

## **Principle of Analogically Graded Unity of Existence; A Philosophic-Mystical Foundation in Environmental Ethics**

**Mohsen Shiravand<sup>1</sup>**

(Received: 2020/02/07; Accepted: 2021/10/13)

### **Abstract:**

In the current essay we have explained the philosophic-mystical principle of analogical unity of existence as a theory that offers a solution for overcoming this critical situation. The existing capacity in this principle is in a form that can be raised as a new theory for resolving the environmental crisis. This essay is composed of two parts: first part has dealt with the evaluation of the theories of environmental ethics and the causes of these crises. Second part has turned to the study and explanation of the principle of analogical unity of existence and its quality of application in resolving the environmental crises. Among the results of the current research one can refer to the fact that based on this principle we can ground the theory of "environmental spirituality". The theory of environmental spirituality has introduced the nature as a sacred being that contains all divine perfections like living, perceiving and rational. Moreover, it has been proven that for prevention from environmental crises instead of adoption of "ethics-centered" laws we need to adopt "spirituality-centered" laws. The method used in this essay is descriptive-analytic and the discussion is based on arguments.

**Key Words:** Environmental Ethics, Principle of Analogical Unity of Existence, Mulla Sadra.

---

1. Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran. Email: m.shiravand@ltr.ui.ac.ir

## 1. Introduction

One of the most important challenges of the present age is the existence of environmental crises. It seems that the main cause of these crises should be sought for in the notion that humankind has of the nature. Human perspective of the nature is a materialistic one. And the only means for his encounter with the nature is experience. We believe that this defected understanding of the world is the Cause of some causes of environmental crisis on the planet and as long as this perspective is not corrected no solution for the environmental crises would be expected. The author contends that one of the theories that can help the man in the domain of "world-knowledge" and provide the man with a well-established understanding of the world is the "Principle of Analogical Unity of Existence". Unity of Existence is one of the most important doctrines of Islamic mysticism which have studied by Islamic thinkers based on philosophical analyses. The main theoretician of this theory in the Islamic world is Ibn Arabi – the Forefather of Islamic Mysticism. However, the most prominent philosophical commentator of this theory is Mulla Sadra of Shirazi the Iranian theosopher and philosopher who has further developed this mystical theory in the context of revelation and rational argument. The general content of the theory of analogical unity is that "existence is an analogically graded unit all levels of which – inanimate entities, plants, animals, man and immaterial world (incorporeal beings) – are the manifestations and aspects of one single Unique Reality, i.e. God" (Mulla Sadra 1981, Vol. 1, 6). The aim of the present study is interdisciplinary exploitation of this philosophic-mystical theory and its application in the domain of environmental ethics. The goal and claim of the present research is struggling to take all works of Mulla Sadra and Muslim thinkers into consideration in order to deduce more correct results. As to the claim raised in this research, one needs to note that some studies have already been conducted as regards some

of the ideas of Islamic philosophy or Islamic mysticism as well as the resolution of the environmental crises that we can mention some of them here as follows:

- "Environmental Ethics in Transcendent Theosophy" (Bidhendi and Shiravand, 2010, 108-133).
- "A Study of Environmental Ethics based on an Analysis of the Theory of Gaya and the Philosophical Principle of Basit Al Haqiqa (Absolutely Simple Reality), (Idem, 2014, 77-95).
- "Ecosophy and Ibn Arabi (Application of the Theory of Union of Divine Names and Attributes in Environmental Ethics), (Bahrami, 2017. 69-84).

The current study has been conducted based on the works of Mulla Sadra and other Muslim thinkers focusing on the relationship between the Principle of Analogically Graded Unity of Existence and the resolution of the environmental crises.

## **2. Method and Objectives**

Current essay has been written based on descriptive-analytic method and it aims at explaining the "Principle of Analogically Graded Unity of Existence" as an appropriate method in the domain of philosophical-mystical thoughts. In present study, first the method of conceptual analysis is used to decompose the constitutive notions in the theory of "Analogically Graded Unity of Existence" and then analyze them one by one. Our goal in this stage is identification of the concepts through eradication of its ambiguity and reaching self-evident and well-defined notions. Then, and in second stage, in addition to the indication of epistemic foundations of this theory (insistence on the fundamental concept of "Primacy of Existence"), we will proceed to provide a logical analysis of this theory. In fact, in this stage the emphasis is on whether we need the existence of other

true propositions along with the proposition at issue in order to reach certainty or not.

