
KRISHNAMURTI'S ENVIRONMENTALIST CRITIQUE OF TRADITIONAL RELIGION A CRITICAL APPRAISAL FROM PERENNIALIST PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Linking theological discourse to environmentalist agenda in the (post)modern age that contests the traditional notion of God appears quite problematic in modern secularist scientific framework. The absence of traditional idea of God in religions like Buddhism and Taoism also limits the relevance of the expression Eco-theology in overcoming environmental crisis. So we need to shift to metaphysical plane understood in the perennialist traditionalist sense to ground the discourse of Theology. In Metaphysics the term God is replaced by Absolute or (suprapersonal) Reality discernible in all traditional religions, Semitic and non-Semitic according to the perennialists. Dualistic exoteric theology can't be easily appropriated in environmentalist terms and stands always in need of drastic reconstruction or rereading for environmentalist purpose. Esoteric dimension of different religions on which the perennialist authors hinge their metaphysical interpretation of religion is generally understood to be ecocentric. The host of problems in the debate begun by Lyn White on ecological appropriation of religion is avoided by taking the integral view of religions in the perennialist fashion that appropriates esoteric dimension and takes a symbolic view of Theology. We need to reread in metaphysical terms such terms as God, creation, man and salvation for ecocentric appropriation of them. Theology is a crude and inexact translation of the truths of traditional Metaphysics. So Ecotheology should be reread as Ecometaphysics for speaking coherently and relevantly to an audience that is post-theological. One may still retain theological framework but with the crucial qualification that Theology is rightly contextualized from a transtheistic metaphysical perspective. The perennialist framework encompasses ecological wisdom of not only all traditional religions but also of archaic wisdom traditions.

Keywords: environmentalism, Eco-theology, Eco-metaphysics, Krishnamurti, Perennialist

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1. Introduction

Environmental problems have been ultimately linked to underlying worldviews. The question of man's attitude towards nature has been a religious question par excellence. Ecology is a field where religious and scientific approaches overlap and interpenetrate each other's boundaries. All religions and mysticism have always taken a specific position vis-à-vis Nature and modern West too has taken a specific position as implied by modernist humanist scientific ideological framework vis-à-vis Nature. Is really a sound way of resolving environmental crisis possible within the framework of modern Western *Weltanschauung*? Many have answered this question in the negative. But do traditional religion and mysticism, as usually understood, come to our rescue? J. Krishnamurti, one of the most important Indian religious thinkers of 20th century, quite unexpectedly answers this question in the negative. But he is also critical of modern Western attitude towards Nature. This paper analyzes his critique of traditional religious approach towards nature that has a significant bearing on their perspective on Ecology. The philosophical and theological assumptions that dictate any tradition's attitude vis-à-vis Nature or the realm of Manifestation have direct link with its attitude to environmental problems. We have selected a representative synopsis of his views by one of his important interpreter and commentator (Woodehouse) for our critical appraisal as Krishnamurti has not systematically dealt with the question of environmentalism vis-à-vis religion in any of his writings. However, the aspects of his thought that have a bearing on environmental issues (especially the philosophical and theological dimensions of environmentalist project) do need a serious reckoning from environmentalist point of view on account of his immense following and influence worldwide This study is also warranted because this dissident viewpoint has been marginalized in various and immense mass of writings that interpret Indian and Eastern religio-philosophical traditions in environmentalist terms.

Every individual is conscious of himself as a living unit, encompassed on all sides by a vast enveloping Scheme Of Manifestation, which in turn he feels to be dependent upon an ultimate Reality beyond it which explains the meaning of Manifestation, "An all embracing spiritual Truth", as Woodehouse notes "would give the organic synthesis of Man, Nature and Reality and explain Nature in terms of the Ultimate Reality manifesting in and through Nature and it would explain Man in terms of Nature herself by relating him, as part of Nature, to significance of Nature's own life. And in this way it would find a home for Man in Nature. She would become his Mother not a stranger and the very process by which her life was being worked out would be the processes of his own spiritual realization. For such a genuine Nature philosophy everything poetical and mystical in man has always yearned. Stronger than any pride of aloofness of exile within Nature's kingdom has always been the call of the Great Mother. Not in spite of, not outside of Manifestation, but within and because of it, must be come into his spiritual heritage." [1]

Now West has miserably failed to help man towards this desired goal. Copernican Revolution leads straight way to Russell's 'unyielding despair' [2]. Promethean and Faustian spirit is always at war with Reality. Man's alienation from Manifestation has resulted ultimately in his self alienation. Sartre, Camus and Becket are logical culmination of this metaphysical revolt, Copernican revolution and Neo-Darwinist philosophy of Nature. That modern ecological crisis can be attributed to modern western's assumptions about nature and man's relation to it is convincingly argued by many traditionalist perennialist authors and many other religious and nonreligious critiques of modern western scientific and philosophical tradition. But the question is how far have the religious and spiritual teachings of the past helped him towards his desired goal?

