



مركز دراسات التشريع  
الإسلامي والأخلاق  
Research Center for Islamic  
Legislation and Ethics  
عضو في جامعة حمد بن خليفة  
Member of Hamad Bin Khalifa University

ISLAM & APPLIED ETHICS

# MAJOR CONTEMPORARY ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND SOME RELIGIOUS AND ETHICAL RESOURCES FOR ADDRESSING THEM

SYED NOMANUL HAQ  
IBRAHIM OZDEMIR

COMPILED AND EDITED BY: DR FETHI B JOMAA AHMED

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## Introduction

*In the name of God,  
the Most Gracious,  
the Most Merciful*

The Research Center for Islamic Legislation and Ethics (CILE) is pleased to place into the hands of readers this series of booklets, which contain a collection of research papers that have been presented at events organized by the Center. Through these booklets, we are seeking to build a methodological platform that will contribute to the CILE's key objective, namely promoting radical reform. The type of radical reform that we are calling for is based on a fundamental concept: transformational renewal. This concept transcends traditional renovation and *a posteriori* diligence, which tends to maintain reality and adapt to it, assessing and judging its components through the system of the five categories of laws in Islam: *Wajeb* (required, obligatory); *Mandoob* (recommended); *Mubah* (permitted but morally indifferent); *Makrooh* (discouraged or abominable); and *Haram* (forbidden or prohibited); in other words, it is rather an evaluative type of jurisprudence. Transformational renovation goes beyond this intellectual space to create a kind of renovation and jurisprudence that addresses facts critically and explores reality intellectually so as to reform it, or even rebuild it if necessary. Moreover, this transformational renovation process puts forward alternative solutions for the shortcomings of the current reality, seeking to establish new means, models, and paradigms at all levels that would achieve ethical objectives. Therefore, radical reform purports to go

beyond superficial issues and directly into the crux of objectives and ethics, beyond minor details into theoretical foundations and frames of reference.

In order to implement radical reform by means of transformational renovation, religious scholars and scientists should share the responsibility. While religious scholars, in many cases, have been capable of judging reality based on specific facts provided by scientists, the task is different when it comes to diligence and transformational renovation. This is because an endeavor such as this requires an advanced and comprehensive understanding of both religion and reality. Being well-versed in Islamic Sharia sciences and being formally and partially aware of reality alone will not help bring about transformational reform unless it is accompanied with similar knowledge of our reality, and with today's scientific advancement, this is only possible by involving those specialist scientists and practitioners. The process of building reality on the foundation of proper Islamic ethics and values should be based on a deep and comprehensive understanding that will help analyze the reasons behind malice, which drive people to engage in substandard activities. This understanding may lead to alternative solutions and new practices, which are more deeply founded on scientific knowledge. Not to dismiss the sound efforts and evaluative diligence of religious scholars, neither Islamic Sharia scholars nor scientists alone should monopolize knowledge or assume sole responsibility for undertaking reforms in society.

CILE activities are noteworthy for bringing together both religious scholars and scientists. We do not seek to address the evaluative process, which is limited to understanding reality through judgment and adaptation, drawing on permissions or prohibitions. Rather, CILE events facilitate open dialogue between scholars and expert practitioners, who can then delib-

erate how best to undertake radical reforms and recommend solutions that are at once inspired by Islamic principles and supported by scientific knowledge.

While the combined work of religious scholars and scientists constitutes a fundamental methodological basis for transformational renovation, it should be coupled with many other elements pertaining to the methods, theories, and objectives of science. For instance, traditional Sharia scientific methods do not preclude the type of renovation desired. At the same time, modern science has failed to focus on ethics, as it has not addressed ethics as a fundamental issue. Rather, science relegates ethics to a secondary position. This raises the issue of the division of sciences into religious or secular sciences, and of their tendency to focus excessively on highly specialized topics without associating them with greater universal themes.

Undoubtedly, this undermines the communication between scientists from various disciplines and thwarts their efforts to work together to develop an epistemological approach that combines their knowledge to serve the important purpose of promoting ethics. Therefore, the challenge set before us is not to persuade scientists belonging to various specialties and backgrounds to work together. Rather, it is to shake them in their scientific safe havens and drive them to push through the epistemological paradigms governing their own knowledge in order to set up a new system and outline methods toward achieving renewal.

Enhancing its specialized research activities aimed at facilitating and exploring communication between religious scholars and scientists, the CILE convened a three-day closed seminar from 4th to 6th January 2014 in Doha, Qatar, to consider the contemporary challenges of and the relationship between Islamic ethics and the environment.

Outstanding scholars, experts, and intellectuals with theological and professional experience from around the world participated in the seminar including Dr Syed Nomanul Haq, Dr Ibrahim Ozdemir, Sheikh Dr Ali Alqardaghi, Dr Franz-Theo Gottwald, Dr Benjamin Hale, Dr Abdul Majeed Tribak, Sheikh Dr Abdul Majeed Al Najjar, Dr Richard (Dick) Shaw, Isabel Schatzschneider, in addition to Dr Tariq Ramadan and Chauki Lazhar. The seminar was moderated by Dr Moaal Izzidien.

The CILE requested the participants to address the following questions:

- (A) What are the major contemporary environmental issues and which religious and ethical input is available to help solve them?
- (B) What are the ethical principles that can provide a framework for addressing contemporary environmental challenges?

This booklet includes some of the research papers presented in this seminar and is a part of CILE book series which we hope will contribute to our project of transformational renewal.

CHAUKI LAZHAR, *CILE Deputy Director*

## About the Authors

SYED NOMANUL HAQ is a professor at the University of Pennsylvania. Prior to this, he held professorial positions at Rutgers, Tufts, and Brown Universities, and this followed his postdoctoral appointment at the Center of Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University. He is General Editor of Oxford University Press's *Studies in Islamic Philosophy* series, and serves on the editorial boards of several international journals, including *Islamic Studies*, and the *Journal of Islamic Science*. He is also a member of the Board of Advisors of the UN-sponsored Forum on Religion and Ecology, and of the Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute of Science and Technology, Islamabad; he is an advisor and honorary professor of Hamdard University, Karachi, and a visiting scholar of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. Dr Haq has published widely and in diverse areas, including, among many others, *Names, Natures, and Things*, which reconstructs the metaphysical system of the famous alchemist Jabir ibn Hayyan, known as "Geber" in the medieval West; and various articles in numerous international scholarly journals among which the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, the *Harvard Middle East*, and *Islamic Review*, *Daedalus and Nature*. He has also contributed to E. J. Brill's *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, *Routledge History of Islamic Philosophy*, *Blackwell Companion to Environmental Philosophy*, *Ultimate Realities* (ed. Robert Neville), *The Human Condition* (ed. Robert Neville), *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, and *The Encyclopedia of Science in Non-Western Cultures*. Dr Haq was

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Major Contemporary Environmental Issues  
and Some Religious and Ethical Resources  
for Addressing Them

Syed Nomanul Haq



“And there is no animal in the earth, nor bird that flies with its two wings, but that they are communities like yourselves”  
(Qur’an, 6:38)

I have slightly paraphrased the question given to me for the forthcoming seminar. But let me begin by citing some disturbing environmental facts of our contemporary times. First, let's have a look at what is called the Kyoto Protocol. This is an international treaty conceived under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), a 1992 environmental agreement ratified by more than 190 states, including the United States, and coming into effect in 1994 with the goal of preventing dangerous anthropogenic interference of the climate system. The UN Convention reports that industrialized countries are principally responsible for the current high levels of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the atmosphere owing to their industrial activity during the past 150 years or so. This industrial activity can be described as ruthless, carried out largely without moral scruples, and involving massive deforestation and burning of fossil fuels, with the disappearance of as many as half the world's tropical and temperate forests. One alarming result of all of this is widely known to us – the greenhouse effect, a phenomenon that manifests itself in the rise of the surface temperature of the planet earth due to re-radiation of GHGs shooting back to the planet, the phenomenon we

ordinarily call global warming. Over the course of the past 100 years, the earth's mean surface temperature has increased by about 0.8°C (1.4°F); two-thirds of this increase came to pass only since 1980.