### **3. Causes of Environmental Crises**

Numerous factors have been enumerated as the main causes of the environmental crises. However, it seems that the following can be considered as the major ones:

#### **3.1 Ontology**

From an ontological perspective, materialism is one of the main factors of the destruction of environment. The modern scientific centers are pioneers of building human worldviews. The dominant ontology in these centers is materialistic. World and nature are nothing but mere matter. This is the most important ontological doctrine of these centers. "Didactic" vision of the nature which has been highlighted in the religious teachings and vision of the theosophers does not have any place in the scientific discourses. Theosophical vision of nature is inspired by the religious sources. The world as depicted by the religion is an entity similar to man and then it enjoys real rights. One of the main philosophical doctrines of Mulla Sadra is that the world is a great man (Mulla Sadra ۱۹۸۰، ۵۲). Mulla Sadra does not consider this to be a product of human mind like the myths of Ancient Greece rather he believed them to be decisive and certain doctrine driven from religion. It is a matter of fact that ontological doctrine of "material world" is itself associated with a destructive aspect. This vision of nature suggests that the material world is waiting for human hands to give a form to it.

#### **3.2 Epistemology**

One of the domains for study in epistemology is linguistics. To discover the realities of the extensive and complicated world various

languages must be mastered. Today in scientific discourses the means of discovery of truth in the domain of empirical sciences do not go beyond experience and experiment. If as it was mentioned earlier in this essay, pure materialism is the ontological basis of an epistemic system the only method for discovery of truth will be automatically experience and experiment. It is needless to say that experience is one of the most important tools of discovery of truth but it is not the only path. It is one of the excruciating pains of contemporary man that he has adopted a monistic perspective (Epistemic Unitarianism) in the domain of epistemology. According to contemporary scholars of physics, "world and the existing phenomena are so vast and complicated that no one can claim that there is no tool but traditional and known tools for discovery of truth". Domination and dogmatism of excessive empiricism and epistemic monism have given rise to complicated conditions for the environment.

### **3.3 Anthropology**

Contemporary man thanks to the wonderful industrial and technological developments has become avaricious and can merely communicate with the language of "pleasure". From the point of view of this metamorphosed man, every "pleasurable" object is "true" even if in the price of destruction of the environment. Nature thanks to the God-given bounties is considered to be the most important and richest source of human pleasure. These God-given bounties have caused the avaricious and greedy man seeks "worldly success and carnal desires" for the sake of acquisition of more pleasure as if man is a masculine entity that can rape the beautiful bride of nature (Warren 1990, 125-146). Excessive exploitation of mountains, seas and skies is an example of the violation that represents the hedonistic root of greedy man.

Now the nature friendly man is faced with the question: shouldn't this destructive process be stopped? Shouldn't a special ethics be developed in proportionate to the complicated environmental situation?

#### **4. Main Centers of Theories of Environmental Ethics**

Although various approaches can be recognized within the domain of environmental ethics,<sup>2</sup> one might determine four major centers of theories within a general classification. This classification has been provided under the title of essential and instrumental value of nature:

- **Anthropocentric Ethics:** This perspective suggests that the focal point of every decision should be man. The idea that man is a creative and conscious being of idea has given rise to a type of wrong mentality according to which he considers himself to be the master of creatures and all entities should be in his service. Considering nature as a tool and man as the master of nature is one of the main bad effects of the destruction of environment (Pentreath and Alain cit, 2, 21).

- **Zoo-centric ethics:** In this ethical theory we are faced with a perspective in which not only humans rather the animals are also considered from ethical perspective (Carson 1962, 75). It is needless to say that in this theory the circle of ethical inclusion has become wider to some extent.

- **Life-centered Ethics:** According to this perspective, every living being that has a will to life lies in the circle of ethical value. No doubt, thus conceived, plants also of ethical relevance. This perspective is also known as biocentric ethics

---

2. Conservationism, Preservationism, Social Ecology, Animal Right, Land Ethic, Deep Ecology, Ecofeminism and Sustainable Development (Brennan, Available at: <http://www.plato.stanford.edu>. And AbediSarvestani, 2007, Vo2, p. 63).

and it consider all species to be part of the system of mutual interdependence (Johnson 2014, 12). Albert Schweitzer is the most prominent figure who defends this perspective: "Ethical system is in a way that as I respect my own life I would feel an equal respect for all beings who have the will-to-live. For this reason, we should establish an ethical system in order to preserve the life. (Schweitzer 2001, 92).

**- Ethics of Universal Consideration:** This theory deals with the ethical transcendence of the living and inanimate entities. According to this perspective, the whole planet earth with all its levels and aspects from the man to the inanimate entities have moral value. Environmental conditions move towards a direction that today everyone is convinced that the value of nature with all its levels is not lesser than human being

## **5. Theory of Analogically Graded Unity of Existence**

The inventor of this theory is Mulla Sadra of Shirazi (1571-1640) the Muslim philosopher. Before any content related discussion regarding this theory and its relation with environmental ethics we need to explain three key terms "unity", "analogical gradation" and "existence" so that a more well established understanding is achieved.

