecology and Religion*, ed. Rajdeva Narayan and Janardan Kumar (New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications Ltd, 2003), 148.

(17:44). All creatures in this universe have their own lives, their own procreation, senses and modes of communication, thus, everything praises God in its own unique way.²⁰⁴ So, the idea that God created the natural environment and that it is a sign (*aya*) of God's indicates that all nature is part of the *muslim* community.²⁰⁵

Due to the fact that everything is made from God, and praises God, all creatures are considered a community because "there is not an animal (that lives) on the earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but (forms part of) communities like you. Nothing have we omitted from the Book, and they (all) shall be gathered to their Lord in the end" (Qur'an 6:38). Because God has created the universe and made it God's community, God considers all Its creation be *muslim* (submissive). Fazlur Rahman claims that "the whole universe is *muslim* because everything therein (except man, who may or may not become *muslim*) has surrendered to God and glorifies Him."²⁰⁶

The basis for many Muslim thinkers to consider nature as a whole a living and praising being is from their interpretation of Qur'an 17:44: "there is not a thing but celebrates His praise; and yet you don't understand how they declare his Glory!" Rumi is included among these Muslim thinkers, and often makes observations about the natural world that relate to this subject.²⁰⁷ For instance, Rumi declares:

Since God hath made Man from dust,
It behoves thee to recognize the real nature of every particle of the universe,
That while from this aspect they are dead,

²⁰⁴ Qorban, Elmi. "The Role of Divine Religion in Protection of Environment." (*Islam: Past, Present AND Future*, 2004): 538.

²⁰⁵ Ibrahim Ozdemir, "Toward and Understanding of Environmental Ethics from a Qur'anic Perspective," in *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*, ed. Frederick M. Denny Richard C. Foltz, and Azizan Baharuddin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003). 16.

²⁰⁶ Fazlur Raman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica Inc, 1980), 65. Here Rahman quotes Quran 3:83 and 57:1, 59:1, 61:1.

²⁰⁷ Ozdemir, "Toward and Understanding of Environmental Ethics from a Qur'anic Perspective." 18.

From that aspect they are living: silent here,
But speaking Yonder.²⁰⁸

In Rumi's view, the natural world is alive and constantly speaking to the Creator who brought it into existence. Many Rumi scholars comment, frequently, on Qur'an 17:44 and maintain that, because objects praise God, they must be animate in some way.²⁰⁹ Moreover, Rumi elaborates on this issue several times in his *Masnavi*.²¹⁰ For example, Rumi proclaims that the stone says "we are cognizant of God and obedient (to Him): we are all (bearing witness to His Wisdom) and not created by chance or in vain."²¹¹ Rumi's *Masnavi* focusses on the notion that nature is alive and sacred. This is because the natural environment is given life directly from God.²¹² Furthermore, nature, according to Rumi, is consummate and a prototypical example of a *muslim* being because it submits, wholly, to the Divine Will.²¹³ And, Rumi acknowledges how mankind, unlike nature, has the ability to doubt that nature glorifies God, given its authoritative position in the Qur'an.²¹⁴ For instance, he states:

Inasmuch as Thou has made everything a glorifier of Thee – both the discerning and undiscerning entity – Each glorifies thee in a different fashion, and that one is unaware of the state of this one. Man disbelieves in the glorification uttered by inanimate things, but those inanimate things are masters in performing worship (3. 1495-97).²¹⁵

Rumi's view of the world focusses on the idea that everything has been created with a specific purpose, and that there is no lifeless matter in the processes of life on earth.²¹⁶ For

²⁰⁸ Quoted from Ibid. 18.

²⁰⁹ Can, *Fundamentals of Rumi's Thought : A Mevlevi Sufi Perspective*. 140.

²¹⁰ Ibid. 142-143.

²¹¹ Quoted from Ibid. 143

²¹² Clarke, "The Universe Alive: Nature in the Masnavi of Jalal Al-Din Rumi."42.

²¹³ Ibid. 44.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Quoted by Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ozdemir, "Ozdemir, I. "Creative Love and Nature, Mevlana Jalal Al-Din Rumi." *Interreligious Insight* 4, No. 2 (2006): 61.." 2.

example, Rumi states that the “earth, and water, fire and air are alive in the view of God, though they appear to be dead to us. So, never think the earth void or dead; it is aware, it is awake and it is quivering.”²¹⁷ Rumi envisions the universe as totally interconnected. He also considers nature as part of an order that is purposive and good.²¹⁸ Rumi sees nature as moral and beyond calculation because it is dependent on the Grace and Mercy of a Living God.²¹⁹ In short, Rumi’s Sufi view of the natural environment is that it is *muslim* and, thus, part of God’s universal plan of salvation for all things. Moreover, Rumi is concerned for all souls returning to the source from which they came.

For Rumi, union with the one Creator is the telos for all of creation. He views life as a journey returning back to God.²²⁰ Moreover, Rumi compares the soul to a moaning dove, to a reed torn from its bed, to a falcon summoned by the fowler’s whistle, and to a pawn that seeks to become a king.²²¹ That is why, for Rumi, returning to the Divine origin of things is so crucial in his life. Moreover, since he construes that everything in the world is *muslim*, it must also long to re-establish this union with God. The poem of the reed highlights Rumi’s understanding that everything longs to return to the source from which it came:

Hearken to this Reed forlorn,
Breathing, even since ‘twas torn
From its rushy bed, a strain
Of impassioned love and pain.

The secret of my song, though near,
None can see and none can hear
Oh, for a friend to know the sign
And mingle all his soul with mine!

²¹⁷ Quoted from Ibid.

²¹⁸ Clarke, "The Universe Alive: Nature in the Masnavi of Jalal Al-Din Rumi." 40.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Iqbal and Jalāl al-Dāin, *The Life and Work of Muhammad Jalal-Ud-Din Rumi*. 178.

²²¹ Ibid.

'Tis the flame of Love that fired me,
'Tis the wine of Love inspired me.
Wouldst thou learn how lovers bleed,
Hearken, hearken to the Reed!²²²

Reynold Nicholson claims that the reed in this poem is the symbol for the soul emptied of self and filled with Divine spirit. Furthermore, this soul, as it lives on earth, "remembers the union of God which it enjoyed in eternity and longs ardently for deliverance [from a world where it is in exile from God]." ²²³ Rumi is predominantly concerned with the soul returning to God. And, because the natural world has souls, it must also long for a re-established union with god. The natural world rises through many states of being and arrive at the human state. Then it has the ability to fulfill its unitive goal because Rumi's sees the world in a kind of anthropocentric nature, and he explains this in his understanding of evolution.

Rumi believes that the entire natural world is focussed on aspiring to a higher state of being. ²²⁴ Additionally, humans, because they are intrinsically linked to the natural world, go through the process of evolving from the smallest particle to become the highest form of being. ²²⁵ For instance, Rumi explain this in his *Mathnavi*:

First he came into the clime of inorganic things, and from the state of inorganic things he passed into the vegetable state.
Many years he lived in the vegetable state and did not remember the inorganic state because of the opposition between them.
And when he passed from the vegetable into the animal state, the vegetable state was remembered by him not at all,
Save only the inclination that he has toward that state, especially in the season of spring and sweet herbs –

²²² Rāumāi Jalāl al-Dāin and Reynold Alleyne Nicholson, *Rāumāi, Poet and Mystic* (London ; Boston: Unwin Paperbacks, 1978). 31.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Clarke, "The Universe Alive: Nature in the Masnavi of Jalal Al-Din Rumi." 50.

²²⁵ Ibid. 50.

Like the inclination of babes toward that state, especially in the season of spring and sweet herbs –
Like the inclination of babes toward their mothers; the babe does not know the secret of its desire of being suckled. (4.3637 ff.).²²⁶

This poem exemplifies how Rumi views the processes of evolution. This is important for how he interprets the notion that all things are on a journey back to God. For Rumi, there is a chain, or, ladder of Being, and each particle in the universe climbs the ladder in order to fulfill its ultimate goal in life. The ultimate goal is union with God. All of God's creation begins at the smallest stages of life and, eventually, ends up in a human state. Here, they have the opportunity to fulfill their journey back to God. This is because, for Rumi, the human state is the highest state of earthly beings. This has to do with the position that humans have in the creation process in the Qur'an, that is, the last thing in the created order is considered to have the highest position in the manifested order.²²⁷ According to Rumi, all of the created order goes through a process of evolution through a human state so as to become the highest in the manifested order on earth, and then they eventually ascend the ladder of Being and transform into a unitive state with God. Consequently, Rumi sees an intrinsic connection between humans and the natural environment's existential purpose. For example, Clarke notes that, in Rumi's poetry, just as a person loves to consume the natural world around them the natural world enjoys this because they are on the path to God.²²⁸ Although, keep in mind that one must not mistake this claim as grounds to consume vast quantities of nature's bounties. Rather, this statement offers an explanation of how Rumi sees a fundamental connection between humans and the natural environment. It is essential that humans understand their position in the world in relation to nature, and know that all beings

²²⁶ Quoted from Ibid.

²²⁷ Chittick, *The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi*. 49.

²²⁸ Clarke, "The Universe Alive: Nature in the Masnavi of Jalal Al-Din Rumi." 44.

are part of a process of evolution that, ultimately, ends with becoming one with God. Although, often humans forget their connection with nature because they become reliant on human knowledge, the human carnal senses, and the idea that religion no longer had a position in the way humans understood nature's sacred characteristics. Understanding a world with God in it was forgotten. Therefore, God's place in the natural processes of nature was gone, and a secular view of the world replaced one that included God.

The Limitations of Acquired Knowledge ('ilm) for Understanding the World

Rumi focusses on an alternative way of learning and understanding through which humans attain spiritual satisfaction.²²⁹ He claims that there are two types of knowledge ('ilm). First, there is a visible form, one that testifies to an awareness of the invisible world which is the only real and eternal aspect of existence.²³⁰ Second, there is an acquired knowledge that is based on facts, concepts from books, what teachers teach, and information from the traditional sciences as well as other sciences.²³¹ For Rumi, such intelligence makes one rise in the world where one gets ranked above others in regard to one's competence in retaining information.²³² The visionary type of knowledge is, in Rumi's view, preserved inside the Sufi, it is the fountainhead from within. It is not knowledge acquired from outside sources. Rather, it is an internal knowledge that is preserved within a person ever since God created them.²³³ The person who expresses this type of knowledge is called a *mutaqqiq* (one who realizes the Truth).²³⁴ In contrast, the *mutaqlid* (one who imitates), is the one who promotes imitative knowledge ('ilm-i

²²⁹ Este'lami, "The Concept of Knowledge in Rumi's Mathnawi." 401.

²³⁰ Ibid. 402-403

²³¹ Jalāl al-Dāin and Barks, *The Essential Rumi*. 178.

²³² Ibid. 178.

²³³ Ibid. 178.