But back to the Kyoto Protocol. This Protocol to UNFCCC was signed in 1997 to be entered into force in 2005. Note that both the US and Canada were signatories of this agreement but then the former refused to ratify it, whereas the latter withdrew from it altogether in 2011. The Protocol made it legally binding on many industrialized states to limit and reduce their emission of GHGs during the period of 2008–2012. Then it was in Doha in 2012 that an amendment was proposed and adopted, adding a second seven-year commitment period to the Protocol, the period running from 2013 to 2020. While in the first commitment phase, 37 industrialized countries and the European Community had committed to reduce GHG emissions to an average of 5% against 1990 levels, the Doha Amendment now committed to a reduction of 18% below 1990 levels during the second phase.

A few significant facts ought to be noted here. First, the Doha Amendment has still *not* entered into legal force despite the UN Secretary-General's insistence on its prompt acceptance. Second, many industrialized countries that had participated in the Protocol's first commitment phase have refused to take on new targets of the second phase – Japan, New Zealand, and Russia among these.

Third, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine, all of which are party to the Amendment, have announced that they are withdrawing from it or that they may not recognize its legal force whenever it acquires this force. Fourth, as noted already, Canada, which was a party to the initial phase of the Protocol, withdrew from it during the first commitment period, and that

the US never ratified it to begin with.

But there is a fifth fact to be carved in our ethical consciousness: and it is that the Kyoto Protocol has become a politically contentious and messy issue: its detractors dismiss it as inequitable, since it places a heavier burden of reducing GHG emissions and environmental responsibility on industrialized countries than on the rest of the world, rejecting it not only as unworkable and unrealistic, but also ill-conceived. The Protocol's supporters, on the other hand, point to the fact that the anthropogenic build-up of CO<sub>2</sub> in the earth's atmosphere is largely the responsibility of the industrialized countries, with 77% of emissions between 1750 and 2004 arising from these countries; then, they also point out that per capita emissions here are more than three times those in the developing countries, and so the argument is made that the legal onus upon the industrialized world for GHG control reduction ought to be more stringent.

Environmentally concerned groups and the Protocol's supporters say that with the rejection of this treaty by the US, there is little hope of success in achieving a reduction of dangerous emissions. They argue that if this largest economy of the world, which burns more fuel that contributes to global warming than any other country of the world (EIA), remains on the sidelines and makes itself exempt from the Protocol, then this whole international initiative could easily be rendered ineffective in the long run. The US, on its part, makes its case on two grounds. Pointing out what it considers an inequity, it questions the comparatively looser emission restrictions imposed by the Protocol on China and India, two of the biggest and most populated developing countries. Note that according to the 2005 figures, in a ranking of 186 countries of the world, China indeed ranked number one in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, just above the US which stood in the second place, with India in the seventh position.

The United States' second ground for not ratifying the Protocol is economic; it will have crippling effects on the US economy, it is claimed, increasing even further the dependence on foreign oil, raising the price of fuel and energy, and costing a huge number of jobs. Again, this position has elicited much international and domestic criticism, accusing the US of narrowly privileging its own economy and financial security over international cooperation and environmental ethics. Critics remind us that the 2007 survey ranked the US to be the world's number one in total primary energy consumption. Ratifiers of the Protocol also cite the fact that between 1970 and 1995, the US represented about one-third of the world's total material consumption, whereas its population accounts only for less than 5% of the global total. And between 1950 and 2005, environmental groups have pointed out, worldwide metal production grew sixfold, oil consumption eightfold, and natural gas consumption fourteenfold. In total, they tell us that about 50% more resources are now extracted annually than just 30 years ago, with the average American using some 88 kilograms of resources daily, more than twice the average European. But let's pause here and note this: in the world ranking of per capita GHG emissions based on the data of the year 2000, Qatar stood on the very top; UAE came second; and the US ranked sixth.

### **Where Do We Stand Then?**

Without taking any political sides, we do note something ominous in the world situation with regard to environmental policies: that, effectively, there is no legally binding international agreement for a reduction of dangerous anthropogenic atmospheric emissions; in terms of concrete policies, then,

there exists a vacuum. In fact, the world, especially that part of the world most intensely engaged in industrial activity and massive energy consumption, has not even reached a consensus as to how we go about reversing the onset of what can be called our ecological crisis; the word “crisis” here is no artificial dramatization.

I am not a scientist, nor a policymaker. My formation has occurred in the soil of humanistic disciplines, and formally I have been trained in intellectual history. Now when I view the environmental crisis in the depth of a historical perspective, I feel that, ultimately, the crisis is of an intellectual and ethical kind generating an attitude to nature, to human societies, and our moral position with regard to our relationship with fellow human beings on the one hand, and with nature on the other. It seems to me that Francis Bacon’s aggressive attitude to the non-human world, expressed as long ago as the 17<sup>th</sup> century, has not quite dissipated as yet. “Beat nature to submission”; “Force nature to yield its laws so that we can manipulate and exploit them”; “Bring the cosmos to subservience” – the merciless attitudes enshrined in these Baconian slogans may have been verbally softened in our times, as they certainly are, but in practice – as far as actual world policies are concerned – they still appear to rule unabated. Indeed, environmental concerns have been surrendered to the business of the academia, and to the preoccupation of “green” private organizations, social groups, a few UN bodies and non-government organizations, and some conscientious individuals – all of them without any executive teeth.

As I see it, it is urgent that we develop our ecological discourses in a historical–ethical perspective and consider some tough questions. This world of ours is divided up into so many sovereign countries – we now call them “nation-states,” geo-

graphical regions occupying their own territories within their marked borders that are internationally recognized and coercively fixed with the force of both domestic and international laws. But this is the world of multiple “polities,” a world often configured and carved out of the globe under the pressures of power politics, embodying a set of policies that are frequently governed by colonial ambitions. And just as these polities in many cases happen to be manufactured by us, the human beings, rather than having been formed in the bosom of sustained historical processes, this human-made division of the globe and the “ownership” of its fragments are often very awkward in ecological terms too, interrupting, cutting up, diverting, and consuming the world resources in what may legitimately be described as unnatural ways. So the bits and pieces of the world of *polities* have no parallels in the *ecological* world. The environment does not recognize “national” boundaries; in this realm, the whole of humanity, indeed all creatures of the whole natural world, are connected.

Given this, it makes little sense to take a local, “parochial” approach to our natural resources, without regard to the rest of the world, and to conceive and effect *neighbor-blind* policies for the exploitation of these resources. Inherently isolationist, I am talking about policies aimed at making unbridled economic gains, or sanctioned for the purposes of supporting and promoting a consumerist lifestyle, a lifestyle that is both indulgent and wasteful. But then, on the other hand, there is a domestic side of the matter too: the ruthless commercial exploitation of the sovereignly “owned” natural resources does not make much domestic sense either, neither does the interference without sensitivity into the ecological balance of the world. It is no poetic flourish to say that any offense against nature recoils back upon the offender. And this is what the Qur’an calls *zulm al-nafs*

(self-injury). Shifting squarely into an ethical mode, let me point out that here we are talking about two sets of responsibilities – one, toward others; two, toward ourselves. Note further that here “others” also includes the non-human world; that is, including all animate and inanimate entities of the planet.

Very recently, a world finance expert, Ishrat Husain, who served as Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan observed:

“[Economic development] strategies of the past, however successful in boosting growth and alleviating poverty, have given rise to second-generation problems ...Consumption standards of advanced countries that are being imitated by developing countries are likely to give rise to [further] global warming due to heav[ier] emission of carbon dioxide caused by increase in the consumption of fossil fuels. Income inequalities, the concentration of income in the top 1pc of the population and regional disparities resulting from rapid growth have become a threat to social cohesion and harmonious ties within multi-ethnic nation-states. It’s therefore obvious that these strategies have to be altered in fundamental ways to ensure environmental sustainability and social equity in addition to economic efficiency” (*Dawn*, December 17, 2013).