### **A) Conceptual Framework of Theory:**

#### **5.1 Unity**

There are two important terms in Islamic mysticism and philosophy the differences of which should be heeded. Some scholars have interpreted the terms "the Absolute One" [*Ahad*] and "the Unique One" [*Wahid*] as the same concept and believe that both of these terms refer to an Entity which is unique and singular from every respects. It is unique in

knowledge; it is exceptional in power and in short it is unique from every perspective (Mulla Sadra 1981, vol. 6, 286). However, the majority of scholars believe that these two terms are different:

The Absolute One: "the Absolute One" is used to refer to something which does not accept diversity and multiplicity neither in the outside world nor in the mind. In other words, it is beyond the numbers.

The Unique One: as to "the Unique One" we need to say that every "unique one" has a second and a third either in the outside world or in the imagination or based on the assumption of reason. Thus this "unique one" can be diversified through being attached to the second and the third (Lahiji 2009, vol. 2, 207; Tabatabaei 2002, 179).

## **5.2 Analogical Gradation**

"Tashkik" [analogical gradation] as word in Arabic implies casting doubt regarding something. But as a philosophical term it is used versus univocity and it denotes that a unique meaning in a word that is considered to be a homonym is predicated to its extensions in a non-equal manner, e.g. predication of the concept of light to its extensions all of which are light in their nature though they are weak or strong in their being an extension of the light. In fact, analogical gradation in philosophy is a description of the external reality and it refers to the unity associated with the plurality and the plurality associated with the unity.

## **5.3 Existence**

No doubt, this concept is the most fundamental key word of Sadra's philosophy. But what does it mean? "What has filled the outside world", "what is the external reality itself". Mulla Sadra contends that primacy

is with the existence and quiddity is a mentally posited notion. The issue of "the primacy is with the existence or with the quiddity" is not of a long history. Even the philosophers like Farabi and Ibn Sina have not raised any discussion concerning this issue. The history of this discussion dates back to the time of Mulla Sadra who believed in the primacy of existence versus the primacy of quiddity. Muslim philosophers take two stances in this regard: a group of Muslim philosophers believe that external world is full of the entities that have no common aspect and are totally different from each other (Ibn Sina, 2000, 512). For example, horse and mountain are two totally different realities which share nothing. However, the other group believe that the world is constituted of the beings that are essentially different but they are common in existence (Mulla Sadra 1984, vol. 39-40). According to the primacy of existence, firstly, the beings in the outside world are common in their existence like the rays of the light all of which are radiations of a unique reality called light. Secondly, what is the source of effects in the outside world is the existence of the objects not their quiddities (Tabatabaei 1999, vol. 1, 43).

The most important point as to the principle of primacy of existence which assists us in environmental ethics is that primacy of existence causes a similarity and unity to be established between the diverse quiddities in the world and it is this unity that allows them to be related despite their diversity. The principle of "existence" is the axis of this unity. According to this unity, the world despite the existing differences is integrated and harmonic and the world as a whole constitutes a majestic one. In fact, the primacy of existence reveals the truth that the world is a mega-man despite the artificial difference of the external members of whom all are a unique body (Mulla Sadra 1981, vol. 3, 32-3 and vol. 4, 200).

Having studied the fundamental concepts in the principle of the analogically graded unity of existence we need now turn to the content of this principle.

### **B) Content of Theory**

The doctrine of analogically graded unity of existence is of basic principles as follows:

**First Principle:** According to the interpretation that Mulla Sadra provides of the external reality, analogical gradation implies that the world of existence – which is a unique reality – enjoys various levels. The Origin and Source of existence is God which is located at the top of the pyramid of existence and this existence is flowing through the whole world and every single object in the world".

**Second Principle:** Given the principle of causality, the existence emanated from the source of existence analogically contains all divine perfections in terms of intensity and weakness. To put it otherwise, since creatures are emanated from the God, then they already contain all divine perfections. This principle is articulated as follows: "Wherever there is a being, that being contains part of the divine perfections and values." (Mulla Sadra ۱۹۸۱, Vol. 1, 414-15). Every being which is closer to this source of emanation it enjoys more intense existence and has more perfections. Then, superiority of the beings over each other depends on the degree of their nearness to the source of existence.