2. Krishnamurti's ecocentric critique of religion

Woodhouse, explaining Krishnamurti's teachings in this respect, writes "Without exception, they have divorced him from Nature, because they could not (or did not) translate the working of Reality, in and through Nature, into any terms which seemed applicable to the problem of Man." [1, p. 105] They have all sought to relate Man directly to the Ultimate Reality, leaving him fundamentally unrelated, or only negatively related, to the intervening scheme of Manifestation "one and all, they have preached Man's spiritual realization as something to be achieved in opposition to, or outside Nature. They have taught mankind to look for the true life, not to the manifested order of things, but to the primal Reality outside and beyond Manifestation.... What should have been an organic Truth, descending through Nature to Man, has been short circuited." [1, p. 105] Nature plays no role in man's salvation or nirvana, he does not receive "the gifts of the Spirit from the hands of the Great Mother. He is told to seek them from Reality direct." [1, p. 105] Manifestation has been made into an unhappy thing. Nature has been an enemy and not a friend, destroying the organic continuity between Reality, Nature and Man. Ecofriendly attitude could hardly be nurtured in this view. All accepted religions have started from the assumption, according to Krishnamurti that life in form and matter is, fundamentally, an imprisonment, that Manifestation is a burden and preach self realization in terms of neutralization or escape. He can either neutralize the burden by setting up some active principle within him, strong enough to prevent him feeling its weight, or he can throw it off and break free from it altogether. Escapist route says, "Turn your backs on whole order of Manifestation and seek your fulfilment in the realm of pure unmanifested Being." [1, p. 106] Wodehouse asserts that the feeling of inherent burdensomeness of life in form and matter has been, throughout the ages, the keynote of the world's spiritual life. At the root of that life has been a profound pessimism about the This, the Here and the Now and focus on the That, There and the Hereafter [1, p. 107]. Even mysticism and occultism are said to "reject Nature or the Natural order, and see the fulfilment of life outside it. Both ... are active protests against

things as they are” [1, p. 108]. Now argues Woodehouse, that Krishnamurti has done the needed correction and restored Manifestation to its proper place in the trinity of Man, Manifestation and Reality. According to Krishnamurti, Ultimate Reality is dynamic. For the formula of Pure Being, he substitutes the formula of Pure Creation. Life as Creation abolishes the whole burden theory of manifestation – cease to regard form and matter simply as ‘things’ to be carried by the manifesting Life and at once we have a total revaluation of the Universe. What seemed to be limitations now become essential conditions of release. Perfection is of the particular in Krishnamurti’s universe. This life is absolute, pure and free. Nature is the Reality. ‘Naturalness’ and perfection are synonymous. Universe is purposeless, relationless, discrete and having no further meaning for life than that of simple manifestation. Life just is [1, p. 124].

Now we analyze Krishnamurti’s critique of traditional religions and mysticism and its implications for ecological thought. Resurgence of traditional religious thought vis-à-vis present environmental crisis and trenchant critique of enlightenment project or modern scientific *Weltanschauung* (especially its relation to Nature) from perennialist religious or mystical point of view will need to be approached in a different light if Krishnamurti is correct. High sounding claims of religion vis-à-vis its ecofriendly premises against Western or modern scientific antienvironmental implications would be vulnerable to serious and destructive critique. Ecofriendly nature of Krishnamurti’s own thought will also be explored.

Krishnamurti is right in arguing for importance of Manifestation vis-à-vis its role as vehicle of Reality. Burden theory too is rightly rejected. Burden theory is attributed by Krishnamurti to all traditional religions according to which the world of manifestation is a burden and needs to be bypassed/escaped from in order to achieve salvation. He has repeated this theme in many lectures without bothering to examine the evidence for the view from primary sources. Environmental crisis can not be resolved through a perspective which alienates man from Nature, which bypasses Nature to reach Ultimate Reality, which turns its back upon the realm of Manifestation. Stratagems of escape and neutralization are rightly criticized. Belief in organic and sacred character of Nature must be the first premises of any environmentalist philosophy or religion. Seeing God in and through Nature and Man is a must for any approach to qualify as properly environmentalist. If present environmental crisis is attributable to hostile or ‘rapist’ and antireligious attitude of modern science towards Nature as argued from so many quarters (and not only religious quarters) or to anthropocentric modernist humanist thesis which privileges Man at the cost of Nature and also exiles Man from Nature and sees him as the accidental product of blind natural forces with no existential and organic relationship with Nature and Ultimate Reality, in sum man’s turning away from traditional religious picture of the world, Krishnamurti’s critique of religions could be used against this usual diagnosis of cause of environmental crisis. If divorce of Science from values is behind many of our current problems

including the environmental problems and values have been always associated with religions (and its is mainly from religious quarters that value based critique of modern science and its relation to Nature has come), this thesis will also be problematized. If resacralization of Nature through return to Eastern pantheistic spirit is the only solution to environmental problems as Toynbee and many others have argued [3], Krishnamurti's rejection of past mystical and spiritual heritage which he accuses of ignoring, libelling or neutralizing Nature, would seem to problematize this eastern or mystical solution to environmental crises. If religions have so far been unable to understand the true relation between Man, Nature and Reality, as Krishnamurti says, modern man can not turn to them for any guidance. West has officially excluded the third and most important part of this trinity of Man, Nature and Reality from its Science, focussing primarily on Man and subordinating Holy Ghost or Nature as the intermediary realm to him and thus it refuses to honour Krishnamurti's formulation of this trinity so neither the West nor the East, neither exoteric religion nor esoteric religion or mysticism could be of any great help in dealing with the great question of Man's relationship to Nature and ultimate Reality which forms the background or basis of any proposed solution to environmental crisis, according to Krishnamurti. Krishnamurti's solution, too, could not be seriously taken in this context as an alternative to above mentioned approaches because it seems to contain, on rigorous analysis nothing new and it can not help us to in deciding about concrete issues – it being too vague and indifferent to values in the usual sense of the term, and also being very simplistic and even self contradictory, as we will be showing latter.