²³⁴ Este'lami, "The Concept of Knowledge in Rumi's Mathnawi." 404.

taqlidi), that is, the knowledge of others. The knowledge of others means that it is knowledge passed down by humans from generation to generation, much like the sciences of nature. The person who relies solely on this form of knowledge does not understand the inner meaning of form where knowledge stems.²³⁵

Rumi emphasizes that the inner knowledge of a person is gained strictly through spiritual realization (*'ilm-i-tahqiq*), and is an expression of the knowledge of the Eternal Existence, or, God.²³⁶ In contrast, Rumi defines the other type of knowledge as worldly knowledge, which he sees as an obstacle on the road to divine knowledge.²³⁷ It is no longer of use when it becomes an obstacle to attaining greater truths.²³⁸ For instance, Rumi states that “when your mind becomes an obstacle for you on the path of God then it is no more a mind. It is a snake and a scorpion.”²³⁹ Rumi strives to refine the internal form of knowledge. For this reason he maintains that this knowledge is a spiritual vision that offers humankind the ability to understand the eternal and invisible Being.²⁴⁰ Moreover, Rumi considers the medium through which one understands this Reality as the internal senses or *hawass-i batin*.²⁴¹

Rumi is critical of external knowledge because he believes that humans were not created to satisfy their material needs.²⁴² Instead of seeking to fulfill our sensual needs, humanity should aim to work on satisfying the internal senses that develop our recognition of God’s overarching role in all knowledge.²⁴³ For example, Chittick claims that, for Rumi, “any thought, any vision,

²³⁵ Ibid. 404.

²³⁶ Ibid. 404.

²³⁷ Ibid. 405.

²³⁸ Can, *Fundamentals of Rumi's Thought : A Mevlevi Sufi Perspective*. 184.

²³⁹ Ibid. 184. Can quotes Rumi from his *Mesnevi* Vol I, no. 2329.

²⁴⁰ Este'lami, "The Concept of Knowledge in Rumi's *Mathnawi*." 405.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid. 406

²⁴³ Ibid.

any understanding that is not informed and guided by the awareness of God's overwhelming and controlling reality loses sight of the nature of things and forgets the purpose of human life."²⁴⁴ When the shift from relying on the material needs in life changes to focussing on the internal needs, there is a transitory passing of the human senses through the veil of ignorance" (*guzara shudan-i hawass*).²⁴⁵ For instance, Rumi states that "when his senses have passed through the veil, his vision and allocution from God will be continuous."²⁴⁶ Therefore, when humans fracture the hold that the human senses have on the mind, their inner being takes hold of their way of living. Consequently, this promotes an awareness of God's place in the cosmos. Therefore, the human sees nature as God's manifestation, and understands that it has an intrinsic connection with the Divine.

From this standpoint, the inner knowledge Rumi discusses is far beyond the bodily realm, and is nothing but a spiritual knowledge.²⁴⁷ It is part of the spiritual realm, which the Qur'an calls the Unseen (*al-ghayb*).²⁴⁸ It facilitates an understanding of things as they are in relation to the Creator.²⁴⁹ Moreover, this is precisely the meaning of *tawhid*.²⁵⁰ Chittick offers an explanation of this regarding a student learning about the inner reality of the world:

Certainly, one studies the world to achieve the understanding of phenomena, but understanding is an attribute of the soul, of the knowing subject. Masters of the intellectual approach recognized that all meaning hides behind the 'signs' (ayat) of God, that all phenomena point to noumena, and that those noumena can only be accessed at the root of the knowing self.²⁵¹

²⁴⁴ Chittick, *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul : The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World*. 44.

²⁴⁵ Este'lami, "The Concept of Knowledge in Rumi's Mathnawi." 406.

²⁴⁶ Quoted from Ibid. 407.

²⁴⁷ Chittick, *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul : The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World*.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.42.

²⁴⁹ Ibid. 42.

²⁵⁰ Ibid. 41-43.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

To know the world around us is to acknowledge the divine realm that it comes from. Rumi tries to awaken our insight and consciousness by descending into the depths of our spirit in order to develop our understanding of the world around us.²⁵² For Rumi, there are inherent problems with relying solely on the mind (reason) for recognising the life within the natural world:

O those who have disillusioned themselves in the material world, and have a high opinion of themselves by relying on their mind! You cannot make sense of the fact that the objects that are thought to be inanimate have life and emotions, can you?²⁵³

The problem is that humans often forget about the place of internal thought, which is to remember that God guides all true thought. We forget this because we do not apply the principle of *tawhid* to life.²⁵⁴ Rumi reminds us of the primacy of the inner consciousness. He understands it as a kind of vision that everything should be informed and guided by the awareness of God:

To be human is to see, the rest is only skin.
To see is to see your beloved.
If your beloved is not seen, better to be blind.
If your beloved is not everlasting, better not to have one.²⁵⁵

Rumi believes that humans should never be content to know things simply with the use of reason.²⁵⁶ Instead, they should enter onto the path to God in order to escape the limitations that come from reason-based knowledge only.²⁵⁷ This is because in order to understand the reality of

²⁵² Can, *Fundamentals of Rumi's Thought : A Mevlevi Sufi Perspective*. 145.

²⁵³ Quoted from Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Chittick, *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul : The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World*. 43.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ *The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi*. 95.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

things, which is that God *is* the Reality of things, we cannot rely on human knowledge. This is not an option for Rumi.²⁵⁸ He is critical of those who attempt to do this by reason alone, and who support the claim that searching for God using human knowledge is plausible. How can a person know God by their senses when God is immaterial?²⁵⁹ You cannot know God through intellect, for God is unthinkable. Consequently, human knowledge, for Rumi, never gets beyond the finite.²⁶⁰ Rumi mocks those who attempt to understand the reality within objects by using acquired knowledge:

Do you know a name without anything answering to it?
Have you ever plucked a rose from R.O.S.E?
You name His name; go, seek the reality named by it.²⁶¹

Valiuddin Mir claims that the senses, human thought, reason and understanding are at a loss in finding God because all of these are temporal, and that is why people who attempt to find God are baffled by the impossibility to do so.²⁶² According to Rumi, a person cannot visualise any rational path to know God because God is beyond reason.²⁶³ Moreover, Rumi says that philosophers wasted their time in trying to understand the origin and nature of God because only God knows God's Self.²⁶⁴ On the word of Iqbal, Rumi understands that humans cannot "treat life and consciousness mathematically, scientifically, or logically, for how can we depend upon our senses which do not carry us far? Knowledge is and must remain a vision of reality."²⁶⁵ Hence the reason why Rumi belittles human knowledge. He protests against the exaggeration of human

²⁵⁹ Iqbal and Jalāl al-Dāin, *The Life and Work of Muhammad Jalal-Ud-Din Rumi*. 179.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Quoted from Ibid.

²⁶² Mir, *The Quranic Sufism*. 87.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid. 88.

²⁶⁵ Iqbal and Jalāl al-Dāin, *The Life and Work of Muhammad Jalal-Ud-Din Rumi*. 180.

knowledge's role in life.²⁶⁶ However, Rumi did not completely disregard the place of human knowledge in a person's journey on the path to God. Refining the human faculties is beneficial, but they must serve as a ladder to spiritual achievement.²⁶⁷ Rumi believes that human knowledge is positive because it seeks certainty, and certainty is the seeker of vision and intuition.²⁶⁸ Sefik Can explains that, for Rumi, reason is a valuable divine gift that distinguishes humans from animals, and this gives people humanity.²⁶⁹ Reason helps human beings defeat their lower selves and become superior beings.²⁷⁰ Also, Rumi gives external knowledge, such as reason, a place to stand against sensual thoughts such as opinion and imagination:

Reason is the contrary to sensuality: O brave man. Do not call reason that which is attached to sensuality. That which is the beggar of sensuality call it imagination.²⁷¹

For Rumi, reason has an essential position in separating one's self from relying on sensual desires. When one relies on such carnal senses they only live according to such. One becomes comfortable with sensual gratification and this keeps them from learning the real purposes in life. Therefore, reason, for Rumi, allows someone to refine themselves and learn to not live their lives based on their carnal desires. When Rumi discusses the importance of reason for ridding one's self from living according to their carnal senses, he does this because he cannot envision the reliance on carnal senses helping a Sufi on their path to God. When humans use reason and rationality in their lives it gets them to a state of consciousness and certainty about the universe. Then this state of consciousness ends and the next step is vision, or, intuition. This is due to vision being the higher state of knowledge that is born immediately of certainty, by

²⁶⁶ Iqbal, 165.

²⁶⁷ Este'lami, "The Concept of Knowledge in Rumi's Mathnawi." 408.

²⁶⁸ Iqbal, 165.

²⁶⁹ Can, *Fundamentals of Rumi's Thought : A Mevlevi Sufi Perspective*. 180-81.

²⁷⁰ Ibid. 181.

²⁷¹ Iqbal and Jalāl al-Dāin, *The Life and Work of Muhammad Jalal-Ud-Din Rumi*.

which he means a spiritual certainty of knowing that God is part of one's inner soul, as well as the entire universe.²⁷² Spiritual experience and gnostic ways of life are, for Rumi, essential for one on the journey to God. Hence, Rumi's own journey, or path to God, corresponds with this aim for vision and certainty.²⁷³

If we do not take the internal knowledge of the world seriously, humans become distant from God. Our distance from God stems from our impression that we are somehow independent from God. This is the work of the egoistic, lower selves (*nafs*) veiling us from perceiving our spirit and what lies beyond.²⁷⁴ Rumi views true intelligence, and not external knowledge, as the ability to see things according to their relation to God, and the value of human knowledge is only based upon its function of leading someone toward the inward reality of themselves.²⁷⁵ Thus, the goal of the intellectual tradition was to prime a person for achieving human perfection.²⁷⁶ According to certain Sufis and Rumi, perfection can only be reached by returning to God and bringing one's self back into harmony with the nature of things.²⁷⁷ The notion of a human striving for perfection is the subsequent theme in Rumi's philosophy. This section offers an exposition of how Rumi's view of the universal human as a channel of grace for the natural world. This being does not rely on the ego to understand the world, and they also understand the trust that God bestowed upon so as to maintain the harmony of the world.

The Perfect Human (*insan al-kamil*)

²⁷² Ibid. 164.

²⁷³ Lewis, *Rumi : Past and Present, East and West : The Life, Teaching and Poetry of Jal Al Al-Din Rumi*. 404.

²⁷⁴ Chittick, "Rumi and the Mawlawiyyah." 123.

²⁷⁵ *The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi*. 88.

²⁷⁶ *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul : The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World*. 45.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

The previous sections of this thesis have been an attempt to show the elements or principles that a human, for Rumi, must possess in order to become a universal human. Once a universal human, all of the aforementioned elements become actualized. Therefore, this individual lives its life according to the principle *tawhid*. The only way to do so is to rid one's self of carnal obstructions that prevent humankind from attaining divine knowledge. This will enable a human to develop into the perfect being who, despite the fall of Adam, re-establishes themselves as the channel of grace for the natural world.