### **Self-Injury, Trust, and the Laws of Nature: The Qur’an as a Source of Environmental Ethics**

I just referred to a central ethical principle of the Qur’an, namely *zulm al-nafs*. Indeed, the cosmological-moral thrust of this sacred religious text can serve as a powerful ethical resource for addressing contemporary environmental issues that I have

identified. Also it appears to be a legitimate claim that when we approach this scriptural thrust humanistically, rather than just parochially, its guiding principles carry much value not only for Muslims but also for the entire humanity without prejudice. Let's note at the very outset that in its totality the Qur'anic text operates in two modes of discourse – metaphysical–cosmological mode, on the one hand, and naturalistic–operational mode, on the other. An important point to note here is that these two modes run in the text as crosscurrents; they flow into each other, feed into each other in multiple, complex, but coherent dispositions.

So we begin with the observation that the Qur'anic notion of the world of phenomena and the natural environment is semantically and ontologically linked with the very concept of God on the one hand, and with the general principle of the creation of humanity on the other. In other words, there is no conceptual discontinuity in the Qur'an between the realms of the divine, of nature, and of humanity. Speaking metaphysically, nature had a transcendental significance since it could not explain its own being, and thereby pointed to something beyond itself. It functioned as the means through which God communicated to humanity, the means through which, one may say, God made an entry into the flow of time. Indeed, natural entities were so many signs, or *ayat* (singular *aya*), of God, like the multiplicity of the verses of the Qur'an, which, too, were *ayat*. Thus, even though natural objects and the Qur'anic verses had different status, they were metaphysically on par with each other.

Speaking morally, human beings were created by God as His vicegerents (*khalifa*; pl. *khulafa'*) in the physical world lying within the finite boundaries of time, and they were world-bound even before they committed their first transgression in the Garden. But the very principle of God's vicegerency also



made them His servants (*'abd*; pl. *'ibad*) who were – by virtue of a Primordial Covenant (*mithaq*) they had affirmed, and a Trust (*amana*) they had taken upon themselves in pre-eternity – the custodians of the entire natural world. Humanity was thus transcendently charged not to violate the “due measure” (*qadr*) and balance (*mizan*) that God had created in the larger cosmic whole.

Speaking naturalistically, the physical world existed to nourish, support, and sustain the process of life – in particular, human life. And the whole cosmos was an integral system, governed by unchanging natural laws (*amr*; pl. *awamir*), which were God’s immutable commands. These laws explained the regularity and uniformity in natural processes which cannot possibly be violated in the general run of things.

We see, then, that in the fullness of the Qur’an, Adam’s superiority over other creatures and his regency over nature arise in a context that is highly complex, with its interlocking metaphysical, moral, and naturalistic dimensions. Indeed, with regard to the environment and humanity’s relationship to it, the position of the Qur’an can only be understood in a framework that is coherently constructed out of the range of notions that have been summarily referred to—the notions of *khilafa* (vicegerency), *amana* (trust), and *amr* (command) central among them.

When one examines Islam as a function, operating in the real contingencies of historical forces, one notes that it has bequeathed in its normative tradition a large body of principles governing both the ethico-legal and practical issues concerning the physical world and our encounter with it. Thus, in the Hadith – the authenticated corpus of the Holy Apostle (and sometimes his Companions’) traditions which functions as a binding moral guide and, more formally, as one of the two material sources

(*usul*) of Islamic law (*fiqh*) – there are to be found numerous reports concerning the general status and meaning of nature, and concerning agriculture, livestock, water resources birds, plants, animals, and so on. Quite remarkably, the Hadith corpus also contains two policy principles of land distribution and consecration, called *hima* and *haram*. Further articulated by Muslim legists, these two related principles, both of which have the sense of a protected/forbidden place or a sanctuary, developed into legislative acts not only for land equity but also for environmental ethics; *hima* and *haram* were incorporated fully into the larger body of the Islamic legal code.

The principle of *hima* is particularly well developed in the Maliki legal school – one of the four schools of law which are followed by the vast majority of Muslims – there are several other Hadith- and Qur’an-based environmental concepts that have been formally articulated in Islamic legal writings in general. One of them, for example, is the concept of *mawat*, literally “waste land,” a concept developed and discussed in great detail by some legists, appearing along with extensive discussions of rivers and other water resources, their distribution, maintenance, rights, and control. Likewise, Islamic legislative rules governing hunting and treatment of animals, including game, arise directly out of moral imperatives in the Qur’an and Hadith. These rules operating at once in a legal as well as an ethical framework. Given this, it is in principle possible to construct from this source of Islamic legal literature a fairly coherent and comprehensive system of environmental philosophy and ethics – both theoretical and practical. But this is something that will only be pointed to in this essay, rather than carried out in its fullness.

## No Separation between the Divine Environment and the Natural Environment: The Qur’anic Metaphysics of Nature

One of the fundamental and most striking features of Qur’anic metaphysics is the linkage it forges between the transcendental and the historical – that is, between that which exists in an intelligible world beyond space and time, and that which is bounded by and lies within the real spatio-temporal world with a finite beginning and an end. Expressed in religious terms, this means that the Qur’an does not admit of a separation between the natural environment and the divine environment. Indeed, nature in its Qur’anic conception is *anchored in the divine*, both functionally and metaphysically. “It is of utmost significance,” it has been pointed out by a scholar, “that in the Qur’an God is said to be All-Encompassing (*Muhit*), as in the verse, ‘But to God belong all things in the heavens and on the earth; And He it is who encompasseth (*Muhit*) all things’ (4:126); and that the term *Muhit* also means the environment” (Nasr). We must note very carefully that the Qur’an’s concepts of God, nature, and humanity all have their roots in the transcendental realm and then issue forth into the moral–historical field.

When we read the dramatic story of the creation of Adam in the Qur’anic chapter named after an animal, “The Cow,” we note the striking fact that God announces to the angels His intention to “create a *khalifa* (vicegerent) on the earth” (2: 30) – to this, angels make a protestation. That the earth was going to be Adam’s abode seems, then, to be an integral component of the very concept of God’s vicegerency that was to be bestowed upon humanity. By a legitimate rational extrapolation, we can say that even if Adam and “his pair” (*zauj*) had not been swayed by satanic beguiling and had resisted the temptation of going near the forbidden tree, they would still have ended up here

on the earth – this was part of the divine plan throughout. The consequences here are far-reaching indeed. Thus, for example, there is no scope in the Qur’anic context for thinking that human existence in historical time is a curse, or that the vast cosmic ocean of natural forces in which we are plunged is opposed to grace, or that salvation consists in a process of recovery of a lost glory whereby nature is to be humbled by the miraculous. The creation of Adam, one notes, is a transcendental phenomenon, but in its very conception it is linked to real life *here on earth*, linked to the historical, that is.

Humanity was not created merely for sport, the Qur’an declares, it had a purpose – the purpose, namely, of creating a moral order in the real world. The human being was God’s vicegerent, who in his very essence was a theomorphic being. Thus, operating in the transcendental mode, the Qur’an speaks of the “Primordial Covenant” that God had elicited from humanity: “And when your Lord extracted from the children of Adam – from their spinal cord – their entire progeny and made them witness upon themselves, saying, ‘Am I not your Lord?’ And they replied, ‘No doubt You are. We bear witness!’ ...” (7: 172–3). The expression, “*Alastu bi-Rabbikum*” (Am I not your Lord?), rings loud until this day in the chambers of Islam, its mystical possibilities most creatively realized in Sufi thought and poetry.

### **Moral Yields: Unbridled Powers over Nature?**

But what are the moral yields of all this in the real world? Quite simply, it means, and so it has meant in Islam’s normative tradition, that human beings cannot arrogate to themselves absolute power and capricious control over nature – they must submit to the commands of their Lord. And it is these commands that constitute God’s Sharia, literally “path” or “way,” which is given to

humanity not as a fully articulated body of laws, one must note, but rather in the form of “indicators” (*adilla*) spread throughout God’s *ayat*. It is precisely the ferreting out of these indicators wherein lies the process of *fiqh*, or “understanding,” a familiar term that is generally translated as “Islamic law.” Indeed, the word “Islam” literally means submission – submission of the human will to the Divine Command, and this is the crux of humanity’s regency over nature.