Our point is that Krishnamurti is right in formulating the problem and in proposing broad outline of approaching it, but he misdiagnoses or misinterprets traditional religious and mystical answer to the problem. He wrongly accuses all religions of alienating man from nature. His generalizations are simply false. He redefines rather distorts traditional religious position for which he has little warrant. His own solution has already been appropriated by religions. He identifies religion with some misreading of it by certain theologians and mystics which can not be taken as representative. He has very narrow conception of Manifestation, ignoring what is called hierarchy of existence or manifestations. His bypassing or even rejection of traditional religious metaphysics which has a deep bearing on our attitude towards nature is naïve and against his own principles for he limits Manifestation to what is manifested to our ordinary consciousness. Reality is almost sidelined by its identification with Manifestation itself. The crucial principle of transcendence hardly comes into picture anywhere in Krishnamurti, or at best only in very negative terms which has hardly any bearing on our cognizance of Manifestation. His overall approach resembles postmodernist approach and will be subject to all those objections to which postmodernist environmentalism is vulnerable He borrows his own insights from religions for his 'naturalistic' philosophy and yet disowns traditional religious thought. Mysticism has usually emphasized immanence of God in Nature. God is approached in and through Nature. Nature is His body.

Seeing and contemplating nature one contemplates God. Nature is charged with the grandeur of God. Nature-mysticism, which has always been nurtured to some extent in all mystical traditions celebrates it as God's visible face. All mystical philosophy which is based on the premises of oneness of existence sees Reality through Nature. Mysticism and mysticism inspired poetry, which has been always associated with religion and even identifiable with it in its esoteric dimension, has sung about the glories of nature and seen God in ordinary manifestation of it. Man is shown as part of nature, organically and existentially linked with it. Original sin or fall of Adam is usually interpreted in environmentalist terms. Some religions even worship nature. East has almost divinized Nature. Islam consecrated but dedivinized Nature. Nature in Islam is God's habit or Gods Sign, the door or gateway to God. For from escaping or neutralizing this 'burden' Nature is perceived as the bridge between God and Man.

Perennialist traditionalist religious philosophers like Frithjof Schuon, Rene Guenon, Huston Smith Ananda K Coomarswamy, S.H. Nasr and others have influentially been arguing for traditional religious view of Nature and environment or sacred ecology for meeting present environmental crisis. They also emphasize transcendent unity of religions and traditional spiritual approaches. They speak for all religions and defend their view of Manifestation against whom Krishnamurti speaks. Here we will illustrate their viewpoint with respect to Islam and its attitude towards nature as represented in its foremost Muslim exponent S.H. Nasr. This will show point by point rebuttal of Krishnamurti's charges on antiecollogical implications of religions treatment of Nature. This will also show how Islam (and this is true of other religious traditions also) had already appropriated Krishnamurti's own insights and especially his formulation of trinity of Man, Nature and Ultimate Reality. Nasr, unlike many modernist and radical Muslims, is deeply rooted in traditional Islamic sources and thus his approach can not be branded as heterodox from orthodox traditional perspective. I take liberty to quote liberally and at length from his writings on this issue to illustrate fully misdiagnosis and misreading of Krishnamurti and like minded critics in this context.

He writes "in Islam the inseparable link between man and nature, and also between the sciences of Nature and religions, is to be found in the Quran itself, the Divine Book which is the Logos or the Word of God which is the basis of religion and that macrocosmic revelation which is the Universe...Intimate knowledge of nature depends upon the knowledge of the inner meaning of the sacred text or hermeneutic interpretation (*t'awil*). The key to the inner meaning of things lies in *t'awil*, in penetrating from the outward (*zahir*) to the inward (*batin*) meaning of the Quran, " 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 order the flow of divine grace or *barakah*, Man seeks the transcendent and the supernatural, but not against the background of a profane nature that is opposed to grace and the supernatural. From the bosom of nature man seeks to transcend nature and

nature herself can be an aid in this process provided man can learn to contemplate it, not as an independent domain of reality but as a mirror reflecting a higher reality a vast panorama of symbols which speak to man and have meaning for him [4]. He also writes "in fact man is the channel of grace for nature; through his active participation in the spiritual world he casts light into the world of nature" [4, p. 96] Inner state of man is reflected in the external order. As Nasr points out the Quran addresses not only men and women but the whole of Cosmos [5]. Thus in a sense, Nature participates in the Quranic revelation. Nasr elaborates "certain verses of the Quran address natural forms as well as human beings, while God takes non-human members of His creation, such as plants and animals, the sun and the stars to witness in certain other verses. The Quran does not draw a clear line of demarcation between the natural and the spiritual nor between the world of man and that of nature." [5] Nature is regarded as "an integral part of man's religious universe sharing in his earthly life and in a sense even ultimate destiny" [5]. Nasr also refers to the Muslim sages who referred to the cosmic or ontological Quran (*al-Quran-al-takwini*) as distinct from and complementing the 'written' Quran (*al-Quran-al tadwini*).... "They remained fully aware of the fact that the Quran refers to the phenomenon of nature and events within the soul of man as *ayat* (literally signs or symbols) a term that is also used for the verses of the Quran)... For them the forms of Nature were literally *ayat* of Allah, *vestigia Dei*, a concept that was certainly known to the traditional West before, with the advent of rationalism, symbols were turned into brute facts and before the modern West set out to create a science to dominate over nature rather than to gain wisdom and joy from contemplation of its forms" [5] The Quran sees Nature as a theophany which reveals God. "The forms of nature are so many 'mosques' which hide various Divine Qualities while also revealing there some qualities for those whose inner eye has not become blinded by the concupiscent ego and the centripetal tendencies of the passionate soul." [5] "Krishnamurti's awakened man who sees God everywhere and nowhere who transcend his ego to let God in and sees Timeless Whispering around every corner, and lying under every leaf [6]. Just looking with full awareness, choiceless awareness on Nature is seeing God, or Reality. Nasr's remarks amount to same thing; "..... according to the Islamic perspective, God Himself is the ultimate environment which surrounds and encompasses man ... in the Quran's God is said to be the All Encompassing (*Muhit*) (4:126)... And that term *Muhit* also means environment To remember God is to see Him everywhere and to experience His reality as *al-Muhit*. The environmental crisis may in fact be said to have been caused by man's refusal to see God as the real environment which surrounds man and nourishes his life. The destruction of the environment is the result of a modern man's attempt to view the natural environment as an ontologically independent order of reality, divorced from the Divine Environment without whose liberating grace it becomes stifled and dies. To remember God as *al-Muhit* is to remain aware of the sacred quality of nature, the reality of natural phenomena as signs (*ayat*) of God and the presence of natural environment as an ambience