William Chittick notes that, in the Qur'an, while the universe is considered *one* when seen from the point of view of the Divine Essence there is, however, from the point of view of relativity, a polarization of the concepts of the macrocosm and microcosm.²⁷⁸ Chittick maintains that the macrocosm is the entire universe reflecting all the divine names and qualities, and the microcosm is the human, who reflects these qualities but as a totality. And, according to Chittick, the latter and former are like two mirrors facing each other, each containing the same qualities as the other. However, the former is an outward expression and the latter represents an inward and subjective expression of these qualities. This is based on the notion that what is last in the created order is first in the manifested order.²⁷⁹ In short, humanity's entire knowledge of itself includes the knowledge of the whole universe.²⁸⁰

In Rumi's view, the ultimate human represents the macrocosm as well as the microcosm.²⁸¹ The macrocosm is the internal aspect of a human that is the most important. This view parallels the notion of nature as a self-disclosure of God. Because the internal aspect of

²⁷⁸ *The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi*. 49.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 49.

²⁸⁰ Chittick, *The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi*. 52

²⁸¹ *Ibid*. 52.

every being is an attribute of God, the inner dimension of all created things is, essentially, a reality of God. So, nature and humans are both theophanies of the Divine. The internal form is the inward reality and the external is the outward reality.²⁸² Therefore, the essential point to clarify is that the macrocosm represents both the highest spiritual realities of both humans and the universe. Thus, humans have an essential role in communicating God's knowledge to the rest of the world. Although, from what we have seen, relying on external knowledge will not facilitate the development of the universal human. This creates a dichotomy, for Rumi, of two type of humans.

The first type of being that Rumi defines is the lower being. The lower being assimilates from all of the animalistic forms of its being.²⁸³ The person who obeys its animal self is, for Rumi, living a life of a slave, constantly contradicting the true nature of their being.²⁸⁴ In contrast, the human who lives in accordance with its higher self is living the life of a free human.²⁸⁵ The higher self is the divine spark within a human, which makes a human the source of infinite power and knowledge.²⁸⁶ Additionally, this being transcends from relying on human knowledge that is sensuous, both in origin and character, and attains divine knowledge.²⁸⁷ Therefore, the perfect human is immersed in divine knowledge, and this enables the perfect human to embrace both the spiritual and material worlds.²⁸⁸

²⁸² Ibid. 51. Nasr maintains that Rumi does not use the Arabic term universal human (*al-insan al-kamil*) in his writings, yet, the meaning of it is reflected in them.²⁸² Instead, he uses the term macrocosm to describe the spiritual man to contrast the profane man, the microcosm.

²⁸³ Iqbal and Jalâl al-Dâin, *The Life and Work of Muhammad Jalal-Ud-Din Rumi*. 181.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ibid. 181-182.

²⁸⁷ Ibid. 182.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

Also, the universal human has refined their human state so as to set the stage to become the universal human. The way to completely refine the human state is to be in accordance with God's will. Consequently, this means that the universal human will contemplate nature's sacred significance and accept the limitations of human knowledge for grasping such knowledge. Rumi understands that when a person becomes an ideal person, their own will is effaced in God's will, and, thus, have attained God.²⁸⁹ If a person destroys their human desires and attributes, then that person becomes the ideal human.²⁹⁰ This occurs when the human being is assimilated into God.²⁹¹ A person may become annihilated into God but they do not lose their individuality.²⁹² So, when Rumi discusses becoming annihilated into God this does not mean that they completely lose who they are as a person. What this means is they are living their life according to God's Will. Also, it does not mean that a person becomes completely ascetic and disregards their worldly self or life. Rumi was against intense forms of asceticism and isolation from the community.

In addition, perfect beings do not identify with the human ego, as they see it as no more than an outer shell outside of the internal reality that composes all its other states.²⁹³ For Rumi, when we escape from our ego, we can focus on re-establishing the harmony between humans and the earth and become a channel of grace for the world. The reason for becoming the channel of grace for the world is due to the reference made in the Qur'an that humans are the "trust" (*al-amanah*) of God's creation.²⁹⁴ Rumi demonstrates the importance of this notion when he says that the most important thing in a human's life is to fulfill their role as the trustee over God's

²⁸⁹ Can, *Fundamentals of Rumi's Thought : A Mevlevi Sufi Perspective*. 137.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Iqbal and Jalāl al-Dāin, *The Life and Work of Muhammad Jalal-Ud-Din Rumi*. 182.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Chittick, *The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi*. 50.

²⁹⁴ Ibid. 63.

creation.²⁹⁵ Additionally, for Rumi, if this was the only task one remembered to do, then there would be no cause to worry.²⁹⁶ Sefik Can remarks that, for Rumi, when humanity became the “subject to the divine Manifestation and was charged with the Divine Entrustment, they gained superiority and became the most honorable and the most superior of all creatures.”²⁹⁷ Rumi defends this trust as a significant part of human life. For instance, he comments on the Qur’an’s statement regarding God offering this trust to the heavens and the earth, and their refusal to accept it:

God did not say, ‘And We honoured heaven and earth.’ So that task which is not performed by the heavens and the earth and the mountains is performed by man. When he performs that task, ‘sinfulness’ and ‘folly’ are banished from him. If you say, ‘Even if I do not perform that task, yet so many tasks are performed by me,’ you were not created for those other tasks. It is as though you were to procure a sword of priceless Indian steel such as is to be found only in the treasuries of kings and were to convert them into a butcher’s knife for cutting up putrid meat saying, ‘I am not letting this sword stand idle, I am putting it to so many useful purposes.’²⁹⁸

Rumi recognizes this Divine Entrustment as a mode through which one realizes their essence, thus, realizes their ideal self.²⁹⁹ As one recognizes the trust that God bestowed upon humanity, one must constantly push the demons within us to the deepest corners of our self because, for human beings to save their humanity, they must realize where they came from and from where they will return.³⁰⁰

From the point of Sufism, and, in this case Rumi’s view, humans must fulfill this trust which God has placed upon their shoulders.³⁰¹ This is due to the fall of humankind and humans

²⁹⁵ Jalāl al-Dāin and Arberry, *Discourses of Rumi*. 26/

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 26-27.

²⁹⁷ Can, *Fundamentals of Rumi's Thought : A Mevlevi Sufi Perspective*. 179.

²⁹⁸ Jalāl al-Dāin and Arberry, *Discourses of Rumi*. 27.

²⁹⁹ Can, *Fundamentals of Rumi's Thought : A Mevlevi Sufi Perspective*. 181.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.* 180.

³⁰¹ Chittick, *The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi*. 64.

being cut off from becoming the spiritual prototype that God envisioned for them.³⁰² To clarify, the fall narrative in the Qur'an is not understood in the same manner as that of the Christian fall narrative. For many Muslims, the belief is that the fall of humanity came because of Iblis' refusal to bow down to Adam when God commanded him to do so (7:11-19). It was this refusal to bow down to Adam that created the fall of humanity. This was because Iblis could not see the importance of humanity in God's creation. This relates to certain Sufi understandings of the fall of humanity from the ultimate human state. Just as Iblis could see only the externals of Adam, Adam's fall was caused when he only saw the world as an external and independent form cut off from God.³⁰³ Therefore, he lost the ability to see the world in this form, and it is only the perfect human who understands the attributes of God manifesting in the natural world.³⁰⁴ Rumi maintains that the soul did fall from its originally pure state. The only way it can rise is if it flows back to the burning fountain from where it came.³⁰⁵ He claims that God alone is the suitable object for man's quest and nothing less will satisfy the yearnings of their soul.³⁰⁶ The purpose is to re-establish God's presence in nature. For Rumi, the journey back to God, and the goal to become one with God is a method for repairing the inner soul, as well as serving as a process by which humans visualize nature as a self-disclosure of the Divine.

According to Sefik Can, Rumi believes that we are from the ground of this earth, we live in soil, and we are tied to the soil of the earth.³⁰⁷ Yet, in us, there is a Divine Entrustment that animals or any other being has within them.³⁰⁸ This entrustment allows a human to nourish

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid. 65.

³⁰⁴ Ibid. 52-57.

³⁰⁵ Iqbal and Jalāl al-Dāin, *The Life and Work of Muhammad Jalal-Ud-Din Rumi*. 136.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Can, *Fundamentals of Rumi's Thought : A Mevlevi Sufi Perspective*. 178.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

themselves in Divine sustenance. Chittick notes that “the universal human, as the principle of all-manifestation, is the distributor of God’s bounty to the world.” As a result, the harmony of the universe depends on humanity’s ability to actualize this universal state.³⁰⁹ This is because only when a person has reached the center of his or her being can they know the reality of who they are and can be considered fully human.³¹⁰

In Rumi’s view, humans should recognize the trust that God bestowed upon them, yet, they constantly separate themselves from God and believe that they are separate from the Divine. Only when we conquer our lower selves that give rise to our animalistic being, it the one who focusses on worldly things without acknowledging the Divine aspects in them, will we become the ideal human.³¹¹ Rumi states that one must contemplate God who created this whole universe and who is the possessor of all that dwells within it.

If the human world accepts their role as trustee over the earth, then the harmony will be restored. However, until then, human beings will continue to have incorrect relations with God’s created order. Rumi believes that the problem is not with nature itself but with our incorrect relations with it.³¹² Clarke states that, for Rumi, it is the “enlightened souls [universal] who experience the whole of nature as it really is rather than grasping at this or that part, it is a foretaste, replete with blessing, of Paradise to come.”³¹³ Therefore, even though the spiritual path is union with God, human beings, in the meantime, have the opportunity to contemplate the Divine’s presence within the natural world. As Rumi states:

God has given milk and nourishment for babes:

³⁰⁹ Chittick, *The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi*. 62-63.

³¹⁰ Nasr, *The Garden of Truth : The Vision and Practice of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition*. 23.

³¹¹ Can, *Fundamentals of Rumi's Thought : A Mevlevi Sufi Perspective*. 178-79.

³¹² Clarke, "The Universe Alive: Nature in the Masnavi of Jalal Al-Din Rumi." 52.

³¹³ Ibid.

He has made the breath of every wife a fountain.
He has given wine to drive away greed and care:
He has made of the grape a fountain to inspire courage.³¹⁴
He has given you honey as a remedy for the sick body:
He has given the inward part of the bee a fountain of honey.
He gave water universally too high and low for cleanliness and for drinking.
The object is that you should follow the track of these derivatives towards the
origins; but you are content with this offshoot... (1.1630-38).³¹⁵

It is, thus, for Rumi, the ultimate human, who acknowledges the limits of external knowledge for understanding the truth of *tawhid*, who will become a channel for grace for the natural world, and fulfill the trust that God bestowed upon them.³¹⁶ Moreover, as this channel of grace, the ultimate being has rid themselves of the *nafs* that prevent them from understanding that the world is a self-disclosure of God seeking union with the Divine because the universal human knows that all things exist in God and not as they exist in themselves.³¹⁷

This chapter delineates Rumi's Sufi view of the natural world and how humanity should relate to it. Based on his understanding of *tawhid*, the natural environment, like the Qur'an, is also a means of knowledge to understand God. The natural world is an Attribute of God's existence working to re-establish union with its Creator. Rumi's view of the natural world is, as stated by Clarke, not mechanistic but, instead, "has a useful position in the great cycle that is God's plan for universal salvation, in which it participates knowingly, actively, and fully."³¹⁸ For Rumi, God sustains all life for all things and "every living thing trusts in God for its nourishment."³¹⁹ In addition, how human beings come to the conclusion that everything is a self-

³¹⁴ Quoted from Ibid. 52-53.