**Third Principle:** According to the analogically graded unity, the world is diverse while it is already unique in the same way that it is unique despite its being diverse. Precisely speaking, what makes the beings united is the same thing based on which they are different. In the doctrine of primacy of existence it is said that objects are united in the principle of existence and the differences of the quiddities is superficial. Thus conceived, the unity that exists in diverse realities is

a unity which is at the same time a plurality and by the same token, this plurality is itself identical with the unity. Unity consists of the fact that the Truth of Existence is a unique thing that is of various levels. In fact, the "existence" of the Divine Presence and the "existence" of nature are not of any essential difference rather this difference is in terms of rank, degree, intensity and weakness.

**Fourth Principle:** According to the analogically graded unity, all beings are made of existence and even the brightest of all beings, i.e. God, is part of this hierarchy. Then, "integrity and homogeneity" of world is among the other fruits of the analogically graded unity of the existence. From the Creator to the creature all have the same genus called "existence" and no single being is superior to others but through intensity and weakness.

**Fifth Principle:** According to the analogically graded unity, the existence of the whole world and as a result the nature and environment is the result of emanation and revelation of God. In other words, world and nature as a whole are the manifestation of God. Here two significant points are hidden: first, whatever is the result of the divine revelation is itself as such a sacred being and any encroachment on it is condemned and denied by every man. Secondly, based on the philosophical principles of Mulla Sadra, "every being – even if it is an inanimate object – is considered to have all perfections of the divinity" (*Ibid*). To put it otherwise, everything that is considered to be an existent enjoys all divine perfections with intensity and weakness.

## **6. Application of Principles of Analogically Graded Unity in Environmental Ethics**

In this part the author struggles to apply the principles included in the doctrine of analogically graded unity in environmental ethics.

**Application of the First Principle:**

According to the first principle, the world is composed of two major metaphysical and physical layers. The physical layer is the shadow of the metaphysical layer. This is why the physical layer contains the perfections of the metaphysical layer. Moreover, despite various human, animal, plant and inanimate levels in this physical layer (natural world) all levels are manifestations of the same unique reality, i.e. God. No doubt, the homogeneity of nature and God as the most significant point of this principle can create a revolution in the domain of environmental ethics. This is indeed something that in some way reminds the sacredness of nature.

**Application of the Second Principle:**

In this principle a significant truth is revealed to the effect that if the genus of the source of existence (God) is one and the same with other beings (i.e. the world as a whole is existentially united), then according to the principle of causality all perfections which one can find in God should be in other beings. Thus, every perfection that exists in God such as life, knowledge, power, reason, will and etc, it does also exist in the existence of nature, environment and all objects and creatures. It is needless to say that such a picture of the world endows the environment and all creatures with an intrinsic value and will allow them to enjoy ethical rights.

**Application of Third Principle:**

According to this principle, which may be a further emphasis on the former two principles, i.e. unity associated with the diversity and the diversity associated with unity, the identity of the aspects of the One (God) and diverse entities (beings) in all domains is underlined. In

fact, all perfections included in the One are also found in the diverse entities. Intrinsic value and moral status of environment are considered to be among the results of this principle.

**Application of Fourth Principle:**

According to this principle, the Supreme Genus of all beings in every level (animal, plant, inanimate) is "existence". Then, there is no difference and superiority between mountain, sea and jungle in terms of existence rather on the contrary, all creatures are required for constitution of an ecosystem. No single being is superfluous or useless. Moreover, as it was mentioned, existence is itself a two layered reality: metaphysical-physical. Then, the world is a material-metaphysical entity. The connection of the matter with the trans-material is itself an indication of a new key word in environmental ethics called "eco spirituality". This gives a permanent sacredness to nature and increases its respect and essential status.

**Application of Fifth Principle:**

The idea of world as a manifestation of divinity is itself a significant discussion in environmental ethics. The principle that world is the result of self-revelation of God (theophany) and not the result of a random event like Big Bang influences human encounter with the nature. Self-revelation in this context refers to the permanent and continuous and ever new presence of the God in the world of existence. In other words, radiation of divine spirituality in the nature and environment is permanent and ever new. This is to say that the world is the place where God is present and every immoral idea does not have any place in the nature and the living and perceiving world will react to it. By accepting the idea of self-revelation of God, the world will be no longer a dark matter rather it has a beautiful divine

truth that deserves moral respect. According to this principle, the world is nothing but mere relation and belonging to God. World and nature are the manifestations of the Divine Attributes of Beauty and Majesty. Thus, environment enjoys a valuable and sacred place. In this regard Mulla Sadra states:

For the men of perfection and knowledge it is God who deserves more than any other being to be loved and after Him it is the world as a whole that deserves human love and the reason for this is its expanse that covers the appearances of Divine Attributes from the heavens to the throne and sky and sun and moon and stars and the earth and whatever exists in it and on including various animals, plants, gold mines and silver mines and the sea and all surprises in it and whatever exists in the atmosphere from winds and clouds to the rain, snow, thunder and shooting star ... They have all been grounded on the best order and system ... [then, they deserve to be respected and since they are attributed to God they are considered to be sacred entities] (Mulla Sadra ۱۹۸۱, vol. 7, 241- 42).