Thus, it is in a moral context – connecting the immediate to the ultimate – that the Qur’an speaks about God making nature “subject to” humanity (*sakhhara lakum*): it is made clear that this does not mean granting of unbridled exploitative powers, for human beings in their turn must remain subservient to God, and that it is His, not our, command that nature follows. So we read: “And He hath made subject to you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth – it is all from Him. Lo! Herein indeed are portents for those who reflect” (45:13). And again:

“It is God who hath created the heavens and the earth, and sendeth down rain from the skies, and with it bringeth out fruit wherewith feed you. It is He who hath made ships subject to you, that they may sail through the sea by His command (*amr*). And the rivers [too] hath he made subject to you. And He hath made subject to you the sun and the moon – both diligently pursuing their courses. And the night and the day hath he [also] made subject to you. And He giveth you of all that ye ask for. But if ye count the favors of God, never will ye be able to number them. Indeed, humanity is given up to injustice and ingratitude” (14: 32–4).

Likewise, speaking of sacrificial animals which were, let us note, symbols from God:

“The sacrificial animals We have made for you as among the symbols from God. In them is much good for you. Then pronounce the name of God over them. Eat ye thereof, and ... with due humility feed the beggar. Thus have We made animals subject to you, that ye may be grateful ... that ye may glorify God for His guidance to you: And proclaim the Good News to all who do right!” (22: 36–7).

To whom belongs the dominion over the creation? The answer is clear and explicit: “Knowest thou not that to God belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth?” (2: 107); “Yea, to God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. And to God is the final goal [of all]” (24: 42).

So we observe that while the creation of nature has according to the Qur’an its roots in the transcendental realm, it manifests itself in historical time in the *real* world where humanity is charged to establish a moral order – but, then, being an embodiment of God’s symbols or signs, nature ultimately recoils back into the transcendental. It is precisely these metaphysical linkages between the immediate and the ultimate that constitute the most characteristic feature of Qur’an’s entire philosophy of being. And this is what that familiar Qur’anic expression epitomizes which is so frequently heard all over the Muslim world, echoing throughout its history: *Inna li’l-Lahi wa inna ilayhi raji’un* – “Surely, we are from God and to Him we return” (2: 156).

### **Humanity: An Accountable Entity of Nature**

It is clear that in the Qur’anic teaching humankind’s superiority lies not in its enjoying any higher powers or control among created beings – it lies rather in the fact that human beings are

accountable before God, like no other creature. This accountability arises out of the onus of global trusteeship that human beings, at their very transcendental origin, had placed daringly upon their shoulders – a trusteeship that is considered to be part of the very human essence. So we note that the Qur’an speaks of the “Trust” (*al-amana*) that God had offered to the heavens and the earth and the mountains; they refused to accept it, being frightened of the burden involved. But humankind accepted it, and bore the Trust.

So enormous is the moral onus of this human undertaking, indeed, that the Qur’an recognizes it by way of what has been called a “tender rebuke” to humanity: “Surely, humankind is unfair to itself and foolhardy” (33: 72). It is an interesting Qur’anic paradox that human superiority in the created world turns out to be an attribute that is exceedingly humbling – in fact, the Qur’an at one place goes as far as to say that the rest of the creation is a matter *greater than* the creation of people: “Assuredly the creation of the heavens and the earth is [a matter] greater than the creation of people: Yet most people understand not!” (40: 57).

It is important to note in this analysis that when the Qur’an speaks about the actual process of the creation of human beings, it operates utterly in a naturalistic context. Thus, humankind is presented as a thoroughly natural creation, for Adam was fashioned out of baked clay (*salsal*), from mud molded into shape (*hama’ masnun*) (15:26, 28, 33); from dust (*turab*) (22: 5); from earth (*tin*) (6: 2; 7:12, etc.), which produced through a confluence of natural processes an extract, *sulala*, that functions as reproductive semen. At one place we read a rather full account:

“Humankind We did create from a reproductive extract of clay. Then We placed him as a drop of sperm in

a receptacle, secure. Then we made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood. Then of that clot We made a fetus lump. Then We made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh ... So blessed be God, the Best of Creators!” (23: 13–14).

Indeed, in the very first verse of what is generally believed to be chronologically the very first revelation in the Qur’an (96), humankind is declared to have been created out of a clot of congealed blood (*‘alaq*). There is to be found, most significantly, *nothing* supernatural in the Qur’anic explanation of the real biological processes of the formation of the human animal.

To be sure, the Qur’an is full of references to nature, natural forces, natural phenomena, and natural beings, and out of its 114 chapters some 31 are named after these. And in all cases, the physical world in its *real* operation is treated in a *naturalistic* framework, in the framework of physical forces and processes that occur uniformly and with regularity – and this despite the fundamental fact that in the Qur’anic metaphysics, as we have noted already, nature is anchored ultimately in the transcendental. Note that in the Qur’anic methodology, the metaphysical–transcendental and the natural–historical are interlinked but do not mix substantively, nor do they, enter into a combat. Therefore, at the *operational* level – or, one may say, for immediate scientific and technological aims – the natural world can legitimately be considered a fully organized system that is self-governing and practically autonomous. Ironic as it may sound, for concrete planning purposes the Qur’an may be read in a “secular” context – that is, containing guiding principles valid for all communities of the world, Muslim or non-Muslim.

But let’s move with the Qur’an. So we see: while humankind bears the burden of global trusteeship, the trust, and functions as God’s vicegerent here in the world, these are its transcenden-



tal attributes that must be linked to the real. In the actual world, then, as it exists in the immediate palpable reality, human beings are *part of nature*; they are a natural entity, subject fully to the laws of nature just like any other entity, participating as an integral element in the overall ecological balance (*mizan*) that exists in the larger cosmic whole. And in the teachings of the Qur'an this would mean that to damage, offend, or destroy the balance of the natural environment is to damage, offend, or destroy oneself. Any injury inflicted upon "the other" is self-injury (*zulm al-nafs*) – and this is a central principle of Qur'anic ethics.

All this has a parallel in the Qur'anic discourses on God, discourses to which it is coherently connected. Thus, on the metaphysical–transcendental side, we have for example:

“Allah alone [is God], there is no God but He, the Alive the Sustainer, neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. To Him belong whatever is in the heavens and on the earth – Who can, then, intercede with Him except, whom He permits? He knows what is before them and what is behind them, while they encompass none of his knowledge, except what He permits. His Throne envelops the heavens and the earth and their preservation fatigues Him not – He is the High, the Great” (2: 255).

God's attributes, we note, are here specified in familiar terms but such as to transcend nature, and even human understanding. There are no naturalistic arguments here; rather the claim is that all is under divine control, and this is a metaphysical claim. The Qur'an here reiterates metaphysically God's absolute centrality in the whole system of existence. But then rises the current of a naturalistic discourse operating in the moral field, speaking of the heavens and the earth, rivers and water, mountains and oceans, orchards and vegetation, and other

natural entities and phenomena. So, for example:

“And who other than He created the heavens and the earth and sent down for you water from the sky whereby We cause to grow lush orchards – for it is not up to you to cause their trees to grow! Is there, then, a god beside God? Yet these are the people who ascribe partners to Him! And who other than He made the earth a firm abode (for you), and set rivers traversing through it, and put firm mountains therein and scaled off one ocean from another? Is there, then, a god beside God? ... And who other than He responds to the distressed one when he calls Him and He relieves him of the distress and who had made you His vicegerent on earth? Is there, then, a god beside God? – Little do you reflect. And who other than He guides you in the darkness of the land and the sea? And who sends forth winds heralding His mercy (sc. rain)? Is there, then, a god beside God? For exalted be He above what they associate with Him! And who other than He brings forth His creation and then re-creates it? And who gives you sustenance from the heaven and the earth? Is there, then, a god beside God? Say [O Prophet!]: Bring your proof if you are right [in associating others with God]” (27: 60–4).