³¹⁵ Quoted from Ibid.

³¹⁶ Rumi does not make explicit explanations of the term perfect human. This term comes from Ibn Arabi, but, the explanation of it through Rumi's poetry is paramount.

³¹⁷ Chittick, *The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi*.62.

³¹⁸ Clarke, "The Universe Alive: Nature in the Masnavi of Jalal Al-Din Rumi." 59.

³¹⁹ Jalāl al-Dāin and Barks, *The Essential Rumi*. 48.

disclosure of God seeking unity with the Divine is dependent upon how they approach the use of reason to understand the world, themselves, and, in extension, God. There is a place for reason in defeating our lower selves (*nafs*). However, to develop into the ultimate being, humans must focus on the intuitive aspect of knowledge, in addition to reason. Here, they become the prototype of all humans, and the bridge between heaven and earth. It is the ultimate human who comes to understand the significance of the natural world as a self-disclosure of God. It is only by understanding God's role in creation, through the principles of *tawhid*, that one may, possibly, comprehend the fact that the Divine is constantly sustaining life for us and providing us with knowledge of the natural world's sacred aspect. And, in this chapter, I focussed on expressing how Rumi's vision of the natural world, and how humans should relate to it, demonstrates this understanding.

Chapter Three: Seyyed Hossein Nasr's Sufi Diagnosis of the Environmental Crisis

The themes discussed in the previous chapter outline Jalal al-Din Rumi's approach to the natural world and humanity's relationship with it. I contend that these themes have influenced Nasr's approach to the environmental crisis. Prior to delineating how Rumi's Sufi philosophies of nature and humanity's relationship to it influence Nasr's diagnosis of the environmental crisis, I will, briefly, explicate Nasr's diagnosis and, subsequently, demonstrate how the four themes I previously presented from Rumi's philosophy of human-earth relationships resonate in Nasr's analysis of the environmental crisis.

According to Nasr, the reason the natural environment continues to be exploited, disrespected, and thought to be something dominated, is the result of humankind's ruinous relationship with the natural world and God. He claims that the environmental problems of our planet are the result of an internal ecological concern within the souls of human beings, which has deep spiritual, philosophical, and religious roots and causes.³²⁰ The major problem being humankind's disconnection with God in their lives.³²¹ It is this detachment that has facilitated the development of nature as a secular mass, or, as an "it," to be dominated. In his view, the materialistic view of nature and the sense of domination over it is also the result of a sense of lust and greed incited by humans through their preoccupation of economic progress and the desire to conquer all aspects of nature. Nasr contends that there is a problem with the way humans perceive the environment because they are unaware of its spiritual significance. And, he says that in the process of conquering nature, humans have not realized that they are destroying

³²⁰ Seyyed Hossein and Muzffar Iqbal Nasr, "The Islamic Perspective on the Environmental Crisis: Seyyed Hossein Nasr in Conversation with Muzaffar Iqbal," *Islam and Science* 5, no. 1 (2007). 81.

³²¹ Nasr, *The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*. 20

themselves and their very existence, both existential and earthly.³²² So, the environmental problems of the planet are the result of an internal dilemma within humans that facilitates a disrespectful view of nature.

Conversely, Nasr aims to re-establish the sacred quality of the universe by rediscovering, or, bringing back the views of religious traditions, like Sufism, that promote a metaphysical awareness of the spiritual significance of nature. The rediscovery of the sacred view of nature can only be done, however, if there is a change in the way people perceive and interact with nature. It is good to promote the sacred views of nature, but, for Nasr, there must be a rediscovery of a certain type of human being that takes this philosophy of the earth seriously, and applies it to their everyday life. It is a process that develops within a person and, then, expresses itself out into the world. And, even if this seems like a small development in the way we can change the environmental situation of the planet, Nasr claims that “even one person changing his or her way of thinking and acting can have an effect.”³²³

Nasr maintains that in order to return the sacred quality to the natural environment, there must be a re-enchantment of the human being, which requires them to reconnect with God. For Nasr, this entails a return to the religious views of the world that advocate an understanding of the universe in relation to God’s place in it, and nature’s role as communicator of the existence of God. If there is a return to the religious view of nature, like those expressed, particularly, by Sufis, human beings may come to understand that the natural world is more than just an entity to be utilized. On Nasr’s word, “we need a deep transformation of our understanding of nature and of the human state, of who we are, of what our relationship is with God and the natural

³²² Ibid. 18-19.

³²³ Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Ramin Jahanbegloo, *In Search of the Sacred a Conversation with Seyyed Hossein Nasr on His Life and Thought*, (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger,, 2010), 198.

environment which is His creation.”³²⁴ He claims that humans cannot save the environment except by rediscovering the connection nature has with God, and redeveloping an awareness of nature’s sacred quality that is a reflection of the work of the Divine.³²⁵ Moreover, humans cannot develop this awareness of nature’s sacredness if they do not rediscover the sacred quality within themselves, which is, for both nature and humanity, the Divine component that is inherent in all of creation. Consequently, Nasr argues that the solution to the environmental crisis can only come from curing the spiritual condition of modern humans and by rediscovering the sacred quality of the world that has been given, generously, to humans from God. Moreover, he states that the generosity nature presents to humanity is the proof of this reality, and despite the ruinous relationship humans have had with the natural environment, nature continues to survive and offer its ontological message to humans.³²⁶

There are four themes from Rumi’s philosophy that presents themselves in Nasr’s diagnosis. I will begin with Nasr’s call for a return to a sacred science of nature where all knowledge is understood in relation to God’s role as the All-Knowing. Nasr, like Rumi, promotes internal knowledge for understanding the sacred quality of nature. Internal knowledge, in this context, is a form of consciousness, or, awareness that recognizes God’s place in the world. Moreover, Nasr promotes this type of divinely-inspired knowledge because, like Rumi, he claims that to know nature’s sacredness means to accept that God’s knowledge is the highest form of knowledge, and that all knowledge evolves from the All-Knowing. Although, Nasr, like Rumi, claims that human knowledge is beneficial for refining a person’s need to fulfill all carnal

³²⁴ Nasr, "The Islamic Perspective on the Environmental Crisis: Seyyed Hossein Nasr in Conversation with Muzaffar Iqbal." 81.

³²⁵ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Need for a Sacred Science*, (London: Taylor & Francis e-Library,, 2005),.145.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

desires. Yet, Nasr claims that it is not sufficient for getting a person to a state of awareness where they perceive the sacredness of nature. It is only by looking to the religious views of nature for inspiration that can re-establish the relationship humans have with the earth.

At the outset of his diagnosis, Nasr claims that to return the sacred quality to nature, humans must re-establish a sacred science of nature and challenge the current, modern, scientific interpretations of the natural world. Instead of relying solely on modern conceptions of nature, Nasr contends that there should be an incorporation of what traditional metaphysical interpretations of what nature is, like that expressed by certain Sufis, can offer to modern definitions of the natural environment's characteristics. Therefore, it is a relationship between what modern science can teach us about nature, and what metaphysical teachings about the sacred aspect of nature can offer. As a supplementary explanation of nature, Nasr outlines the importance of the religious views of nature in his book *Religion and the Order of Nature*:

There must be a radical restructuring of the intellectual landscape to enable us to take this type of knowledge of nature seriously, which means to accept the findings of modern science only within the confines of the limitations that its philosophical suppositions, epistemologies, and historical development have imposed upon it, while rejecting completely its totalitarian claims as the science of the natural order. It means to rediscover a science of nature that deals with the existence of natural objects in their relation to Being, with their subtle as well as gross aspects, with their interrelatedness to the rest of the cosmos and to us, with their symbolic significance and with their nexus to higher levels of existence leading to the Divine Origin of all things.³²⁷

Nasr argues that the sacred science of nature calls into question the claims made by modern secular science as the absolute science for defining the world. For Nasr, modern science

³²⁷ Nasr, *Religion & the Order of Nature : The 1994 Cadbury Lectures at the University of Birmingham*. 288. Nasr clarifies that when he discusses the term "science," he means a form of philosophy of the earth. He goes against the modern definitions of what constitutes science in addition to his criticism of its claim to be *the* science of the earth. Therefore, when Nasr talks of science, he means a philosophy of how to approach and define nature's qualities.

is a secular approach for defining nature because God's role in it is no longer considered a valid explanation of nature's characteristics. On Nasr's word, this secular science of nature developed, historically, from the Modern Era. According to Nasr, the general rule of this time, and times following it, became that only secular scientific knowledge of nature was the only type of knowledge of nature. Moreover, the view that secular scientific knowledge as the authoritative form of knowledge for understanding the earth developed a claim that religious views of nature were only based on sentiment and emotions.³²⁸ Consequently, he claims that when God's role was cut off from nature, humans no longer felt any responsibility for nature.³²⁹

The introduction of rationalism and humanism during the Enlightenment and so forth, is, for Nasr, the cause for the separation of God from nature, and continues, today, through an overreliance on modern science for defining nature's qualities. For instance, Nasr claims that, ever since the Renaissance, people of the West, that is, those who promote solely secular human knowledge for defining nature, have desacralized the whole cosmos in the name of the supremacy of man. Nasr believes that classical humanism has failed to positively develop the human person, and it is only by returning to the perennial spiritual traditions, that have so long been part of how humans define the world around them, will there be a change in the way humans perceive nature's significance.³³⁰

Nasr claims that the acceptance of modern science as the authoritative interpretive system of the world of the world is faulty, and has led to a belief in what is known as scientism.³³¹

³²⁸ Nasr and Chittick, *The Essential Seyyed Hossein Nasr*. 37.

³²⁹ Nasr, "The Islamic Perspective on the Environmental Crisis: Seyyed Hossein Nasr in Conversation with Muzaffar Iqbal." 80.

³³⁰ *The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*. 84

³³¹ Nasr is criticising Enlightenment rationalistic thought. He is not focussed on all types of rational thought but, rather, the attempt to take God out of rationalistic thinking.