## **7. Two important points**

**7.1** It should not be forgotten that Mulla Sadra is a theosopher and has designed this principle or doctrine based on his divine vision and using Holy Quran. Then, existence of perfections for "all creatures" is decisive, real and has a Quranic basis not a mere poetic fantasy. A scholar of environmental ethics is aware that the existence of such perfections for environment that includes even the inanimate objects leads to the codification of real environmental rights for the nature and promotes the intrinsic value of the environment. Accordingly, any encroachment on the domain of environment is considered to be an encroachment upon the Kingdom of Heavens. Mulla Sadra based on the doctrine of analogically graded unity provides a beautiful,

consistent, harmonic and ethical picture of the environment. In the domain of the protection of the environment the mystically grounded environmental ethics should be considered to be a true knowledge for educating the contemporary man. We should not be afraid to say: according to the doctrine of analogically graded unity, all beings including the inanimate objects, plants, animals and the whole domain of the earth and the heavens are all the light of Divine Presence. If God is the Light of All Lights other beings in the domain of environment (wild animals, birds and trees) and the whole ecosystem including the waters and lands, mountains and jungles are all in one respect the manifestation of this Light of All Lights.

Having proposed his specific philosophical-mystical foundations, Mulla Sadra opens a new chapter of knowledge and rationality in the discussion of the environmental ethics. Today protection of the world without reference to an epistemic system is done out of pity for the environment. By acceptance of the principle of analogically graded unity of existence, environment turns to a living, perceiving and conscious entity instead of being a dead and non-perceiving and in this way some rights and obligations are defined for it. Accordingly, the revealing and the revealed find a true homogeneity. In fact, the discussion of the world's revelatory aspect is considered to be an epistemological protection in the domain of environmental ethics. In other words, today one of the main motives for the protection of the world and environment is humanism. Thus, environment is protected not due to its intrinsic value rather for the sake of the future generations. Nevertheless, the principle of the analogically graded unity considers the nature and the environment of intrinsic value and accordingly even if there was no man the world would have had intrinsic value.

## 7.2 Principles of Simple Truth and Environmental Ethics

Principle of “Simple Truth” is one of the most important philosophical rules of “Transcendent Theosophy”. According to this principle, any being whose truth is simple, it would contain the totality of perfections and existence of the lower beings. Although the chief place of this principle is in the discussion of monotheism, there is a close relationship between it and environmental ethics. This principle has two domains: domain of unity in diversity and the domain of diversity in unity.

The content of these two domains implies that “Simple Truth” has the existence and perfections of all beings in a nobler form and on the other hand, all perfections of Simple Truth are flowing through all beings, aspects and levels of the world. To put it otherwise, since God is the cause of the existence of all objects and other things owe their existence and existential perfections, and in one sense, all creatures are identical with the need to the Necessary Being. Thus, as long as the Necessary Being does not enjoy such perfections, He cannot endow them to other things (Mulla Sadr 1981, vol. 6, 116). Identity of Simple Truth with things is indeed the circumspection and presence of Simple Truth in relation to different levels of existence. Mulla Sadra who believes in this idea quotes the following from Ibn Arabi in *Futuhat*: “And He is identical with everything in emergence not in its essence that is purified of all as His Essence is unique and the things are the things” (Sadr Al Sadra 1981, vol. 2, 337). This principle suggests that only the emergence of the Necessary Being is considered to be identical with the things and is present in all levels of beings and the identity of the Simple Truth (in view of its essence) with things is denied. Although there are fundamental differences between these two alternatives – i.e. identity of the emergence of Simple Truth with things and the identicalness of the Simple Truth (in view of its essence) with things. But what is found as the common aspect of these two domains is the manifestation of the principle of “Simple Truth is

the totality of things and not any one of them". It is needless to say that this principle can be reconsidered in relation to environment. For according to this principle, environment and nature are not mere inanimate matter, rather they are full of perfections and divine and ethical values and have essential value. The belief in this doctrine gives a sacred aspect to environment. It seems that teaching and promotion of these principles in scientific and educational centers can reduce the damages done to the environment and cure some environmental damages too.