God’s lordship, stated elsewhere in metaphysical terms as we noted, is here being elucidated in terms of its expression in the naturalistic realm – and this is being done with rhetorical embellishment which adds a particular force and urgency to the message. Divine lordship, the Qur’an is here pointing out, manifests itself *in* and is *expressed through* God’s creation – that is, *the entirety of nature*. Again, note the linkage between the immediate and the ultimate, between the transcendental and the temporal.

## Nature: Embodiment of Cosmic Laws, Guidance, and Mercy

Nature, then, serves as a means of God's *stanzil* (sending down) of guidance to humanity. As we have observed already, the whole cosmos was but an embodiment of God's bountiful signs (*ayat*): these signs could not explain their own existence, thereby pointing to a creator beyond. And, again, all natural entities were contingent upon sustenance that must come from other than themselves; thus, by virtue of their very being they all perpetually testified to God's glory - "The seven heavens and the earth and whatever is therein sing the glories of God" (17:44; 57:1; 59:1; 61:1; 13: 15; 16: 49; 22: 18; 55: 6: 7: 206; 21: 19). The significant thing to note here is the Qur'anic doctrine that nature exists *essentially* in the temporal world, and follows God's *amr* – *amr* on the operational level is to be understood as the system of immutable and independent *laws of nature*. These laws were both uniform and knowable – and here one notes the corollary that the Qur'an has opened up the possibility of scientific investigation of the cosmos.

The word, *amr*, which literally means "command," denotes in the Qur'anic context a universal operative principle whereby every created natural entity plays its assigned role and takes its assigned place as an integral element in the larger cosmic whole: and this according to the command it uniquely receives from God. Thus, it was the *amr* of an acorn to grow into an oak tree; and that of an egg to hatch into a bird; and that of sperm to develop into an embryo; and that of the sun to rise from the far horizon. In other words, laws of nature express God's commands, commands that nature cannot possibly violate – and this explains why the entire world of phenomena is declared muslim (note the lower case "m") by the Qur'an: "Do they, then, seek an obedience other than that to God, while it is to Him

that everyone [and everything] in the heavens and the earth submits [*aslama*]” (3: 83). From the divine act of the creation of the *ayat* to the human act of belief or disbelief in God – we have here an integral conceptual system in which the transcendental is coherently linked to the naturalistic, the temporal.

But, on the other hand, and not in isolation from all this, there existed another aspect to the creation of nature. Nature was an embodiment of God’s mercy. Indeed, it has been observed frequently that in the totality of the Qur’anic teachings God’s mercy and his omnipotence are inseparable: “These two perfections are the two poles of divine action, at the same time contrasted and complementary” (Gardet, 1987, p. 30). God’s creative action was a special expression of his mercy – for not only did he bestow being upon his creation, he also provided sustenance for that creation; and sent guidance for that creation; and made himself the very end (*al-Akhir*) (57: 3) to which the entire created world was ordained by him to return finally.

The Qur’an abounds in references to the bounty of nature as an undeniable expression of God’s mercy. Indeed, this is the very refrain of the collection of the verses that bears as its title God’s exclusive Qur’anic attribute, *al-Rahman*, the Merciful. Speaking eloquently of nature’s bounty and the naturalistic cosmic order as constituting divine favors and blessings, and asking rhetorically as to how they can possibly be denied, the Qur’an says in a powerful sweep:

“The sun and the moon follow courses exactly computed. And the stars and the trees, both alike bow in adoration. And the Firmament – God has raised it high, and set the Balance ... It is He Who has spread out the earth for His creatures: Therein is fruit and date palms, with their clusters sheathed. Also corn, with its leaves and stalk for fodder, and sweet-smelling plants ...”

And then emerges the resounding question, which serves here, as the refrain: “So, which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?” Again, referring back to the world in a naturalistic mode: “He created human beings from sounding clay, like the potter’s . . . He let free the two seas that meet together, between them is a barrier that they do not transgress . . . Out of them come pearls and coral.” Then rises the finale of the matter at hand: “Of God seeks [its sustenance] every creature in the heavens and on the earth. Every day in a new splendor, does He shine!” The intervening refrain goes on throughout: “So which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?” (55: 5–29).

### **Metaphysical Equivalences: Prophecy/Nature/ and Revelation/Nature**

Given that the natural world is an embodiment of God’s signs (*ayat*), and given that it is an expression of God’s mercy (*rahma*), we have here a case of a unique metaphysical equivalence between nature and prophecy, and thereby between natural entities and Revelation. Through the created world God sent His guidance; but then, he also guided human beings directly in an articulated and clear language (*bayan*), speaking to them through His revealed word – and the Qur’an, indeed, was this very speech (*kalam*) of God.

Just as natural entities exist in the form of real-historical objects, so God’s Revelation is delivered by a real-historical Prophet, a human apostle who is no god and no supernatural being but is “from amongst yourselves” (9: 128). Just as nature is a guide, so is the Prophet a guide (*hadi*) (13: 7). Just as nature receives and follows God’s *amr*, so does the Prophet receive “a spirit from [God’s] *amr*” (45: 52) which the Prophet himself and the rest of the humanity ought to follow. Just as natural enti-

ties are called *ayat*, so the verses of the Qur'an are called *ayat*. And just as natural entities, God's *ayat*, express and manifest God's mercy, so Prophet Muhammad, the one chosen to receive God's speech, His *ayat*, was "nothing but a mercy (*rahma*) to all beings" (21:107).

Again, we note the characteristic parallelism between the natural field and the moral field, between the transcendental and the historical. And again we note the conceptual linkages between the divine, human, and natural realms, constituting a highly complex but coherent and integral system.



Rethinking Human–Environment Relations  
(A Response to the Paper Presented by Dr Syed  
Nomanul Haq)

Ibrahim Ozdemir



## **Introduction**

In 2012, the Associated Press (AP) ran a story about the plight of environmental consciousness and activism in Muslim societies, in fact among imams (a person who leads prayers in a mosque) and it was reporting from Doha. According to the story, “at Friday prayers in Qatar’s most popular mosques, the imam discussed the civil war in Syria, the unrest in Egypt and the UN endorsement of an independent state of Palestine. Not a word about climate change, even though the Middle Eastern nation of Qatar is hosting a UN conference where nearly 200 countries are trying to forge a joint plan to fight global warming, which climate activists say is the greatest modern challenge to mankind” (Casey & Ritter, 2012).

The reaction of Adham Hassan, a worshipper from Jordan streaming out of Omer Ibn al-Khatabb mosque in Doha, when asked what he thinks about the issue was that: “Unfortunately the Arab and Islamic countries have political and economic problems.” Moreover, he argues that “Islam calls for the protection of the environment, but the Muslim countries are mostly poor and they didn’t cause pollution and aren’t affected by climate change.” If that was Hassan’s personal view, it would be understandable. Unfortunately, many Muslim policymakers and even scientists also defend the same argument. According to them, environmentalism is a new game of the capitalist

West which aims to prevent the development of Muslim countries. Therefore, Muslims also should use and exploit natural resources of their economic and political development. Interestingly, AP contacted six mosques in the Qatari capital, Doha, and “only one included an environmental message in the Friday prayers, telling those in attendance to plant trees, shun extravagance and conserve water and electricity.” This was also considered an indication of Muslim imams’ superficial understanding of environmental issues. To use terminology by the Norwegian deep eco-philosopher A. Naees, it was an indication of “shallow environmentalism” of imams regarding global environmental problems.

The reporters concluded that although “the Qur’an is filled with more than 1,500 verses to nature and Earth, the voice of Islamic leaders is missing from the global dialogue on warming.”

I am grateful to Professor Syed Nomanul Haq for the stimulus of his paper and the opportunity it presents to re-think the relationship between major contemporary environmental issues (problems) and some religious and ethical resources for addressing them in a creative and meaningful way. I should at the beginning say as a perfectly general point that the concept of the environment that is reflected in the contemporary environmental movement(s) is the concept of holism. It is very likely that we come across the motto “everything is connected to everything else” (Commoner, 1972). This holistic ideal, as we see in Haq’s paper, echoes in the common environmentalist slogan that “humans are part of nature” (Jamieson, 2008, p. 3).