According to Nasr, scientism is the development of a secular way of thinking about the natural environment. And, instead, he calls for a restructuring of a religious understanding of how humans define the qualities of nature. Western secular science, as Nasr calls it, is what has caused many human beings to forget the divine quality of nature. In his view, it has replaced the religious understanding of the order of nature that explains the processes of nature, and why it exists to function in accordance with God's plan for creation. Consequently, the lack of a religious understanding of the world has caused many humans to forget the place of God in creation. Humankind has, thus, for Nasr, disturbed the harmony between themselves, the earth, and God. They have forgotten this because they do not seriously consider the religious understanding of the order of nature to be a valid way of defining the characteristics of the natural world.³³²

Nasr's critique of modern science is set off by the relationship it has with metaphysical and religious stances regarding nature's qualities.³³³ Ibrahim Kalin offers a short exposition related to Nasr's criticism of modern science. He states that, for Nasr:

Modern science is an anomaly not simply because we have to pay a high price by destroying the natural environment, but because modern science operates within a seriously misguided framework in which everything is reduced to pure quantity and

³³² When Nasr discusses "Western" secular approaches to the environment, he is not focussing, strictly, on the problems that the West has with the environment. He acknowledges that many people of the East, if that is possible to break down the world into such dated spheres, need to, also, change the way they interact with nature. Nasr calls for a return of the Eastern sciences of nature because he claims that they have, historically, offered a positive view of nature and how humans relate to it. In these sciences, he finds teachings that all people can draw from. However, Nasr also claims that, in the West, as a largely Christian-based population, they can draw from perennial wisdom that Christianity has to offer. This demonstrate how diverse Nasr's approach to understanding the environmental crisis is because he claims that many religious traditions offer a nuanced view of human-earth relations. So, keep in mind that Nasr is not only critical of the West, but also of the East and the loss of religious understandings of the earth that have evolved. He is critical of modern secular conceptions of nature and calls for a return to traditional religious views of human-earth relations. It is modern views that are the issue here, not any particular part of the world. It is just that many Westerners have become reliant on modernity for every aspect of how they interpret the world around them. And, this view is spreading to all parts of the world.

³³³ Ibrahim Kalin, "The Sacred Versus the Secular," in *The Philosophy of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, ed. Randall E. Auxier Lewis Edwin Hahn, Lucian W. Stone, Jr. (Illinois: Open Court, 2001). 446.

by which modern man is made to think that all of his problems, from transportation to spiritual salvation, can ultimately be solved by further progress in science. The other cost of the scientific fallacy is to make spiritual realities appear redundant, or at least not relevant to the world-picture presented by modern science [and] it is the absence of such metaphysics that makes science modern or traditional.³³⁴

Nasr theorizes that there is not just one science for defining what the world is, how it evolved, and what it is comprised of. Instead, he promotes a type of science that acknowledges the various forms of realities in the world and does not reduce the planet to quantifiable or measurable characteristics.³³⁵ However, the authoritative nature of the rationalizing ideology that is scientism is so powerful because scientists and theorists who support it claim that it surpasses the religious views of human-earth relations that is based on myth and symbolism.³³⁶ According to Chittick, “scientism provides the de facto theology for the civil religion of modernity.”³³⁷ Nevertheless, Nasr’s criticism of scientism is based on the understanding that science alone cannot conceive of what it means to be human, and as long as there is the promotion of rationalistic scientific ways of defining nature, there is no possible way to unlock the secrets of the natural world.³³⁸ The reason Nasr argues that rationalist theories of nature cannot fulfill the requirements to recognise nature’s sacredness is because he claims that humans cannot follow the very paradigm that has caused the environmental crisis in the first place. In other words, one cannot find the answer to a solution in the very substance that has created the problem. In contrast, Nasr claims that humans need another paradigm where nature is not viewed as an “it,”

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Nasr, *The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*.22.

³³⁶ Ibid. 70.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Chittick, *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul : The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World*. 83.

not as a source of raw materials to be exploited by humanity, and not a material reality devoid of sacredness.³³⁹

According to Nasr, humanity needs to follow the paradigm of a *scientia sacra*, which means a sacred science that reveals the significance, symbolic and spiritual, of all types of knowledge that, ultimately, lead to the highest order of knowledge, which is God. Without applying this type of divine knowledge to the role of human sciences and other forms of earthly knowledge, Nasr states that, consequently, all types of knowledge become “sheer facts opaque and blind to truths of a higher order.”³⁴⁰ So, the attempt to explain or discover the truth in nature is not possible without acknowledging God’s place in it because of the limitations of human knowledge for attaining such awareness. Rumi’s influence here is on two levels.

First is Nasr’s general call for a return to a *scientia sacra*. Since he claims that modern scientific explanations of nature are insufficient for determining nature’s sacred quality, he looks, historically, to Sufi views of nature that include nature’s sacred significance in their approaches to defining the natural world. Rumi acknowledges nature’s sacred significance in his own interpretations of the characteristics of nature. Therefore, when Nasr calls for a return to traditional religious views of nature, he attempts to contrast this with the dominant secular views of the natural world. This, generally, expresses Nasr’s call for a view of nature based on religious views. Rumi’s philosophy of human-earth relations is one of these views, and offers an alternative interpretation of nature’s qualities in Nasr’s attempt to transform how humans interact with their natural environment.

³³⁹ Religion and the Environment: An Interview with Seyyed Hossein Nasr. 16.

³⁴⁰ Nasr, *The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*. 31.

Second is Nasr's differentiation between human knowledge and inner consciousness. The latter is a type of knowledge defended by Muslim sages, like Rumi, who argue that it comes from within a person, and cannot be found from knowledge learned from human faculties, or, by the belief that one can tease out the existence of God through reason or intense scientific examination. Keep in mind that when Nasr discusses teasing out evidence of God in nature, it is because he considers all of nature as an expression of God, and that everything in the world is interconnected because it stems from God. For Nasr, only by rediscovering the way humans, prior to the Renaissance and the Modern Era, apply this type of knowledge to the way they define nature's qualities, will there be a change in the way humans interact with nature.

Nasr maintains that in every person there is a kind of consciousness that has permanently resided within them. This is because this form of knowledge has no beginning or end, except with God. Moreover, because God is the beginning and end, this form of consciousness must have been created within human beings a priori.³⁴¹ This relates to Rumi's interpretation of the immutable archetype defined in the principles of *tawhid*. All thought and all created things were known to God before they were created. The metaphysical consciousness, or, vision, that Nasr promotes as an authentic expression of knowledge of how humans can understand God's place in the world is, essentially, why he calls for a return to Sufism. He says that many Sufis deny the possibility of intellect to know the divine quality of the world. It is, instead, a divine spark within a person that enables them to have knowledge of God and to remember that "the Sun of the Self shines at the center of man's being."³⁴² Nasr's advocacy of the inner vision so as to perceive the

³⁴¹ *The Garden of Truth : The Vision and Promise of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition*. 7.

³⁴² Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Reply to Chittick," in *The Philosophy of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, ed. Randall E. Auxier Lewis Edwin Hahn, Lucian W. Stone, Jr., The Library of Living Philosophers (Illinois: Open Court, 2001). 714.

Divine in nature demonstrates where Rumi's philosophy is evident. Specifically, Nasr explains the dichotomy of the two types of knowledge for understanding the earth, just as Rumi does.

Nasr theorizes that there are two types of knowledge, acquired and presential. The former is knowledge that is transmitted and part of intellectual philosophies. The latter type of knowledge is knowledge that comes from vision and experience.³⁴³ All types of knowledge, in Nasr's view, stand equally amongst each other, and are locked in a metaphysical hierarchy that stems from the Qur'an, which is by extension God, because it is God's word.³⁴⁴ Therefore, when Nasr discusses the importance of metaphysical, inner, knowledge for understanding that nature is an communicator of the Divine's existence, he holds it at the same level as other scientific rationalistic theories of the universe. There must be a coherence between the two in order to fully comprehend nature's sacred significance. If a person relies solely on rational knowledge they will not see the message in nature. But, the use of rational knowledge for refining a person's abilities is key to getting a person to a state that is appropriate for such awareness. Nasr's differentiation between the two types of knowledge exemplifies an influence from Rumi's philosophies because of his claim that there must be an integration of inner knowledge, or vision, for understanding nature's sacred quality if there is ever going to be a positive change in the way humans view the natural world. Nasr even uses one of Rumi's poems to exemplify the difference between relying on the inner intuition of a person rather than the human intellect. The former is a product of those who have become bewildered by God's Reality in the world:

Sell cleverness and buy bewilderment,

³⁴³ Glyn Ford, "Rebirth of Islamic Science," in *The Touch of Midas: Science, Values and Environment in Islam and the West*, ed. Ziauddin Sardar (Mapusa, Goa: The Other India Press, 1984). 35. It is my aim to discuss the two types of knowledge generally without having to delve deep into the characteristics that define each type of knowledge. So, for instance, when Nasr discusses acquired knowledge, I understand that there are categories within this knowledge itself, but, I aim to explain the two broad types of knowledge due to the space allotted for this thesis.

³⁴⁴ Ibid. 35-36.

For cleverness is conjecture and bewilderment victory.³⁴⁵

The type of internal spark that Nasr discusses cannot be learned from relying on human reason or the human senses. Although, he acknowledges a place for acquired knowledge in his diagnosis of the ecological crisis for creating a separation between those who rely on their human senses and do not attempt to refine their human faculties. Nasr says externally acquired intelligence, while insufficient for determining nature's sacredness, is beneficial for ridding one's self of carnal, egoistic, desires. In other words, Nasr argues that refining the human faculties will give humans the opportunity to get to a level where they no longer live their lives according to their carnal needs. It is a process of getting away from the lower self (*nafs*). This will help a person on their path to the state of awareness needed to perceive nature as an attribute of God. Self-knowledge, according to Nasr, "pierces the veils that limit our ordinary consciousness and ultimately leads to those higher states of consciousness..."³⁴⁶ This is in line with how Rumi promotes self-knowledge for getting a person to the state of awareness needed in order to be ready to pass through the door of wakefulness. Only when a person has enhanced their human capabilities will they be on the right path to attaining the inner consciousness needed to change the way they interact with nature.

What Nasr is critical of is relying on the human faculties, especially, giving into the carnal desires of the senses. He claims that the faculties of the soul occupy the highest realm of intellect, whilst the faculties of the human senses occupy the lowest.³⁴⁷ Nasr's claim that the

³⁴⁵ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Reply to Mehdi Aminrazavi," in *The Philosophy of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, ed. Randall E. Auxier Lewis Edwin Hahn, Lucian W. Stone, Jr., The Library of Living Philosophers (Illinois: Open Court, 2001). 570.

³⁴⁶ Nasr, *The Garden of Truth : The Vision and Practice of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition*. 7. Self-Knowledge is another term for human knowledge. It is not the divine type of knowledge but is an important aspect of getting a human to a state where they can refine who they are and come to learn nature's sacred significance.

³⁴⁷ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Studies: Essay on Law and Society, the Sciences, and Philosophy and Sufism* (Beruit: Systeco Press, 1967). 142.

human senses occupy the lowest realm shows another parallel in Rumi's methodologies about human-earth relations. Like Rumi, Nasr's diagnosis of the environmental crisis demonstrates that humans must get away from relying on sensual pleasures that facilitate the exploitation of nature and the overuse of it. When a person relies only on their human senses for interacting with the earth they seek to pleasure those senses. Bear in mind that the human sense are essential for contemplating nature's significance. If we did not have the ability to smell, hear or taste the gifts of nature, it would be difficult to be able to understand the quality and diversity that comes from God's creation. What Nasr argues is that humans need to control their senses, to contemplate and see nature for more than what it provides for us in our mortal state as consuming beings. The natural environment is, instead, a method for contemplating God's existence and to grasp an understanding of where nature and all of creation for that matter comes from.