## **8. Principle of Analogically Graded Unity of Existence: Deep Insight or Shallow-mindedness**

According to the foundations of some philosophers and thinkers, although man has certain responsibilities before the animals and the environment this is not to say that these are part of human responsibilities. These thinkers understood these responsibilities as part of human responsibilities before his fellow men. In other words, we are obliged to be compassionate with our fellow man and we have been prohibited from brutality. This causes us to be kind towards the animals. In fact, moral behavior with environment is a function of human moral behavior with man. The continuation of this procedure as to the entities that enjoy independent moral status led to the emergence of a spectrum of theories from shallow-mindedness to deep insight into environment. The proponents of the shallow-mindedness have reduced the attention to environment and its value down to the human interests. In fact, in the shallow-minded approach it is man who has an intrinsic value and the environment is of just instrumental value. But in the deep insight approach all life types enjoy an equal moral status. As Arne Naess (1912-2009) suggests, in the deep insight approach (deep ecology) all environmental sources are equally

distributed among the creatures while in the shallow-minded approach (shallow ecology) these resources are just given to man (Naess 2001, 151). But whether the principle of analogically graded unity is a deep insight or an extension of shallow-mindedness?

According to this principle, world and whatever exists in it are wholly "life", "intelligence" and "purposeful". No single element of the world is dead and without perception. Everything is living and of a goal. No single being is a tool for any other being. Beings are of intrinsic moral value. Then, analogically graded unity is a deep insight approach and sees every creature from the lowest to the highest from a moral perspective. Man is also a citizen along with the other citizens of the world who does not have the right to violate and trespass the rights and privacy of other creatures. Of course, we need further research regarding the mechanism and scope of human exploitation of the nature in order to reach a well established certainty in this regard.

## **9. Man, Mediatory Ring:**

In the epistemic geometry of Mulla Sadra the world had two arcs of ascension and descension. The arc of ascension is constituted by the trans-physical world while the arc of descension is composed of the world of nature. The mediatory ring between these two worlds is the man. In other words, man is a being that has one foot in metaphysics and one foot in the nature. This is to say that according to the analogically graded unity, the makeup of the world of existence is top-down and based on the intensity and weakness. God lies at the top of the pyramid of existence and stretches respectively across the world of nature. In this descending arc the first being in the world of nature is man. After the man lie respectively the animal, plant and the inanimate objects. In the analogically graded unity, man is the mediatory ring between the sphere of divine commandment and the

creation and then he is the total-some of all divine and natural virtues. This is why Mulla Sadra believes that man is the "minor world". In other words, man is a being in whom all perfections of two worlds of nature and supernatural simultaneously exist. One can say that due to the place that man has thanks to his mediatory role between the world of creation and the world of divine commandment and the knowledge that he has of these two worlds, he is the "protector and sustainer" of nature and environment not the brutal wolf that sees the nature as an opportunity.

Having said these, although all creatures from the highest to the lowest have intrinsic and moral value the closer one is to the top of the pyramid the more will be its moral value and the farther is one from the top of pyramid the lesser will be its value. Based on the descending arc, man as compared to the animal and plant has higher value but being valuable by no means is tantamount to domination and exploitation of other creatures. Man needs to pay attention to the point that his true happiness lies in the coexistence and "personified and individuated vision of nature" because the nature is a living and perceiving creature. For this reason the scope of the use of man of nature should be intelligible and in line with providing the needs not based on the hedonistic pursuit of more pleasure.

## **10. Two important points to be noticed:**

1) The question that may come to one's mind is whether satisfaction of real human needs can be one of the causes of environmental crises? To answer this question, one should distinguish between the consumerist life style and the satisfaction of human real needs. Consumerism is a cultural, social and economic phenomenon which has become prevalent almost after the occurrence of industrial revolution in west and now changed into one of common pattern in

public life style. Consumerism contrary to traditional patterns is not a function of needs, preferences, cultural requirements, opportunities and environmental restrictions including the natural, the cultural and the social as well as the rational expediencies (Aqa Mullaei, 2020: 195). The instinct of pleasure-seeking is the basis of consumerist life. Of course, it seems that environmental crises are more a product of the ambitions of consumerist man motivated by large companies than being an outcome of the satisfaction of intelligible needs. Secondly, human avarice in seeking natural pleasure does not have any limit and is not necessarily concerned with intelligible needs. This is acceptable that some of human needs are intelligible and one should not have any doubt of their satisfaction. But the satisfaction of these needs should be in line with the observation of environmental values such as the environmental balance. Accordingly, firstly, moral principle of “decolonization of nature” has to be followed by every type of satisfaction. Secondly, “principle of proportionality” should be observed as regards the relationship between the ecologic tolerance threshold of nature and the limitless human needs.