permeated by the Divine Presence of that Reality which alone is the ultimate “environment” from which we issue and to which we return.” [5] Organic and integral connection between Nature and Reality that Krishnamurti wants to restore has already been an integral part of Islamic teaching. Krishnamurti has nothing new to say. Sufi Poetry beautifully illustrates this Quranic environmentalist attitude. Nasr quotes Saadi’s following verse. “I am joyous with the Cosmos for the Cosmos receives its joy from Him. / I love the whole world, for the world belongs to Him.”

He also refers to Yunus Emve, a Sufi folk poet of Turkish language who heard the invocation of God’s Blessed Name in the sound of flowing streams which brought a recollection of paradisaical realities and so he sang: “The rivers all in paradise/ Flow with the word Allah, Allah/ And every loving nightingale/ He sings and sing Allah Allah.” Nasr points out in this context the Muslim contemplatives and mystics have loved nature with such intensity because they have been able to hear the prayer of all creatures of the natural world to God [5]. He quotes Quranic verse “Nothing is, that does not proclaim His praise” in this connection. The sage lives in the remembrance of God and as a result he hears the prayers of flowers as they turn toward the sea. Now the question is, is all of this compatible with Krishnamurti’s charge that religion has alienated man from Nature and bypasses Nature to reach God who is conceived in static and abstract terms absolutely beyond and even opposite to the realm of Manifestation. Islam advocates ‘I-Thou’ instead of ‘I-It’ relationship toward Nature and this is against ‘burden’ theory and alienation thesis of Krishnamurti.

It is the Islamic conception of Man which shows pro-Nature and ecofriendly approach in Islamic *Weltanschauung*. Man is not in exile in the Universe, but fully integrated to it and in and through it to Ultimate Reality. Man, as Nasr says has always been viewed in various traditional religions as the custodian of Nature. Man is vicegerent of Allah, according to Islam. “In the same way that God sustains and cares for the world, man as His vicegerent must nurture and care for the ambience in which he plays the central role he can not neglect the care of natural world without betraying that trust which he accepted when he bore witness to the God’s lordship in the preeternal covenant” (*almithaq*) [5]. Man as theomorphic being reflects all of God’s Names and Qualities in a direct and central fashion. Islam emphasizes man’s duties more than rights towards Nature. By depriving man of absoluteness, unlike West, Islam safeguard’s against anthropocentrism of modernist humanism. In Western worldview “neither God nor nature have a right for a humanity which sees itself as absolute even talking about man being an insignificant observer on a small planet in the periphery of a minor galaxy as if all this kind of superficial humility were not also based upon the absolutization of sense – experiences and rational powers of the earthly man” [5]. Nasr also points out that rape of nature could never be allowed in any religious tradition and it was only after weakening of religious forces and triumph of secularization that the way was paved for modern technological nature destroying civilization. Man is traditionally conceived as microcosms and his deepest self identified with God

(or God is contained only in human heart and knowing one's self is the way of knowing God. Central thesis of Hinduism *tat twam asi* (I am thou) makes the same point). Thus Man, Nature and Reality are organically linked in this perspective, there being no separation or bypassing of any one element. Thus Western dualistic approach is avoided.

Nasr answers the charge of many secularists in the West that Judeo-Christian tradition, to which Islam is also added in this context, is responsible for the present ecological crisis by pointing to the fact that neither Christian Armenia or Ethiopia nor even Christian Eastern Europe nor Islam gave rise to the science and technology which in the hands of secular man has led to the devastation of the globe. Pervaiz Manzoor has pointed out in a similar context that Islam has dedivinized Nature but not desacralized it [7].

None of the great religions alienates Man from Nature or turns its back upon Nature. John Hinnels has called Zoroastrianism as the world's first ecological religion, for Zoroaster taught that "the most important task of man is to preserve unity not only in Nature but in all beings" [8]. Zoroastrian prayers are full of praise of mountains, oceans flying birds and 'Mother Earth and all her good creations'. The Parsees are told that 'every single flower is appropriate to an angel'. Buddhist literature is full of detailed instructions for preserving and nurturing the human habitat. In *Vinaya Sutra* the planting of trees is said to be within the obligations of a *bhikku*. Hindu prayers and ceremonies are embedded in the love for nature to such an extent that some adherents worship practically all objects in nature. The *Baisakhi* festival of the Sikhs is celebrated in the midst of nature to show human gratitude, as Guru Nanak taught the Sikhs that "God sleeps in the tree, dreams in the animal, and wakes in man" [9]. Doctrine of non-violence of Jainism could not have been conceived in an atmosphere of 'burden' theory of Manifestation. Buddhist prayer known as the 'Prayer for the Happiness of All that Lives' and paralleled in Hindu Sanskrit Prayer *Sarve bhadvanti Sukhinah* (i.e., all beings achieve happiness, enjoy health and become good) could only have been current in an environmentalist or ecofriendly religious atmosphere where salvation concerns just not an individual, but the whole of Manifestation. The theory of reincarnation which sees whole Nature populated by soul in need of salvation shows how Man, Nature and Reality (or self) are all organically and intimately linked.