Because Nasr promotes an all-inclusive view of the world, he understands that God is evident in all of creation. For this reason, he is critical of those who attempt to use human reason to know God by investigating nature. According to Nasr, one cannot know God through reason.³⁴⁸ For instance, a scientist who tries to find God through modern scientific conceptions of nature will not be able to because they are not applying a certain type of metaphysical knowledge about the universe seriously. This is essentially Nasr's problem with those who search to find God through human investigation. The thought that one can know God is false, and those who claim to have found God are mistaken.

To review, Nasr maintains that the awareness needed to understand nature's spiritual significance cannot be found strictly through secular sciences and the reliance on rationalist

³⁴⁸ Nasr, "Reply to Chittick."713.

scientism. Instead, there needs to be an acceptance of what metaphysical, internally intrinsic, self-awareness can offer to the way humans interact with nature. Nasr parallels Rumi's explication regarding the limitations of self-knowledge for defining the sacred quality of the natural environment. Furthermore, they both claim that by understanding that there is an internal knowledge established within human beings that is a priori and comes, solely, from God, will humans come to understand nature's spiritual significance as a self-disclosure of God. Nature as a self-disclosure of God is another theme within Nasr's diagnosis of the environmental crisis where Rumi likely influences his thought.

Nasr's argument to rediscover the sacred quality of nature evolves, initially, from the overall influence of Islamic thought, primarily, from the teachings of the Qur'an that demonstrates that nature is a sign (*aya*) of God's existence. In addition, Nasr supports the view of the Muslim contemplatives of nature who recognized this.³⁴⁹ He claims that when Muslim sages referred to the cosmic or ontological Qur'an they saw the letters of it upon the faces of all creation. They saw the phenomena of nature as an *aya* (sign) of God.³⁵⁰ This is because Islamic cosmologies, including Sufi cosmologies, view the cosmos as instilled with meaning and purpose.³⁵¹ He says that for many Sufis, Rumi included, creation is seen as myriads of reflections of theophanies (*tajalliyyat*) of God's Divine Names and Qualities in their varied combinations.³⁵² Moreover, the reason Nasr calls for a return to such views of nature is because they can aid in the rediscovery of nature as a means of recollection of Paradise, or, Heaven.³⁵³ Rumi's interpretation

³⁴⁹ Fazlun Khalid, "Islam and the Environment—Ethics and Practice an Assessment," *Religion Compass* 4, no. 11 (2010). 709.

³⁵⁰ Seyyed Hossein Nasr and MyiLibrary., *The Need for a Sacred Science*, (London: Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005), <http://www.myilibrary.com?id=17097>.

³⁵¹ Chittick, 87.

³⁵² Nasr, *Garden of Truth*, 44.

³⁵³ Nasr, *The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*. 118.

of *tawhid* is what has influenced Nasr's view that humans must understand that nature communicates the existence of God. The natural world, for Nasr, consists of sacred realities of the Divine. He explains this in his diagnosis of the environmental crisis:

[The religious view of nature] enables us to see the sacred in nature and therefore to treat it not only with respect but also as part of our greater self. It reminds us how precious each being created by God is and how great a sin to destroy wantonly any creature that by virtue of its existence bears the imprint of the Divine and is witness to the One who is our Origin and End...³⁵⁴

In Nasr's view, all of the natural processes and entities on the planet are symbols of a "higher degree of reality" that communicate a spiritual message for humanity as a revelation of God.³⁵⁵ Consequently, as a revelation of God, nature has a sacred quality. Although, Nasr claims that only God is Sacred, and that It manifests itself in all kinds of beings in the world. So, according to Nasr, God is the Sacred, and then there are objects in the world that are sacred because of their relation to God.³⁵⁶ We see this in an example from Nasr's poetry regarding God's place in creation:

Thy Beauty is in all creatures reflected here below,
In the face of a fair maiden and the flight of a flock of birds,
In the azure sky and the roaring sea,
In the mane of the mighty lion and the hues of the lovely sea urchin.
I hear the Beauty of Thy Voice in the siren song of the whale,
As well in the chant of the nightingale in the garden,
Hymning Thy Praise in her morning concert.
Above all I behold Thy Beauty in the sanctified soul of Thy true lovers,
Beholden to Thy Love, basking in Thy Radiance.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁴ *Religion & the Order of Nature : The 1994 Cadbury Lectures at the University of Birmingham*. 288-89.

³⁵⁵ *The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*. 21.

³⁵⁶ Nasr and Jahanbegloo, *In Search of the Sacred*
a Conversation with Seyyed Hossein Nasr on His Life and Thought. 203.

³⁵⁷ Nasr, *The pilgrimage of life and the wisdom of Rumi*, 23.

Nasr's interpretation of *tawhid* is a staple in his criticism of modern, secular, scientific definitions of the natural world, and the fragmented view of reality that it promotes.³⁵⁸ Like Rumi, Nasr differentiates between God's transcendent and immanent aspects so as to clarify that nature is not what he considers sacred. Nasr's exposition of nature's sacred quality reveals that he only worships God, but, because nature is an expression of God's existence, the natural environment has an element of sacredness and is, thus, a significant role player in communicating God's existence to humans. Nasr explains this by stating that there is often knowledge of Unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in Unity. Moreover, he upholds that many Sufis speak of this differentiation between unity and multiplicity.³⁵⁹ Nasr, being a Sufi, is in full agreement with this metaphysical teaching.³⁶⁰ Therefore, we see a striking similarity between Rumi's understanding of nature as a theophany of God. Also, both men explain how giving reverence to nature means giving reverence to God, and not nature itself. Although, often, this view is criticised because some critics claim that such Sufi views are pantheistic. However, Nasr clearly states this view is not pantheistic or idolatrous.³⁶¹ In contrast, his interpretation that nature has a sacred quality is only due to it being a product of God, whom is sacred. What Nasr wants is to demonstrate that nature has a purpose in life that is far beyond its use as a materialistic entity. So, when humans constantly destroy nature they are destroying a method for contemplating God's existence in the world. And, when humans destroy nature they are reducing the amount of sacred realities in the world.

³⁵⁸ Quadir, *Traditional Islamic Environmentalism: The Vision of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*. 30.

³⁵⁹ Reply to Archie J. Bahm, 582-3.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Quadir, *Traditional Islamic Environmentalism: The Vision of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*. 76.

Nasr's demarcation between God's immanent and transcendent aspects is a central aspect to his approach to the natural world as theophany.³⁶² Based on his understanding of *tawhid*, Nasr, in his diagnosis of the environmental crisis, recognizes that the natural environment communicates, to humans, the existence of God as attributes of the One who created it. He believes that there are hidden realities of God's existence which express themselves in all forms of creation. Even though they are unseen, Nasr considers them authentic expressions of the Divine's existence, and this expression is as real as the externality of the object itself. Nasr's understanding of *tawhid* demonstrates the influence that Rumi has had on his analysis of the ecological dilemma. When Nasr discusses nature as a theophany, and, similarly, makes it clear that what he is considering sacred is not nature itself but God, there is a correspondence between his and Rumi's interpretation of *tawhid*.³⁶³ Another consequent theme from Nasr's interpretation of *tawhid* is that nature has its own existential purpose in life, and that it strives to fulfill its journey to reunite with the One who created it.

The Qur'an emphasizes that everything was, and is, created by God and points to the One who has created it (Qur'an 22:16). Not only did God create everything in existence, the Qur'an states that everything praises God: "The seven heavens and the earth, and all beings therein, declare His glory: there is not a thing but celebrates His praise; and yet ye understand not how

³⁶² Ibid.76-77.

³⁶³ Lewis, *Rumi : Past and Present, East and West : The Life, Teaching and Poetry of Jal Al Al-Din Rumi*. 25. There is a famous Sufi, Al-Hallaj, who was executed for his claim that "I am the Truth." Many Muslims considered this a blasphemous statement because they did not understand al-Hallaj's interpretation of *tawhid*. Rumi defended al-Hallaj because he understood al-Hallaj's purpose for making this statement. Because God is in everything and a part of all created things, all things must then in some way be God. Therefore, when al-Hallaj stated that he was the Truth, he did this because he believed that he was part of God's creation, and that because God is the Truth, and God's creation is an extension of that Truth, then, all beings must be the Truth. Rumi was a profound defender of this understanding of *tawhid* he followed a similar interpretation that al-Hallaj followed. It is not pantheistic thinking but, rather, an interpretation of *tawhid* that understands God's place in every created being. Nasr also follows Rumi's elucidation of *tawhid* and the fact that God is present everything.

they declare His glory! Verily He is Oft-Forbear, Most Forgiving!” (17:44). Within Nasr’s diagnosis of the environmental crisis, he contends that a rediscovery of the sacred view of nature is possible if humanity can remember where it is nature evolves from and, eventually, strives to return.³⁶⁴ For Nasr, nature “bears the imprint of the Divine and is witness to the One who is our Origin and End...”³⁶⁵ He envisions that nature is not only created by God, but is on a journey back to the Divine as part of the *muslim* community.³⁶⁶ In Sufism, the human aim is seen as a quest to re-establish this primordial union with God.³⁶⁷ Nasr argues that this rediscovery of a sacred science of nature means to deal with the existence of natural objects in relation to God and their nexus to higher levels of existence leading to the Divine Origin of all things.³⁶⁸ In other words, Nasr understands that not only is everything interrelated and an expression of divine reality, but, because God created all things, everything aims to re-establish this lost connection, a connection which he sees as part of the crisis in humanity. Like Nasr, Rumi understands the order of nature and the fact that everything strives to be in union with God. For instance, Rumi provides the reader with an example of a reed being ripped from the reed-bed and states that “anyone pulled from the source longs to go back.”³⁶⁹ The notion that everything strives to become in union with God is, essentially, how Nasr and Rumi’s approach the relationship that nature has with God, as well as humans.

Nasr states that nature expresses the cosmic and meta-cosmic reality of the truth of Islam because, although humans may waver in their faith, nature continues to be in perfect surrender to

³⁶⁴ Nasr, *Religion & the Order of Nature : The 1994 Cadbury Lectures at the University of Birmingham*. 288.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 288-89.

³⁶⁶ *The Garden of Truth : The Vision and Practice of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition*. 6.

³⁶⁷ Richard C. Foltz, “Islam,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, ed. Roger Gottlieb, 210.

³⁶⁸ Nasr, *Religion & the Order of Nature : The 1994 Cadbury Lectures at the University of Birmingham*. 287.

³⁶⁹ Jalāl al-Dāin and Barks, *The Essential Rumi*. 18. I extracted just one line from Rumi’s poem “The Reed Flute’s Song,” but there is majority of other statements I can pull out of Rumi’s poetry.