2) Numerous factors are involved in the creation of environmental crises. Scientism (Mohammadi, 2010: 123-130) and rationalism create the illusion that man can establish a Utopian State immune to all damages relying on empirical knowledge and his autonomous independent reason. One might be doubtful of the fact that ratiocination as a divine bounty still has the potentiality of becoming a source of deviation in man and nature instead of the creation of virtue. The answer is that though reason is a divine bounty, ratiocination and the use of reason are still different from rationalism in the sense of scientism and needlessness of revelation (Nasr, 2005: 286). The use of reason is continuously recommended by religious texts but mere reliance upon reason distances man from revelation. Today, modern man is suffering from rationalism and scientism and struggles to

resolve all crises including the environmental crisis resorting to science minus revelation. Moreover, modernity and postmodernity in anthropology are both hinged upon the worldly truth of man and they do not believe that human original truth is heavenly not worldly. In fact, western solutions for the crisis are rationalism and reliance upon human worldly aspect. In cosmology, dominant doctrines of the western man are grounded in the corporeality of nature and the latter's heavenly dimension is neglected forever. However, the present essay defends the alternative stance that defies these dominant doctrines and lays the emphasis on the forgotten heavenly dimensions of man and nature. In fact, this essay seeks to substantiate the fact that the creation of a stable environment is only possible via the reliance upon the hidden authentic truths in man and nature.

## **11. Outlining Key Points of the Essay**

- 1- Nature is seen as the self-revelation of God and then God has a permanent presence in it. Every being that is considered to be a manifestation of God is of spirituality and then it is sacred.
- 2- There is an existential homogeneity and integrity between God and nature. Thus, all creatures in the environment are of intrinsic value and the man does not have the right to destroy the nature.
- 3- All existing perfections in God exist in the nature and environment. Thus, nature is living, perceiving, intelligent and rational.
- 4- (According to the third point) since the nature has divine perfections, all elements of the world and as a result the nature and beings have a goal and end. Every existent which has a

goal and an end deserves to have a moral status. It is necessary to further explain this section. Final cause can be conceived as for the agents that have intelligence and perception, e.g. man and animal. But purposefulness of the agent does not require any type of intelligence and perception. For in final cause the conception of purpose and telos is considered but in purposefulness there is no need for perception and intelligence. Then, thinking of the purposefulness of all creatures in the natural world including the intelligent and non-intelligent entities does not imply any contradiction. However, thinking of the final cause in the non-intelligent creatures implies contradiction. What is referred to as purposefulness in man is different from the purposefulness in animal, plant and the inanimate object. Man is a purposeful creature. In every action or in all actions, man pursues a purpose that completes his/her existence. One can generalize this purposefulness and say that every agent – including the human and nonhuman agents – that does an action or a set of actions is considered to be purposeful. Animal is also a purposeful creature and does some actions in order to reach its purposes. It is this attention to the purpose that persuades the animal to design a number of movements for the sake of reaching the goal. The difference lies in the fact that the animal is conducted by the instinct not by reason. This is also the case with the plants. For evolution, the plant does a set of movements and actions that finally lead to the ultimate evolution. Then, the plant is also a purposeful creature. But since it lacks intelligence, one cannot speak of final cause in them (Ubudyyat, Ontology, 2001, 141-165).

To justify the purposefulness of the inanimate object, however, one should resort to other Sadraean principles and

rules. Using such principles and rules as the Primacy of Existence, the Analogical Gradation of Existence, and the Substantial Movement, Mulla Sadra argues that the universe with all its stages is moving towards a sublime goal. The major context of all Sadraean principles is the Doctrine of Primacy of Existence. According to this principle, Mulla Sadra believes that existence is a common ground in all creatures in the world that flows through all levels of existence in an analogically graded fashion. The highest level of existence belongs to the Necessary Being while the other levels of existence have a share of existence and relevant perfections in proportion to their own capacity. He contends that these perfections permeate into every being down to the lowest level of existence in an analogically graded fashion and in proportion to the capacity of every creature. Accordingly, such perfections as perception, intelligence and purposefulness are not specially for the man rather these perfections do also exist in the inanimate objects. This is indeed an expression of the idea of the co-extensionality of the knowledge and existence to which has been frequently discussed by Mulla Sadra. Its logical result, i.e. the enjoyment of all beings including the inanimate objects of the existential perfections, e.g. perception, power, life and telos, in all levels of existence: "*Verily the existence in everything is identical with the knowledge, power as well as other attributes of perfection of the being qua being, but this is in proportion to the existential level of the creature at stake*" (Mulla Sadra, 1967, 7). In the 6<sup>th</sup> volume of Kitab Al Asfar, he argues: "*All creatures along with the Necessary Being own existence in a graded fashion and this existence is identical with knowledge, power, will as well as other existential properties...*" (Mulla

Sadra, 1981, vol. 6, 139). Also: “*And as Existence is a unique truth flowing through all creatures in different levels and in an analogically graded form in view of the perfection and imperfection, this is also the case with the true existential properties, i.e. knowledge, power, will and life, which are flowing through all stages of existence in a form that is known only to the Mystics. Then, all creatures even the inanimate objects are living, knowing and confessing to the existence of their Creator and glorifying their Lord*” (ibid, 117). In fact, acceptance of Sadraean doctrine of Primacy of Existence will be tantamount to the acceptance of the flowing of all existential perfections through all levels of existence in accordance to the existential expanse of every being.