Religion's concern with preserving the mystique of nature and its refusal to demystify existence shows its spiritual relation vis-à-vis nature. Modernist Faustian project of demystifying Nature with the help of Science leading to its profanation and commodification is rejected by religion or mysticism. Every logic and all the tools of analysis which 'murder to dissect' are strongly criticized by religion. Virginity of nature has been lost in present secular atmosphere and its consequent prostitution has been instrumental in environmental crisis. Eternal silence of the stars or vast heavens which so much frightens modern man and has produced in reaction an urge to conquer it, to land on it..., was perceived in very different light by traditional religion. Saint befriended not only beasts but also had an intimate dialogue with heavens. He

had I-Thou relation with it. He was received as a guest of honour in heaven by angels of God.

Nasr refers to this important distinction between the 'I-It' and 'I-Thou' attitudes to nature repeatedly in his writings. This appears crucial to his whole argument. Modern West takes nature as an 'It' rather than as 'Thou'. Recent organicist philosophies and such theories as Gaia can hardly be a good substitute of taking nature as living, as if it has a personality and rights of its own, Mystics, and East in general, enjoys an intimate dialogue with nature (a good parallel is in Buberian Philosophy of in *Ich-Du*). The spirits that populate nature have their own demands and no profanation of environment is allowed. Nature worship is traceable to this profound Eastern conviction. Earth has been addressed as Mother in traditional India. Even forests that Western man dreads intuitively have been the prized home of sanyasin and mystic. God has revealed Himself through a tree to Moses. Buddha got enlightenment under a tree. This has profoundly symbolic meaning. Virgin nature is the sign of God. Reincarnationist thesis implies a conception of nature that could be best approached as 'Thou'. Whole Nature needs salvation not only in Christian scheme but also in Hindu scheme of things. Prophets and saints have traditionally been seen as knowing the language of beasts, and even that of trees. The Quran makes a statement that in whole nature there are communities like you. Sulaiman's dialogue with ants, narrated in the Quran, shows how developed is the eco-conscience in Islam. Western anthropocentrism and humanist tradition can not conceive of addressing nature as 'Thou', Nothing is living, not even life (as reductionist science implies) in the West. Man is not a theophany. He is not organically and metaphysically linked with the whole of Nature. Man is at bottom a lonely creature caught up in the absurd world. He is not responsible for even his own salvation, not to speak of the Others and nature. He rebels against the heavens, falls and is, unfortunately caught up in the plague of life. He is in exile. He has been exiled from the Heaven and from this Earth. He is stranger to himself. Sartre, Becket, Ionesco and others well portray this predicament of man (more precisely the Western man) who seems incapable of just keeping living, not to speak of winning salvation. The titles of Camus' works (that well portray and represent a case for modern man) *The Fall*, *The Rebel*, *The Outsider*, *The Plague*, reveal modern man's disequilibrium. Such a man can hardly think of the rights of the others, and of the non-human world. He has forgotten even himself and can at best be self-centred only. Absolutizing of the human state by humanism has paradoxically resulted in destruction of man himself. It has led to worst kind of unredeeming pessimism. The deification of the earthly man by the modern West has directly led to environmental crisis. Nasr's remarks in this context are pertinent and serve to demolish the charges that Krishnamurti labels against religion. He writes, in above quoted paper "The consequence of this perspective upon the relation between man and the environment has been immense. In the traditional Islamic world, since the human state was never absolutized, man's rights were never made absolute in total forgetfulness of the rights of God and also of His other creatures. Modern Western man, in contrast

to the traditional Muslim or for that matter Christian owes nothing to anyone or anything. Nor, as already mentioned does he or she feel responsible to any other being beyond the human. In contrast, the traditional Muslim or *Homo islamicus* has always lived in awareness of the rights of God and the rights of others which include the non-human realm. He has remained aware of his responsibility to God and also the responsibility for His creatures. Islam has been always strongly opposed to rationalism while being rational, to naturalism while being aware of the sacred quality permeating the natural order and to humanism while being concerned with man and his entelechy in the deepest manner possible. These attitudes, moreover, exercised an immense influence upon the Islamic attitudes towards nature and the natural environment especially until the advent of the domination of the Islamic world by West.” He also writes in the same paper, “There is also the need to dethrone the humanistic conception of man which makes of man almost a deity who determines the value and norm of things and who looks upon all of nature from only the point of view of his self interest. The dethronement means a death of the type of man who almost instinctually views nature as the enemy to be conquered and the birth of the man who respects and loves nature and receives spiritual as well as physical sustenance from it while also giving something of himself to the multifarious species of the natural kingdom.”

In tune with Krishnamurti's plea for harmony between Man, Nature and Reality, Nasr mourns Western man's apostasy from the belief in this trinity and writes “That the harmony between man and nature has been destroyed is a fact which most people admit. But not everyone realizes that this disequilibrium is due to the destruction of the harmony between man and God; [4, p. 20] and “.... what we can say with all certainty is that there is no peace possible among men unless there is peace and harmony with Heaven, and ultimately with the source and origin of all things” [4, p. 136]. He adds in a footnote, quoting from *The Books of China, The Texts of Taoism* (translated by J. Legge) [4, p. 143]: “The clear understanding of the virtue of Heaven and Earth is what is called ‘The Great Root’ and ‘The Great Origin’; - they who have it are in harmony with Heaven, and so they produce all equable arrangement in the world; - they are those in harmony with men [4, p. 143]. Nasr warns “it is no more than a chimerical dream to expect to have peace based upon a state of intense war toward nature and disequilibrium with the cosmic environment” [4, p. 135].