God through its state as *muslim*.³⁷⁰ Since all levels of reality belong to God, all creatures praise God simply by their existence.³⁷¹ Here, there is a parallel understanding between Nasr and Rumi's explication of nature as *muslim*, and that it strives, as a worshipper of God, to return to the Divine. Unity with God is a prominent aspect in the way Nasr approaches many aspects of life. He even discusses how union with God is, in a way, the only method to know God. Although, Nasr maintains that knowing God is impossible but the Sufi should, instead, strive to become one with God. The goal, for certain Sufis, is a unitive state with God. It is not about striving to know God but, rather, becoming one with God. For instance, Nasr states:

To participate in a unitive state which transcends the dichotomy of knower and known beyond all mental and even intelligible categories. He cannot comprehend God in Himself, since God is infinite and to comprehend means literally to encompass; therefore how can one encompass that which is infinite? But one can become immersed in that ocean of Light on the condition of becoming no one, by becoming totally transparent before God within or the inner Self which knowing Itself knows all things.³⁷²

Becoming one with God is, for Nasr, the goal of all creation. The return to God is what all of nature is on the path to doing. And, while some humans may fall short of fulfilling the end of this journey, nature does not. Nature is a guide for humans to contemplate that all of creation returns to the One who is the Source and End of all life. In Nasr's diagnosis of the environmental crisis he makes it clear that one of the issues that facilitates the constant destruction of our natural resources is the fact that some humans do not understand the significance of nature, and that it has its own existential purpose. Therefore, by returning to certain Sufi views of human-earth relations, like Rumi's, one sees that the natural has a purpose beyond human utilization. It

³⁷⁰ Nasr, *The Cosmos and the Natural Order*, 349.

³⁷¹ Nasr, *The Cosmos and the Natural Order*, in *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations*, 347.

³⁷² Nasr, "Reply to Chittick." 714.

is this call for a return to views, such as Rumi's, that Nasr contends will offer a nuanced approach to how humans interact with nature.

The final theme regarding Rumi's possible influences in Nasr's diagnosis of the environmental crisis relates to Nasr's call for a rediscovery of the ultimate human who encompasses all of the necessary qualities of a human being so as to, collectively, live their life according to the principles of *tawhid*, accept the limitations of human knowledge for understanding nature's sacredness, and who, continually, contemplate nature's spiritual significance. All in all, the ultimate being, for Nasr, is the human who becomes the prototype of all beings because he sees, in them, all of these qualities.

In his elucidation of the contemporary environmental situation, Nasr advocates that, in order to affect change in the way humans interact with their environment, there must be a rebirth of the ultimate human who guards the natural world as the *khalif* (maintainer, custodian) over the earth, and who balances the harmony between heaven and earth. The Qur'an states that humans have been made a *khalifah* (steward) by God:

It is He Who hath made you (His) agents, inheritors of the earth: He hath raised you in ranks, some above others: that He may try you in the gifts He hath given you: for thy Lord is quick in punishment: yet He is indeed Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful (6:165).

The Arabic word *khalifah* has been variously translated into English to mean successor, vicegerent, deputy, inheritor or trustee.³⁷³ Additionally, the verbal root, *khalaf*, means he came after, followed, succeeded to, and holds this position despite possibly being at variance with, and offending against, violating or breaking a rule, command, or promise. Thus, the *khalifah* is

³⁷³ Abd Abd al-Hamid, "Exploring the Islamic Environmental Ethics," in *Islam and the Environment*, ed. A.R Agwan (New Delhi: Institute of Objective Studies, 1997). 40.

someone who inherits a position of power, a trust, and who must hold it responsibly and in harmony with its Bestower (Allah).³⁷⁴ The term *khalifah*, both singular and plural, is mentioned nine times in the Qur'an, and seven of them are coupled with the words *fi-al-ardh* (on this earth, on this planet). Also, in each case it refers to a person, people or humankind, to whom God has entrusted part of his power on earth. Thus, like Adam, all humankind was appointed *khalifah* and has inherited that power and responsibility vis-à-vis the planet and all its life forms, because it was neither the heavens, the earth, nor the mountains that accepted the trust of God, but that of humankind (Qur'an 33:72).³⁷⁵

Nasr claims that the rebirth of humans as guardians over nature requires the death of the image of man and nature that has developed from modernism and its subsequent developments, such as the previously discussed explanation of Nasr's criticism of the overreliance on modern science that is responsible for supporting a secular view of nature. For Nasr, the moment when nature became a secularized mass, it was no longer sacred. Furthermore, not only did nature become devoid of any sacred quality, so did humans. Nasr says that when the concept of nature changed to a secularized mass, primarily throughout the Modern Period, the Promethean human was born. Promethean is the profane human who, in Saltzman's explanation of Nasr's interpretation of the promethean being, "is viewed as the robber of heavenly fire, a rebel against the Divine, who has forgotten his real mission. He may secretly long for the Eternal, but he is filled with profane science and excessive materialism."³⁷⁶ This being is completely separate from nature because they forgot their role in protecting and balancing the harmony of the natural

³⁷⁴ Ibid. 41.

³⁷⁵ Ibid. 41.

³⁷⁶ Judy D. Saltzman, "The Concept of Spiritual Knowledge in the Philosophy of Seyyed Hossein Nasr," in *The Philosophy of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, ed. Lucian W. Stone Randall E. Auxier Lewis Edwin Hahn, Jr., The Library of Living Philosophers (Illinois: Open Court, 2001). 594.

world.³⁷⁷ According to Nasr, prior to the development of the promethean human, humankind was the center of all creation. Although, he states that this centrality was not due to the anthropomorphic qualities of its being but, rather, to the theomorphic ones.³⁷⁸ In other words, humanity's place in creation was linked to their relationship with God.

Nasr's call for a rediscovery of the ultimate human does not imply a reinvention of a new type of human but, rather, the "resurfacing of the true [human], the pontifical [being] whose reality we still bear within ourselves."³⁷⁹ This is, essentially, why Nasr calls for a return to traditional Sufi cosmologies of human-earth relations. In them he sees the Sufi striving to fulfill this role as the ultimate human.³⁸⁰ Their connection with God and their relationship with nature is a prototypical way of interacting with the cosmos. In contrast to the Promethean being, the Pontifex, or, Pontifical human has not forgotten its role as the vicegerent of God (*khalifat Allah*). According to Nasr, this human lives life knowing the origin and end of where they come from. They are not separated from God.³⁸¹ Certain Sufis, especially Rumi, were these types of universal humans, or, at least, were striving to become them. Their focus on God's place in the world was significant in the way they approached life.

Nasr envisions humans as the channel of grace for nature, and if they contemplate nature's sacred significance, nature becomes illuminated with the Light that illuminates all things.³⁸² It is ultimate humans who contemplate nature's sacred significance. If there were no

³⁷⁷ Nasr, "The Islamic Perspective on the Environmental Crisis: Seyyed Hossein Nasr in Conversation with Muzaffar Iqbal." 79.

³⁷⁸ *The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*. 68.

³⁷⁹ *Religion & the Order of Nature : The 1994 Cadbury Lectures at the University of Birmingham*. 288.

³⁸⁰ It is also possible that Nasr has been highly influenced by the work of Nietzsche and the Perfect Being. Nietzsche supported the philosophy of the *Übermensch* (Superhuman) which supports new moral values for humanity.

³⁸¹ *Ibid*, 594.

³⁸² Nasr, *The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*. 96.

more contemplatives of nature, nature would become deprived of this reality. The natural world would be devoid of the Light that shines within it.³⁸³ Nasr claims that because of the connection between humanity and nature, the inner state of human beings is reflected in the external order. The inner state of humans is also the inner state of nature because all of the significant internal spiritual reality of a person is the same. It is one Reality who is God. So, the Light that shines in humans shines in nature as well. This interpretation of the macrocosm and microcosm dichotomy of the human being is similar to Rumi's. Humanity is both the macrocosm and microcosm of the universe. The internal aspect of humankind's being is the macrocosm, and it is the inner Reality that all things share. Also, the microcosm is the external order of humanity's being. It is the outer shell of a human. Nasr sees the inner state of human beings as the inner state of nature. So, when humans have turned away toward darkness and chaotic ways, nature also turns to disequilibrium and disorder.³⁸⁴ According to Nasr, "man sees in nature what he is himself and penetrates into the inner meaning of nature only on the condition of being able to delve into the inner depths of his being."³⁸⁵

According to Nasr, the ultimate human, in Sufism, is a miniature of Reality, the microcosm that reflects all the perfect attributes of the macrocosm. So, just as the Prophet was the creative principle of the Universe, the ultimate human was the cause of the Universe. Furthermore, as the focal point for God's will to be known, the perfect human is the reason the world was made.³⁸⁶ Although, because of humanity's unique position in creation, they have the choice of whether or not they will fulfill their role in balancing the harmony between them,

³⁸³ Ibid. 96.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶³⁸⁶ A. J. Arberry, *Sufism, an Account of the Mystics of Islam*, Ethical and Religious Classics of East and West (London: Allen & Unwin, 1950). 101.

nature and God. This is due to the fact that, in Nasr's interpretation, humankind is the last revelation of God, hence, the last manifested order is the most important of all created orders that comes from God. This is parallel with Rumi's own interpretation as well.

Rumi's notion of the universal human resembles Nasr's vision that the harmony of the natural world depends on humanity's relationship with it. When humans live according to their lower selves and give into superficialities, they study nature as something to be dominated and exploited.³⁸⁷ This view is the result of modern scientific, secular, conceptions of nature. Conversely, for Nasr, humans who look within themselves, toward their inner Light, see nature as a symbol of a Reality that points beyond itself.³⁸⁸ The inner intuition that comes only from religious views of nature is how, for Nasr, the natural environment will be given back its sacred quality. Furthermore, only when humans follow the mystical path to acknowledging God's place in creation will they see the path that all creation is on. It is a journey that leads from the relative to the Absolute. The relative is, in this context, nature's existence as a theophany. It is relative because everything is relative in relation to the Absolute, which is, God. This is because God created everything. Therefore, all existence relates to God. This is also evident in Nasr's view of *tawhid*. The relative is a sign of the Absolute. Therefore, when humans enter the mystical ways of interacting with the natural environment they understand that all paths lead to God.³⁸⁹ Nasr utilizes Rumi's poetry to demonstrate how all paths, eventually, lead to God:

The moment thou to this low world wast given,
A ladder stood whereby thou mightiest aspire.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁷ Nasr, *The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*. 97.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁹ *Sufi Essays*. 30.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

For Nasr, the contemplative of nature sees the Truth in nature.³⁹¹ As they strive to become in union with God, all of their divisions of knowledge develop and becomes perfect. Once in union with God, all of this becomes a reality in the sense that they have reached the ultimate Reality. There are no imperfections in this type of human, and his contradictions and carnal reliance has disappeared “like a drop of water in the infinite ocean of Being.”³⁹²

Nasr also discusses how this ultimate human is the central link in the great chain of being that begins with the lowest creature of the mineral kingdom all the way to the highest order of being.³⁹³ This interpretation corresponds to Rumi’s notion of how human play a significant role in the process of evolution toward the highest state of being. Nasr quotes Rumi here to demonstrate his point:

I died as a mineral and became a plant,
I died as plant and rose to animal,
I died as animal and I was a Man.
Why should I fear? When was I less by dying?
Yet once more I shall die as Man, to soar
With Angels blest; but even from angelhood
I must pass on: all except God doth perish.
When I have sacrificed my angel-soul,
I shall become what no mind e’er conceived.
Oh, let me not exist! For Non-existence
Proclaims in organ tones: To Him we shall return.³⁹⁴

Like Rumi, Nasr envisions humans playing a significant part in how nature functions harmoniously. He says that humans occupy a central role with respect to other creatures. Yet, only humans can acquire gnosis and sanctity, and achieve perfection. They act as a channel of Divine Grace for all other creatures. As a creature passes through the stages of evolution they

³⁹¹ Nasr, *Islamic Studies: Essay on Law and Society, the Sciences, and Philosophy and Sufism*. 142.