This state of affairs in Muslim societies is alarming and even troubling when we look at the future. It means that we Muslims, the heir of a rich and glorious tradition – as very often said – are

occupying ourselves with trivial daily problems, not giving a second thought to what kind of future we are preparing for ourselves, and most importantly for our grandchildren. In fact, as Jacques Attali, a former adviser to the French President, Francois Mitterand, reminds us, it is time for us to stop for a moment and ask ourselves the following questions and to ponder about them: “What will planet Earth be like in twenty years? At mid-century? In the year 2100?” And the ultimate question he asks is: “Will we leave our children and grandchildren a world that is not only viable but better, or in this nuclear world bequeath to them a planet that will be a living hell?” (Attali, 2009). Either way, he warns, the time to act is now. We must do something not only for the environment but for ourselves and future generations. Of course, it can be philosophically asked and debated if we have any rights at all to unborn subjects of the future. In fact, environmentalists often claim that the classical ethical theories and all their contemporary versions and off-springs are anthropocentric; that is, they take as their subject matter the relation of human with human only or the relationship of humans with society. Moreover, those theories define the good and the bad in terms of action-pattern. In other words, the pattern of action is short-termed. The results of any action do not pass the limits of time and space. There is no explicit moral obligation, as it is understood from all those theories toward the natural world or non-human beings. This important feature of old theories is stated forcefully by Hans Jonas as follows:

“To be sure, the old prescriptions of the ‘neighbor’ ethics – of justice, charity, honesty, and so on – still hold in their intimate immediacy for the nearest, day-by-day sphere of human interaction. But this sphere is overshadowed by a growing realm of collective action where doer,

deed, and effect are no longer the same as they were in the proximate sphere, and which by the enormity of its power forces upon ethics a new dimension of responsibility never dreamed of before” (Jonas, 1984, p. 6).

However, an interesting development has emerged out of old traditions, that is, the old issues define themselves in the context of new problems. As a result, old conceptions of ethics are redefined, criticized, and most importantly developed to the point that they can regulate human interaction with the natural world (Ozdemir, 2008). Therefore, Haq’s paper and also others presented at this seminar as a contribution to these new intellectual works, can help us to develop a better understanding of human–nature relationship. Moreover, eco-philosopher Henryk Skolimowski says that “in every society there must be people who are looking forward to the future with foresight and clarity” (Skolimowski, 1990). I think this seminar by the Center for Islamic Legislation and Ethics (CILE) may be regarded as a humble response to this call. When reading Syed Nomanul Haq’s paper, I also see such a forward looking scholar. He tries to outline the major environmental problems first and then how Muslims can develop environmental ethics of their own. I will try my best to emphasize some major points this paper makes and also list some comments and critiques to reach a better understanding of the problem at hand.

### **Major Problems and Power Politics or Politics of Power**

Haq reminds us at the outset that he is “not a scientist, nor a policymaker,” and, moreover, that his formation has occurred “in the soil of humanistic disciplines, and formally he had been trained in intellectual history.” When he views the environmen-

tal crisis in the depth from a historical perspective, he feels that, ultimately, the crisis is of an intellectual and ethical kind generating an attitude to nature, to human societies, and our moral position with regard to our relationship with fellow human beings, on the one hand, and with nature, on the other. It seems to me that Haq, as an intellectual historian, is pointing to a very important dimension regarding how to approach environmental problems and suggest some solutions. I agree with him that it is time for scientist and scholars of different fields and disciplines not only to understand environmental problems with their diverse backgrounds in the spirit of an interdisciplinary and beyond disciplinary approach, but also to come out with fresh and different proposals to respond to the global environmental challenges. In fact, the very global and complex nature of environmental problems compels us to think differently. We can also remember what Einstein said once: “we can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.”

Interestingly, the UN also approached the issue in a similar way, when it asked scientists to understand the climate change first, and then to come up with solutions. After painstaking studies and work, a draft report authored by 2,500 scientists was released in Paris on February 2, 2007. Alarmingly, the report warned of more heatwaves, floods, droughts, and rising seas linked to greenhouse gases released mainly from burning fossil fuels. After six years, the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released a new report which underlines that scientists are now 95 to 100 percent certain that humans are cranking up the global thermostat. What is interesting according to these two reports is that scientists believe with near certainty that “human activity is the cause of most

of the temperature increases of recent decades” (Mole, 2013). I think it is very interesting and revealing to see – maybe for the first time in the history of science – such unanimous agreement by scientists on a subject.

Although Haq takes climate change as a case study, we can bring to mind other major environmental problems. Jared Diamond, one of America’s most celebrated scholars and a professor of geography and physiology at the University of California, classified major environmental problems as “deforestation, the impending end of the tropical rainforests, over-fishing, soil erosion, soil salinization, global climate change, full utilization of the world’s fresh water supplies, bumping up against the photosynthetic ceiling, exhaustion of energy reserves, accumulation of toxics in water, food and soil, increase of the world’s population, and increase of our per capita input” (Diamond, 2005). What is interesting is that all these problems also result from human activities (Elisabeth & Andrew, 2007). Therefore, any alternative response to environmental problems and degradation has to deal with human–nature relations as a whole. We should not forget what Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor once reminded us that “ecological protests all over the globe are an outcry against the unreflecting growth of technological society” (Taylor, 1995, p. 100). Here, it should be interesting to ask who is responsible for the “unreflecting growth?” In other words, are the philosophers of developmental theories or policymakers responsible for our unhealthy relationship with the natural world? In this context, the ideals of enlightenment philosophy can also be criticized in an analytical and meaningful way. We can then understand or at least have a better understanding of our development theories and our relation with the natural environment. But what is the effect of these reports and scholarly works on the subject?

In other words, what is the role of academia in responding to environmental challenge? Haq argues that their role is limited in the first part of his paper. He uses the Kyoto Protocols as an example and convincingly tries to indicate that power, not “ecological protest against the unreflecting growth of technological society,” is effective. It is almost unbelievable that most developed countries, of course which caused the major environmental problems, are not in favor of the Kyoto Protocols as Haq highlights in some details.

Two, that many industrialized countries which had participated in the Protocol’s in the first commitment phase, such as Japan, New Zealand, and Russia, have refused to take on new targets of the second phase. Moreover, Canada withdrew from it during the first commitment period, and that the US never ratified it to begin with.

I think, Haq is right when he argues and underlines that the countries that have power are not willing to compromise their national interests or the interests of the powerful, but also do not offer any concrete solutions to overcome this challenge. Although he points to the role of “the pressures of power politics,” we still need to hear more on how to overcome it. Is there any hope, for example, from non-governmental organizations of different countries and cultures? What is the role of majority of people in influencing and changing minds of policy makers, in our case, to make them to sign the Kyoto Protocols, is not clear. In fact, Theodor W. Adorno and Herbert Marcuse were two voices that tried to awaken us half century ago from this mentality of modern capitalist states. I think now is the time, more than ever, to listen to critiques of these scholars who severely criticized the so-called new world order and the UN (Stone, 2010; Holmes, 1993; Fischer). Today, we need more critical views to overcome not only environmental problems,

but also political, social, and cultural problems.

Haq's critique of Francis Bacon's aggressive attitude to the non-human world is justified. Without a doubt, almost all environmental thinkers start with Bacon, as his philosophy of science had paved the way to modern science. But when criticizing Bacon, we should also remember the fact that modern Muslim scientists and scholars may also be influenced by his philosophy of science. Is it not this modern understanding of science that is still being taught in our schools and universities alike? In this context, I think Haq also would agree with me that we should say something about the peculiar features of Islamic philosophy of science and its metaphysical foundations.