Traditionalist perennialist authors rightly emphasize importance of *Cosmologia perennis* or symbolic significance of Nature so as to make it a medium for man's flight to Ultimate Reality. Supernature is linked to Nature by them to emphasize this point. Hierarchy of existence, belief in the reality of which forms the cornerstone of perennialist thesis, is precisely directed towards restoring Man's relation with Ultimate Reality through higher order of existence. Religionists, especially the representatives of traditionalist religion take modern Science to the task for precisely the reason that Krishnamurti and many other environmentalist critics of religion would like – its alienating character, alienating Man from Nature and Nature from Reality. Symbolist

traditional Cosmology has prevented the alienation and exile which modern man feel in its absence leading to such reactions as absurdism and war against nature in the modern west. Rejection of Symbolist pre-Copernican cosmologies by Renaissance man led ultimately to rejection of both theomorphic Man and our ultimate concern – God.

All traditional civilization has been sustained by faith or religion and respectful and worshipful attitude towards Nature and there has been no alienation and no such responses as escape or neutralization as accused by Krishnamurti. The ancient Greeks possessed a Cosmology similar to that of other Aryan people of antiquity. The elements, and nature itself were inhabited by the Gods and matter was alive with spirit, Western dualism of nature and Supernature being absent. It was only “with the gradual increase in decadence of the Greek Olympians religion more and more the substance of nature itself became divorced from its spiritual significance” [4, p. 54]. For ancients in general “Nature violate is at once a vestige of the earthly paradise and a prefiguration of the heavenly paradise as Schuon points out in his *Light on the Ancient World* [4, p. 43]. In the Far East we see in the Chinese tradition, especially in Taoism and also in Neo-Confucianism, a devotion to Nature and a comprehension of its metaphysical significance which has nothing in common with the burden theory. This same reverential attitude towards nature, together with a strong sense of symbolism is to found in Japan also, Shintoism having strongly fortified this attitude. Taoism has great triad of Heaven, Man and Earth. Heaven representing the Spirit or Essence, Earth the substance and Man synthesis of both and mediator between them, himself partaking of the dual nature of Heaven and Earth. Perfect Man’s position is symbolized in the trigrams of which upper line represents Heaven, the lower Earth, with Man in the middle. Man is thus link between Nature and Reality, Time and Eternity. Where is the escapist or neutralizing attitude towards ‘burden’ of Manifestation? Nasr remarks in this context: “The metaphysical significance of nature as expounded in Taoism, and also Buddhism, while contributing to the development of Sciences of nature, remained as a balance which presented the hierarchy of knowledge and prevented nature from becoming profane [4, p. 87]. Nasr also traces the theme of relying upon nature in the task of spiritual realization in Hindu tradition and says that it is carried to its full conclusion in the practices connected with Tantra Yoga. He elaborates: “in Tantrism the *Shakti* or feminine principle becomes the incarnation of all forces and power in the Universe, and through the use of this very power, as if riding upon the waves of the sea, the Yogi seeks to pass beyond nature and the ocean of cosmic manifestation. In Tantrism there is an elaborate correspondence between man and the Cosmos, the spinal column itself being called the Meru of the human body. The Universe is the ‘body of the lord’ and by dying and burying himself in its bosom, in the arms of nature as the Divine Mother, the Yogi finds his deliverance.... Tantrism in its connection with Alchemy presents a most profound symbolic interpretation of nature [4, p. 92]. Existence of various traditional sciences such as Islamic Science, Chinese Science, Hindu Science,

all of which were directly inspired by religion shows religion far from alienating man from environment does exactly the opposite job of inspiring contemplation and study of it which makes civilization as well as God consciousness possible. Toynbee rightly presents the religion as the *raison d'être* of civilization.

Nasr is at his best or most original in presenting environmentalist face of all religions against modern Western approach to environment. We quote him at length in connection – with the problem of modern science and its relation to traditional religion. Environmental crisis occurred only in modern scientific West. West has made much of the conflict between faith and Science and criticized former for blocking the progress of science. West achieved Renaissance and modernity, enormous technological developments which ultimately were instrumental in triggering present environmental crisis in spite of Christianity or religion. Nasr is not least apologetic about this; he criticizes enlightenment project for rejecting symbolist spirit of medieval Cosmology which ultimately led to emergence of modern science with its yang or masculine spirit trying to conquer, dominate loot and rape nature. He writes “In fact it might be said that the main reason why modern science never arose in China or Islam is precisely because of the presence of metaphysical doctrine and a traditional religious structure which refused to make a profane thing of nature. Neither the ‘Oriental bureaucratism’ of Needham nor any other social and economic explanation suffices to explain away the scientific revolution as seen in the West did not develop elsewhere. The most basic reason is that neither in Islam, nor India nor the Far East was the substance and stuff of nature so depleted of an sacramental and spiritual character, nor was the intellectual dimension of these traditions so enfeebled as to enable a purely secular science of nature and a secular philosophy to develop outside the matrix of the traditional intellectual Orthodoxy. Islam, which resembles Christianity in so many ways, is a perfect example of this truth, and the fact that modern science did not develop in its bosom is not the sign of decadence as some have claimed but of the refusal of Islam to consider any form of knowledge as purely secular and divorced from what it considers as the ultimate goal of human existence.” [4, p. 97] Thus Nasr’s view of history of warfare between Science and religion make a case for religion against secularist science, for eco-conscious religion against antagonistic science. Ecological or environmentalist interpretation of history is thus linked with religious interpretation of history. It is thus religion which comes to Man’s rescue, seeing whole realm of Manifestation as Sacred and gives meaning to history and Man’s life as in relation to Ultimate Reality which incorporates triple ideals of goodness, beauty and truth. Thus Man sees whole Creation and himself as a channel for grace, for God. God speaks through Man and knows Himself through perfect Man or Sage. Religious man sees God everywhere and himself becomes a mirror reflecting God. All subject object (or Man Nature) duality ceases for religious man.