5- Existence of divine perfections in nature itself leads to the "personified and individuated perspective". In fact, the world is a "Major Living Man".

## 12. Conclusion

Based on the principle of analogically graded unity the following conclusions can be drawn:

A) Environmental Epistemology: all centers which are devoted to the environmental activities should form their environmental knowledge based on all prevalent methodologies and avoid mere empirical knowledge in the domain of nature. Knowledge of nature with the coordinates delineated in the principle of analogically graded unity requires the use of all potentialities which exist in the epistemology.

B) Adoption of New Laws: Since the current environmental laws have not been codified in view of nature as a conscious entity then they do not have the capability of prevention from the environmental destructions. No doubt, living, perceiving, rational and purposeful nature is a sacred being that deserves respect and moral status. Thus, we need to adopt laws in the level of such a creature.

### **13. Suggestion**

Given the fact that the principle of the analogically graded unity proves that the nature is a manifestation of God and contains all divine perfections it is suggested that such an approach to environment to be called "eco-spirituality". It seems that this new term can improve human encounter with the nature.

**Resources:**

- Abedi Sarvestani, A. 2007. *The Nature and Perspectives of Environmental Ethics with Emphasis on Islamic view*, Vol. 2, Issues 1, Tehran: Journal of Ethics in Science and Technology.
- Aqa Molaie, Sahar. 2020. *Modernity, consumer culture and lifestyle*, Journal of Culture and Communication Studies, No. 51, Research Institute of Culture, Art and Communication.
- Brennan A, Yeuk-Sze L. 2002. *Environmental ethics*. In: Zalta E N, Editor. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Available at: <http://www.plato.stanford.edu>.
- Jahanbagloo, Ramin 2008. *In Search of the Sacred*, translated by Mustafa Shahraeini, published by Ney.
- Johnson, Jayme .2014. "Bio centric Ethics and the Inherent Value of Life" umass.edu. Archived from the original (PDF)
- Minteer B A, Corley E A. Manning R E. 2003. *Environmental ethics beyond principle? The case for a pragmatic conceptualism*, Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics.
- Abedi Sarvestani, Ahmad et al. 2006. *Nature and Views of Environmental Ethics focusing on Islamic Perspective*, Tehran: Journal of Ethics in Sciences and Technology.
- Ibn Sina .2000. *Al Nijah*, edited by Mohammad Taqi Daneshpazhuh, second edition, Tehran University Press.
- Lahiji, Abd Al Razzaq. 2009. *Shawariq Al Ilham*, vol. 2, Imam Sadeq Institute, Qom.
- Mulla Sadra. 1981. *Four Journeys (Asfar)*, 8 Vol. Beirut: Dar Ehya Al Turath.
- Mulla Sadra. 1984. *Al Mashaer*, Tehran: Moula Press.

- Mulla Sadra. 1985. *Al Mazahir*, trans. Hamid Tabibyan, Amir Kabir Press, Tehran.
- Naess, A. 2001. *Ecosophy Deep versus shallow ecology*, London, Reading in Theory and Application press.
- Nasr, Sayed Hussein 2005. *Religion and the order of nature*, translated by Insha'Allah Rahmati, published by Ney.
- Mohammadi Abdolah. 2010. *Fundamentals of Critique of Modernity in the Thought of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, Journal of Knowledge, 159: 123-130.
- Pentreath, R.J. 2004. *Ethics, genetics and dynamics: An emerging systematic approach to radiation protection of the environment*. Journal of Environmental Radioactivity, 74.
- Schweitzer, A. 2001. *Reverence for Life*. London: The in sor learning press.
- Sesin V. 2003. *Environmental ethics and human interests: problems of mutual relations*, Available at:  
[http://www.fondazionelanza.it/epa/abstract/sesin\\_full.pdf](http://www.fondazionelanza.it/epa/abstract/sesin_full.pdf).
- Tabatabaei, Mohammad Hossein. 2002. *Nihayah Al Hikmah*, Qom: Islamic Press.
- Ubudyyat, A. *Ontology*. 2001. Ontology, Qom: Imam Khomeini Institute.
- Warren, Karen. 1990. “*The Power and The Promise of Ecological Feminism*”, Vol. 12, Environmental Ethics journal.