### **The source of moral values and human responsibility**

Haq presents some important issues regarding moral responsibility of Muslims toward environment as a whole. To understand the full implication of this argument, I want to highlight "the sources of moral obligation." The late M.A. Draz's *The Moral World of the Qur'an* is regarded as "a formidable intellectual masterpiece and a work of classical Islamic scholarship in a modernist form" (Draz, 2008). In this work, "Draz, with an extraordinary incisiveness, analyses the moral and ethical dimensions of human intention, will, and action. He demonstrates that morality for its own sake has no foundation in ethics. Morality needs a purpose and an aim, which for humankind ultimately is to attain proximity to the Divine" (Draz, 2008, p. ix). Moreover, he argues and presents us with "how morality is interwoven with human nature, and how, according to the Qur'an, human nature is delicately balanced between reason and passion." To clarify the subject, he asks some important questions: "What is the source of moral obligation? Where



does humankind find the perfect legislation? From which philosophy or school of thought should he select his code of life?” (Draz, 2008, p. ix). He outlines the characteristics of moral obligation within Islam, and the rigorous and systematic method by which it is formed in this classical work. His differentiation between “religious, social, and moral responsibility” is very relevant for any discussion on ethics in the Qur’anic context. He discusses “the issue of responsibility in relation to the theological debate about free will and predestination” in a critical way, for these issues have been more critical and debated subjects from the formative history of Islam. In fact, many schools of thought had been formed right away with their understanding of these subjects from the orthodox Islam. So, it may be right and meaningful to ask “to what extent is one responsible for an action which one is commanded to do? To what extent is one responsible for an action that is spontaneous, which one did not intend commit?”

It seems to me that we should ask the same set of questions when talking about environmental moral responsibility. We should go forward and ask what is the source of morality? Unless we come out with some clear answers to these questions, our approach to the subject at hand will be limited. It is interesting and instructive, in this context, to see that Draz, when trying to find out the source of moral obligation, considers Kant’s moral theory to be very close to the Qur’anic one. He argues that Kant “was more correct in claiming to have discovered the source of moral obligation in the highest faculty of the human soul, independent of both inclination and the outside World” (Draz, 2008, p. 15) His quotation from Kant is also important and meaningful for our purpose:

“Duty, a sublime and great word ... what origin is worthy of thee and where is the root of thy noble stem to be

found...? It can be nothing less than that which elevates man above himself ... that which links him to an order of things that the understanding alone can conceive” (Draz, 2008, p. 15).

Draz concludes that (the Qur’an) teaches us that:

- The human soul has received the knowledge of good and evil in its primal structure (91:7–8);
- As well as the faculties of language and the external senses, man is endowed with moral awareness (75:14);
- He already knows the two paths of virtue and vice (90:8–10);
- It is true that the soul commands to evil (12:53);
- Man is capable of mastering his inclinations; and for he who controls his faculties and restrains his desires, Paradise will be his home (79:40).

Draz, however, encourages anyone who sincerely wants to do something but feels himself helpless and hopeless that “even if not everyone exercises such influence upon himself there are nevertheless those who do so with God’s help.” He supports his argument with a saying of the Prophet (PBUH): “Whenever God wants good for someone, He raises within that person’s inner heart a counsellor who exhorts him to act or to abstain. There is an internal force within man, which can not only advise him and clarify his choice, but which, properly speaking, can also command him to act or not to act” (Draz, 2008, p. 15–6).

So, I think this will be enough for our purpose here. Any Muslim who wants to care about environment and natural world as a whole and see it, as Haq underlines in his paper, as “God’s mercy (*rahma*),” can find “an internal force within himself” which can not only advise him and clarify his choice, but can also command him to act or not to act. Moreover, “The

Qur'an does not confine itself to the intellectual faculties alone: it takes greater care to awaken our noblest and most legitimate feelings, but it prompts them into action only under the control of reason. It is always to us that it addresses itself; that is to say, the luminous part of our soul, our faculty of understanding, which weighs the pros and the cons in everything and assesses different values" (Draz, 2008, p. 16).

### **Human–nature relationship**

Another important issue Haq also raises and argues to some extent is the human–nature relationship. He argues that when “the Qur'an speaks about God making nature ‘subject to humanity’ (*sakhkhara lakum*), it is made clear that this does not mean granting of unbridled exploitative powers, for human beings in their turn must remain subservient to God, and that it is His, not our(s), command that nature follows.” However, this subject, I think, needs more analysis, deliberation, and discussion. Are humans masters of nature, have they unlimited rights over nature, and can they do whatever they wish? Moreover, what are the roots of the idea of this mastering and ownership over nature? Is it some philosophical theories or religious worldviews? Moreover, any religious discourse on human–nature relationship should respond to Lyn White's classical argument against Judeo-Christian “anthropocentric” view of human being (White, 1967). “White located the source of the environmental crisis in the exploitative attitude towards nature that is at the heart of the dominant strand of the Christian tradition. As a historian of science and technology, White did not underestimate their importance to the environmental crisis. However, he saw them as proximate rather than ultimate causes. On his view, science and technology themselves

are expressions of the dominant tendencies within Christianity” (Jamieson, 2008, p. 20–1). White takes his argument to a boundary which reflects the boundary of colonial West. He argues that although “environmental problems occur all over the world, even in those regions that we do not think of as part of the Christian world. Yet even there Christianity is ultimately responsible for the environmental crisis through her progeny, science and technology, and her heresies, such as Marxism” (White, 1967). The gist of his argument is that “nature is there to be managed by humans for their benefit.” Moreover, Adorno also argues that “the domination of man’s natural environment made possible by controlling man’s inner nature leads to a limitation of the human horizon to self-preservation and power. In addition, the justifying idea of a divine commandment to subdue the earth and to have dominion over all creatures reduces the sensitivity of civilized humans for the conditions of their violent domination of nature organized in and by society” (Fischer).

Although both thinkers have in mind the Judeo-Christian legacy, Muslims also have to think about this issue in-depth. As Haq underlines, “human beings were created by God as His vicegerents (*khalifa*; pl. *khulafa*).” He treats the subject in a convincing way. But still it seems that something is missing, when we consider White and Adorno’s critique of this concept. For example, how Muslim societies, and especially Muslim scientists understand the role of to be God’s vicegerents on earth and how this understanding influenced their scientific activities and experiments on animals. Let’s forget for a moment the political understanding of the concept in political history of Muslim societies. Remembering the impact of White’s article on Jewish and Christian scholars, I think we should also approach our tradition as well as modern history with a critical mind. In

this context we can remember the Qur'an's emphasis "about God making nature 'subject to' humanity (*sakhkhara lakum*).” I do believe and agree with him that “although man is a distinct and special part of the universe and has a very distinctive standing and rank among all other beings, this distinction does not provide him with the power to dominate and destroy the natural environment. On the contrary, this distinction gives man a high sense of responsibility. This responsibility has two dimensions at least. First, there is the responsibility of reading/comprehending the real and true meaning of natural order and then constructing a moral obligation which necessarily arises from the Qur'an and nature *per se*. For, when the Qur'an points out the orderliness and especially that everything is created with measure and that there is a measure in the universe which is to be observed and studied, it also underlines the importance of measure and observing it in social and daily life. Thus, the maintenance of measure in both spheres is in the responsibility of human beings” (Ozdemir, 2008). However, I think that it would be very enlightening to see and understand how these verses were understood by classical as well as modern Muslim scholars. I know that there are some scholars, Nasr is one of them, who are in favor of what Haq argues and as I said I also agree with him. But still I wonder at the effects, if there are any, of these verses on modern Muslims scientists who work in basic sciences, especially in theatrical physics and more specifically in nuclear programs. If we put the question in this context, how we can understand and construe the basic motives of a Muslim scientist who works on nuclear programs?

If we look at the subject from the point of Islamic philosophy and science, we can ask what is the metaphysical foundations for scientific inquiry? How the Muslim scientists approached the natural world as their subject matter? And what was their

treatment of animals in scientific experiments? In this context, it will be very interesting to learn if Muslims scientists also approach animals like the 13<sup>th</sup>-century Muslim legal scholar ‘Izz ad-Din ibn ‘Abd as-Salam, who formulated the following principles of animal rights:

“[T]hat he spend on them the provision that their kinds require, even if they have aged or sickened such that no benefit comes from them; that he not burden them beyond what they can bear; that he not put them together with anything by which they would be injured, whether of their own kind or other species, whether by breaking their bones or butting or wounding; that he slaughter them with kindness; that when he slaughters them he neither flay their skins nor break their bones until their bodies have become cold and their lives have passed away; that he not slaughter their young within their sight but that he isolate them; that he make comfortable their resting places and watering places; that he put their males and females together during their mating seasons; that he not discard those which he takes as game; and neither shoot them with anything that breaks their bones nor bring about their destruction by any means that renders their meat unlawful to eat” (‘Izz, 1980, p. 167; Khalid & O’Brien, 1992).