³⁹² *Ibid.*

³⁹³ *Ibid.* 144.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

develop the ability to become a higher being. Thus, they have the ability to reach the ultimate goal in life, which is, union with God. What this means for Nasr's diagnosis of the environmental crisis is that he attempts to rediscover the ultimate human within all humans. This is because, unlike many people who corrupt the earth and dominate it, the contemplative, like Rumi, finds nature as a sanctuary.³⁹⁵ Moreover, the traveller on the path in his journey finds forms in nature that symbolize his inner being as his inner being reflects the Sacred in nature.³⁹⁶

According to Nasr, the shift from the current view of the natural world as an inferior object to be dominated requires a change in the character of human beings. As a result of an overreliance on rationalistic human knowledge the disconnection between humans and God, has, for Nasr, caused humanity's inability to "read the signatures of God on the face of things."³⁹⁷ Consequently, the natural world has lost its sacred aspect as a theophany of the Divine. Also, the natural world has been exploited and dominated because humankind has forgotten where nature stems from, and to which it shall return. Nasr envisions that all of creation is considered part of a *muslim* community. Moreover, nature, unlike humans, is a perfect example of a *muslim being* because it does not waver in its focus on God. So, because human beings have become separated from God, unlike nature, they have forgotten where it is nature stems from, as well as their role to protect the natural environment's well-being. Therefore, for Nasr, there must be a rediscovery of the religious views of nature that incorporate such views of human-earth relations. The impact that Sufism, specifically, Rumi's Sufi views, has had on Nasr's life has influenced the way he diagnoses the environmental crisis.

³⁹⁵ Ibid. 147.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ *Religion & the Order of Nature : The 1994 Cadbury Lectures at the University of Birmingham*. 289.

Nasr has a background in mathematics, physics, science, various methods of philosophy and comparative religion. Yet, Sufism has been the inspiration for the development of his position regarding the role of metaphysical knowledge over rationalistic knowledge for understanding the world.³⁹⁸ Moreover, he follows Sufi doctrines that are based on knowledge that incorporate a type of apriori intuition of Illumination.³⁹⁹ It is Rumi's advocacy of this type of inner knowledge for understanding human-earth relations that resonates in Nasr's diagnosis of the environmental crisis. Nasr's diagnosis also exemplifies the influence that Rumi has on his interpretation of *tawhid* and how nature not only has qualities of the Sacred, but is on a journey back to the One who created it. This is because all of creation is part of the *muslim* community.

Nasr looks to individuals, like Sufi philosophers and Gnostics, who he thought discovered the truth about the soul and human existence. This is because they viewed the natural world as alive and holy.⁴⁰⁰ Consequently, Nasr claims that only a contemplative of nature can attain the type of knowledge to understand God's place in the world, which will enable nature to aid in their spiritual life as a prototype of what it is to be *muslim*.⁴⁰¹ A contemplative of nature, such as Rumi, has acquired the knowledge to understand nature's significance as a sacred reality of the One who created it, and to which it will return. These contemplatives are on a journey to reunite with God, and are striving to become the ultimate humans who protect nature and maintain the harmony between God, humans, and nature. Conversely, Nasr is critical of humans who rely exclusively on human knowledge for defining nature. They also continue to facilitate a view that it must be dominated and exploited. This is because they operate according to their

³⁹⁸ Saltzman, "The Concept of Spiritual Knowledge in the Philosophy of Seyyed Hossein Nasr." 590-91.

³⁹⁹ Ibid. 593.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid. 592.

⁴⁰¹ Nasr, *Islamic Spirituality : Foundations*. 349.

carnal desires and treat nature as a means to their own ends, especially, economic ones.

However, Nasr contends that there can be a rebirth of human beings as the ultimate beings.

These ultimate humans not only see the divine quality in nature, but, they understand the place of human knowledge in relation to God's place in it. They act as the sustainers and protectors of the balance between nature, themselves, and God. With this in mind, Nasr argues that a rebirth of the ultimate human will aid in the reconnection between humans, the earth, and God. Consequently, this means that the disharmony between the three can be repaired.

Conclusion

This thesis explores the possible Sufi influences of thirteenth century Sufi mystic Jalal al-Din Rumi's thought regarding the natural environment's characteristics, and humankind's relationship to it, in contemporary Muslim scholar Seyyed Hossein Nasr's diagnosis of the environmental crisis. Nasr claims that the dilemma is an eco-theological crisis in the hearts and souls of human beings as a result of their disconnection with God. This thesis focusses, explicitly, on certain Qur'anic themes from Rumi's thought that resonate in Nasr's philosophy that is directed toward eco-theology and the way humans can interact with nature on a more respectful and conservationist level. According to my research, there are four general themes from Rumi's philosophy that present themselves in Nasr's thought, and possibly influence his diagnosis of the environmental crisis. First, they follow similar Sufi interpretations of *tawhid* (unity/oneness of God) in their understanding that nature is a sign (*aya*) of God's existence. Second, there is a common Sufi interpretation of the concept of *tawhid*, and that all of creation has its own existential purpose which leads to a union with God. Third, they share a commonality when they discuss the concept of the ultimate human and the importance of striving to become this being. It is this person that functions as the *khalif* (sustainer, custodian) of the earth, and maintains the harmony between humans, God, and nature. Fourth, there is a parallel criticism of relying on human knowledge and the human senses so as to define nature's sacred quality. They uphold that a dichotomy exists between what human knowledge has to offer to the study of nature and God, and the importance of looking toward the inner awareness that is inherent in all humans. The latter is the only way for a human to comprehend God's existence in nature. Although, both men claim that human knowledge is beneficial for ridding one of their

carnal desires, which are the product of relying on the human senses. However, only the internal consciousness of a Sufi on the path to God is plausible for the understanding that nature is a theophany. This thesis, thus, aimed to present the possible influence from these themes, within Rumi's thought, in Nasr's Sufi diagnosis of the environmental crisis. In addition, in my view, this thesis offers a nuanced approach to how people can, perhaps, view nature differently in light of the current environmental problems of the planet and the devastation that certain humans continue to generate upon it.

I chose to approach this study with a genealogical method, and I follow Michael Foucault's definition of genealogy as a methodological avenue for scholarly writing. Genealogy must, in the words of Foucault, disturb what was previously considered immobile and fragment what was thought to be a unified and concrete truth.⁴⁰² Moreover, he maintains that genealogy emphasizes the sometimes discontinuous and chaotic becoming of the present.⁴⁰³ When one manages their study, based on the genealogical method, they must keep in mind that the formation of one's thought, or, the evolution of terms and philosophies, does not occur in a linear fashion. Rather, there are incursions and fragments of inspiration that create the finalization of an idea. It is not a step to step development. And, by following Foucault's rendition of what genealogy means in terms of methodology, Rumi's influences in Nasr's life are not linear in the sense that they do not occur sequentially and in order. There are many fragments of influence that come from Rumi, and these shape Nasr's life and understanding of the environmental crisis. There are various effects from Rumi's thought that have entered into the life of Nasr especially the way he interprets the environmental crisis.

⁴⁰² Foucault and Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader*. 82.

⁴⁰³ William A. "Genealogy as Methodology in the Philosophy of Michel Foucault, 2005 Paper. 1.

Nasr's appeal for the importance of returning to religious views of nature is prominent in many scholarly approaches to environmental ethics, because they view the relationship between religion and ecology as undying. Nasr claims that having a religious input on how environmental ethics approach the protection, conservation, and preservation of the natural environment is significant. He has studied the natural world from both secular and religious perspectives. Although, he does not envision the problems concerning the environment as separate instances that have come from separate causes. The cause, for Nasr, is the mindset of human beings, and how we connect with nature on a spiritual level. He argues that there is no longer a spiritual view of nature because the religious views of the natural world have been taken over by modern secular conceptions of nature's characteristics, and its significance to humans. Generally, Nasr calls for a return to the religious view of nature so as to offer an alternative to the current view of nature as spiritually empty and devoid of any sacred characteristics. His notion is based on the idea that if humans reconnect with the Creator, their perspective of nature's quality could change their way of thinking about nature as, strictly, an entity to be dominated and over-utilized. Specifically, I contend that there are possible influences from Rumi's thought regarding nature and human relationships to it that resonate in Nasr's Sufi diagnosis of the environmental crisis as an eco-theological crisis in the hearts and minds of many who have forgotten their inherent connection with nature, and with the Creator. From the research I have gathered from both of these men, I have written this thesis to offer a nuanced approach to the current field of eco-theological studies and the way humans can, perhaps, envision an alternative way of interacting

with the nature in a more considerate manner.⁴⁰⁴ To be brief, this thesis is just one alternate way for looking at environmental ethics in a new light.

⁴⁰⁴ The primary reason I wanted to write this thesis and, hopefully, continue into a larger investigation into this topic has to do with the affiliations I have had with companies and organizations that wantonly destroy the natural environment for the pursuit of economic advancement. I have worked in the oilfields of northern Alberta, as well as areas including massive gravel and excavation pits. When I was immersed in this lifestyle, it did not take long for me to understand that there was an uncompromising mindset that economic development and resource extraction supersedes the importance of conserving the natural environment. The experiences I have had in these areas, and the family members who are, and were, associated with many of these types of corporations, has given me the opportunity to know, firsthand, what some people can do to the natural world for the sake of money and resources. This is why I was so attracted to Nasr's approach to the environmental crisis. It spoke to me on a personal level because I have lived the experience of having to work in these places, and Nasr's explication of the majority of the environmental problems of the planet being related to the pursuit of economic development, as a result of the greedy and selfish mentality of many elite and powerful corporations, caught my attention. Nasr's philosophies, in addition to learning to understand Rumi's poetry on a more metaphysical level, has led me to develop a new perspective of the intricacies of nature, and both men have given me a new inspiration for the way I should engage with the natural environment.

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