It is the Sacred art and architecture of all traditional civilizations which represents most eloquent testimony of its attitude toward Manifestation. The first canon of art, laid down by Taoist painter Hsueh-ho is that it should manifest “The life movement of the spirit through the rhythm of things”, also translated by Waley as “the operation of the spirit producing life’s motion” [10] to the art of the Far East, especially in the Taoist and Zen traditions, paintings of natural scenes are veritable icons. They are a means of communion with Transcendental Reality. Nasr, in his *Islamic Art and Spirituality* discusses importance of void in Islamic architecture. Taoism also shows awareness of the presence of transcendent dimension by the void so dominant in landscape paintings. Entering a Zen temple opens even hardcore atheist’s heart towards transcendence and Sacredness of things. Coomaraswamy shows how architecture of temple represents microcosmos. Man gets an experience of Ultimate Reality through the form of Sacred art and architecture. Beauty of Sacred art points to principle of Transcendent Beauty. To be one with Nature and God is best realized through Sacred art and architecture. Iqbal’s poem ‘Mosque of Cardova’ in his famous *Bali Jibril (Wings of Gabriel)* beautifully shows this dimension of Sacred architecture. Nature is made to reflect Ultimate Reality in all its sublimity and beauty by religious artist. Man, Manifestation and Reality all represented in proper relationship in Sacred architecture. Cooper shows how Taoist art (which is true of all traditional art in general) puts Man and Nature in proper perspective which avoids Promethean, Titansque and Faustian rebellious attitude which ultimately is the real culprit behind present environmental crisis. As Cooper writes “Taoist art... puts man into perspective, making him part of natural scene. He is a small creature when compared with mountain vastness so as a small figure he appears he is not allowed to dominate the scene, nor is nature ever used merely as a background to show him-off. Putting him into perspective is however very different thing from dwarfing him.” [10, p. 99]

Religion, ultimately asks man to be natural, to be true to his nature, to be ordinary and as Zen Buddhism puts it ‘Samsara is Nirvana’. Islam repeatedly emphasizes its natural – all too natural character. The Sage – in Taoism is above all the wholly natural man. The aim of the Sage is to be in harmony with his own nature for through this harmony comes harmony with men and this harmony is itself the reflection of harmony. Aim of spiritual man is to contemplate nature and become one with it, to become ‘natural’. Religion is innocence of becoming. It is living moment by moment, finding eternity here now, in this moment. It is choiceless awareness as Krishnamurti also says. It is seeing God everywhere, in the trees, in the Moon, in the streams. Religion intends to de-alienate man, to help him to be himself. To God has to be existentially experienced, discovered within the depth of our being or self. There is no beyond, no remote realm of being or no otherworldly destination, in the pursuit of which one is asked to leave this world. Heaven is won only in and through this world. This world is the ground or soil on which the tree of hereafter grows. Nirvana must be won here, every moment. God has to be

remembered with every breath. Nothing is profane, all is holy ground. Following words of Iqbal show this 'secular' theological spirit of all true religion. "There is no such thing as a profane world. All this immensity of matter constitutes a scope for the self-realization of spirit. All is holy ground...The spirit finds its opportunities in the natural, the material, the secular. All that is secular is, therefore sacred in the roots of its being." [11] Religion seeks to make man co-partner of God in creation as Quran implies. God became man so that man may become God' said a great Christian authority. God pursues man as all revelations testify because God initiates revelatory discourse. Faith is not belief or consenting to a certain proposition but vital appropriation of whole Universe. God is not to be taken as a proposition, but direction, as perennialists authors say. Thus there is no question of alienation from Nature, from this world in religious pursuit of salvation. Belief in the immanence of God in one or the other sense, forms essential part of all religions. Personal God, conceived as the other, for whose sake one needs to relinquish this world or body is not the Ultimate Reality in religions. *Nirguna Brahman* or Impersonal Absolute Beyond Being (symbolized by Void) or Transcendent principle is the Ultimate Reality in religions which has no relationship to Man or Manifestation and is not concerned with Man's Salvation, as exoteric theology ordinarily conceives. Theologian's God is even dispensable in Eastern religions and thus question of alienation of man from his own self due to presence of God conceived as the other does not arise. Krishnamurti not only ignores metaphysics of theistic religions, especially as esoteric perennialist approach sees them, but seems to wholly ignore Eastern religions approach

Against the Western dualist approach which usually absolutizes subject – object or Man – Nature dichotomy or binary opposition (and this fatally affects its policy toward environment). East has monistic approach which is so important for sound Ecology, as against modernist humanist ecology cultivated in the West. Cooper illustrates this in case of Taoism in following words, "in the natural there is a total cooperation with life. Modern man tends to be an observer rather than a partaker, he imagines he can stand apart from life, view it from outside and look at it with analytical mind... it is impossible to be in accord with a world one regards as wholly other, it is to be a split personality, the modern Schizophrenia." [10, p. 65] He further comments "once he [man] has become divorced from nature and has lost the sense of communion with all things, the oneness, he starts on the downward path which leads to destruction not only of nature but of his own spiritual life, for the two are intimately associated as he kills nature so he kills himself" [10, p. 66].

Against the Western dualism of body and soul (which is shared by most of Christian theologians despite Jesus and underlying monist current throughout history of Christianity) traditional religion believes in ternary division of body soul and spirit but seeing man "as microcosm, composed of dualistic nature of the yin yang and reconciling and unifying these in himself, (who) is the masculine spirit and feminine soul united, from which the third, the son, the

unifying principle, emerges” [10, p. 84]. Krishnamurti’s critique of religion’s supposedly alienating character is valid only on consistently dualist assumption of West and exoteric Christian theology. However there is some justification for Krishnamurti’s critique in relation to Christianity and this is acknowledged by traditionalist perennialist authors and many Christian theologians also. Mainstream Christianity does draw a sharp dividing line between the realm of nature and that of Grace which could lead to alienation and exile of man in the midst of Manifestation. Nasr admits the fact but gives a good apology for the same “Christianity, when it was called upon to save a civilization rather than a few souls, was faced with a world in which naturalism empiricism and rationalism were rampant, where knowledge of a human order had become divinized and where an excessive attraction to nature seemed to the Christian eye a blasphemy that blinded men to the vision of God. Christianity, therefore, reacted against this naturalism by emphasizing the boundary between the supernatural and the natural and by making the distinction between the depriving nature of the inner spirit that breathes through all things.” [4, p. 55] It belittled theological and spiritual significance of nature, opposed the ‘cosmic religion’ of the Greeks and some theologians called nature *massa perditionis*. Alienation took place toward nature which has left its mark upon the subsequent history of Christianity, blamed for the present crisis of modern man in his encounter with nature, although retrospectively looking we could exonerate it from this charge because it never intended it; it was unfortunate accident of history or necessary evil. However the important thing to note is that it still preserved, though in a marginalized form, symbolist outlook and true metaphysics which is crucial to meet present impasse in man’s encounter with nature. And as Nasr says “it is only through a rediscovery of true metaphysics, especially the sapiential doctrines of Christianity which has done justice to the relation between man and nature, that a hierarchy of knowledge can be again asserted and a symbolic science of nature reestablished” [4, p. 74]. It is possible to have an environmentalist reading of Christianity or Judeo-Christian tradition as Nasr does and here also attempted as an answer to Krishnamurti and to modernist humanist environmentalist critics of it.

In the Old Testament there are explicit references to the participation of nature in the religious view of life, such as in the vision of Hosea in which God entered into covenant with beasts and plants in order to secure peace. Likewise virgin nature is also seen as a place of contemplation and as reflection of Paradise. This vision and tradition of the contemplative view of nature was to survive later in Judaism in both the Kabbalistic and Hassidim school, as Nasr points out [4, p. 99] cosmic character of Christ is evidenced in New Testament as death and resurrection of Christ is accompanied by a withering and rejuvenation of nature. St. Paul also believed that all Creation shares in the redemption. In contrast to the Western Church which interpreted virgin nature as a domain of warfare and combat, Eastern Church emphasized the contemplative view of nature and in it. “Nature was considered as a support for the spiritual life and the belief was held that all nature shares in Salvation

(*apokatastasis panion*) and the Universe is renovated and reconstructed by Christ in his second coming.” [4, p. 100] Nasr refers to early Greek fathers like Origen, Irenaeus, Maximus the Confessor and Gregory of Nyssa who developed a theology of nature.. Origen and Irenaeus applied the Logos doctrine not only to man and his religion but also to the whole of nature and all creatures. Celtic monks sought after the vision of the Cosmos as a divine theophany. For Johannes Scotus Erigena, man stands between the spiritual and material Creation and partakes of the nature of both. In him the whole Creation is contained in an essential rather than in a material or substantial sense. Spiritual world is reflected in him as the man is created in the image of God. Saint Hildegard had a vision of the Universe in which nature is totally in the domain of the Spirit manifesting itself in all products of nature. St. Francis of Assisi spent his life among the birds and beasts whom he addressed thus demonstrating Christian belief that through holiness man can gain a relationship with nature. This is a return to conditions before the fall with its ensuing disruption of harmony between man and nature [4, p. 103]. Christian alchemists also preserved a symbolist vision. For Alchemy, nature is sacred, and the alchemist is the guardian of nature considered as a theophany. Residues of Christian tradition of nature now based on metaphysical doctrine are seen even up to now as we see John Ray and other Christian natural historians searching for the vestiges of God in nature. In the perspective of the modern science, the order of the Universe is identified with the Divine Mind and the scientist is said to be discovering the mind of God in his scientific pursuits. Scientific method itself has been called a Christian method of discovering God’s mind. Bacon’s famous statement that word of God and work of God complement each other is in tune with Christian tradition of revering nature. A Christian can not be indifferent toward God’s work. Modern science’s concern with the realm of Manifestation is ultimately religious in inspiration.

3. Conclusion

There do exist a significant minority of theologians who moving against the tide of the general modern trends of Theology bring to life once again the Sacramental character of all creation and to return to things the sacred nature of which recent modes of thought have deprived them. They emphasize the forgotten truth that from the Christian point of view incarnation implies the Sacramental nature of material things. They argue that the outward and material aspect of things acts as a vehicle for the inward, spiritual grace indwelling in all things, by virtue of their being created by God. It is also argued that if Creation were not in some way revealed there would be no revelation possible. Temple makes important points in this connection. He says that Christianity is able to dominate over matter precisely because in contrast to other religions such as Hinduism it is ‘the most avowedly materialist of all the great religions’. Also he says that His Creation is Sacramental of Himself to His creatures but in effectually fulfilling that function it becomes sacramental of Him to Himself –

the means whereby he is eternally that which eternally He is [4, p. 64]. The world, which is the self expressive utterance of the Divine Word, becomes itself a true Revelation, in which what comes is not truth concerning God, but God Himself. Either all occurrences are in some degree revelations of God, or else there is no such revelation at all; for the conditions of the possibility of any revelation require that there should be nothing which is not revelation. Only if God is revealed in the rising of the sun in the sky can He be revealed in the rising of the son of man from the dead [4, p. 65]. Eliade says: "the feeling of the sanctity of nature survives today in Europe chiefly among rural populations, for it is among them that a Christianity lived as a cosmic liturgy still exists" [4, p. 47].

In sum we can conclude that environmentalist critique of religion on the grounds suggested in Krishnamurti's works is misconceived.

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