So, although White’s argument developed in a different context, Muslims should also look at our tradition with a critical approach. Therefore I think Haq also, like me, may agree with Jamieson in that although, “the environmental crisis is fundamentally a spiritual and religious crisis, its ultimate solution would itself have to be spiritual and religious” (Jamieson 2008). Therefore, Haq’s arguments for a Muslim environmen-

tal ethics in the rest of his paper is very important. So when everything has been created for human beings, the use of all these things is limited and restricted by the Qur'an itself.

### **Thoughtless Consumption and Wastefulness**

As we discussed above, although everything has been created for human beings, the use of all these things is limited and restricted by the Qur'an itself as an ethical ground which highlights mutual rights and obligations in the relationship between humans and nature. From this general observation, we can deduce the following points: first, the fact that everything has been created by *mizan* (measure) and has an *order* and that everything is interdependent with everything else implies that humans should/must take into account this interconnectedness when dealing and interacting with the natural environment. Second, the Qur'an itself declares that "Eat and drink, but waste not by excess; verily He loves not the excessive" (7:31). This reminds us of another important Islamic principle related to the environment in terms of natural resources and their consumption in modern consumer-driven societies.

Wastefulness, from a Qur'anic perspective, is not only the thoughtless consumption of natural resources; it is at the same time to be disrespectful toward God, the Creator, and the Owner of all the bounties. For this reason, in Islam, eating and drinking of licit food is lawful, but wastefulness is forbidden. At this time, we know better than any other that the world's resources are limited. Extravagance and over-consumption will affect not only us, but the coming generations, too. We are, therefore, compelled to be aware of and sensitive concerning our consumption habits and behaviors.

According to Living Planet Report of the WWF 2012, for example, since the 1970s, annual demand on the natural world

by human beings has exceeded the annual Earth's regenerative capacity, indicating an eventual depletion of our natural resources. The report also indicates that "an individual's ecological footprint varies significantly depending on a number of factors, including their country of residence, the quantity of goods and services they consume, the resources used and the wastes generated to provide these goods and services." The report also presents us some examples from different part of the world. The report argues that if "all of humanity lived like an average Indonesian, for example, only two-thirds of the planet's bio capacity would be used; if everyone lived like an average Argentinean, humanity would demand more than half an additional planet; and if everyone lived like an average resident of the US, a total of four Earths would be required to regenerate" (WWF, 2012, p. 43). Moreover, the size of a person's ecological footprint depends on development level and wealth, and in part on the choices individuals make on what they eat, what products they purchase, and how they travel.

I think reflecting on the findings of the report with a Qur'anic perspective and sensitivity, a Muslim may ask him/herself, at least two major questions. First, what is shaping our human–environment relations, I mean is it Islamic values or values borrowed from the modern and dominant Western capitalist worldview. Second, if we lived like an average Muslim, for example, how much of the planet's bio capacity would be used and the impact of this to regenerate humanity's annual demand on nature. I want to clarify this with a more interesting example for a better understanding of Muslims relationship with natural resources in their daily life.

As we know, the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) attached great importance to the moderate use of water, and forbade the excessive use of it even when during religious ablutions, saying



that to do so was *makruh* (reprehensible). Needless to say that the Qur'an regards water as the source of life and gives great importance to water as an essential and primary element of the ecosystem. With this emphasis, the Qur'an also draws our attention toward water: "And God has created every animal from water" (24:45). The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) with his attitude and reverence toward water was setting a living example (Sunnah) for his *ummah* (the whole community of Muslims bound together by ties of religion). He prevented people from using too much water even for something like ablutions when preparing to enter the divine presence for prayer:

"God's Messenger appeared while Sa'd was taking the ablutions. When he saw that Sa'd was using a lot of water, he intervened saying: 'What is this? You are wasting water.' Sa'd replied asking: 'Can there be wastefulness while taking the ablutions?' To which God's Messenger replied: 'Yes, even if you take them on the bank of a rushing river'" (*Musnad*, ii, 22; *Ibn Maja*, "Tahara," 48, No: 425; i, 147).

While reflecting on this particular event and the attitude of the Prophet (PBUH), it seems that this event is not only a simple instruction of using water responsibly while taking the ablutions, moreover, it is a principle which articulates an important and critical principle to be followed by Muslims in all of their daily affairs. The following points should be emphasized in this context:

- God's Messenger is stating an important prohibition;
- The prohibition concerns something for which no effort was exerted in obtaining it, nor money spent, but is free: the water of a flowing river;
- Moreover, the excessive use of water causes no defi-

ciency to nature, nor does it cause pollution, nor spoil the ecological balance;

- It causes no harm to living beings;
- Furthermore, the matter in question, that is, taking the ablutions, is not some trivial matter; it is a necessary condition for the obligatory prayers.

If then, despite all the above, it is reprehensible to use excessive water from a river while taking the ablutions, and it was prohibited by the Prophet (PBUH), how much stronger is the prohibition on being wasteful and extravagant in matters, in which none of the above statements are applicable? That is, if wastefulness

- is in something that requires the investment of time, money and/or effort;
- if it causes degradation of invaluable natural assets, thus spoiling the ecological balance or if it harms living beings;
- if it violates the rights of forthcoming generations to live in a healthy environment;
- if it is arbitrary and meaningless, and merely for enjoyment, that is, for the satisfaction of destructive side of man.

It is evident that there are very good reasons for Islam prohibiting wastefulness and prodigality so forcefully. We may put it this way: there are between five and six thousand million people living in the world today. Just think of each individual person cutting down a tree or killing an animal just for the fun of it. Six thousand million trees or six thousand million animals would perish. Or think of the water they would waste, or the bread or other foodstuffs they would throw away. The serious consequences of those apparently insignificant actions are clear. Moreover, for the greater part it is not possible to reclaim

the resources we have polluted, destroyed, or annihilated. It is in this light that we may understand how meaningful was the point God's Messenger (PBUH) was emphasizing when he said: "Even if you take the ablutions in a flowing river, do not waste the water," and how important it would be for the preservation of the ecological balance, if taken as an ecological moral imperative.

### **The Qur'anic Weltanschauung**

I agree with Haq's argument that "the Qur'an is full of references to nature, natural forces, natural phenomena, and natural beings." The question which comes to mind is: How did the first readers of the Qur'an, the first generation of Muslims, understand the Qur'anic message? In pre-Islamic Arabia, natural world was perceived as having no meaning and purpose. By contrast, the Qur'an presented a worldview that included a new way of understanding and marking time, a way of relating to the environment, to human beings, to family, and, most importantly, a new way to relate to God. Thus, the Qur'an shaped the Muslim perception of natural world from its earliest revelations. When the Qur'an is analyzed in a chronological way, it can be seen from the early revelations that it "... makes frequent and repeated statements about nature and natural phenomena." The Qur'an used "a number of Arabic words in a new conceptual scheme" and revolutionized the pagan Arab perception of nature with what Izutsu called the Qur'anic Weltanschauung, a new and vivid understanding of nature (Izutsu, 1964). In doing so, it revolutionized the pre-Islamic perception of nature as it awakened the senses and subtle inner faculties of people, providing early Muslims with a totally new vision of the universe and nature.

While doing this, the Qur'an challenged the polytheism of the pagan Arabs by referring to nature as an assembly of orderly, meaningful, and purposeful phenomena. Moreover, nature "having a firm and well-knit structure with no gaps, no ruptures, and no dislocations" is regarded as "one of the grand handiworks of the Almighty" (Rahman 1980). Like a mirror, nature reflects the power, beauty, wisdom, and mercy of its Creator. Nature is seen as a balanced, just, peaceful, unified pattern, created and sustained by God. Moreover, the Qur'an's insistence on the order, beauty, and harmony of nature implies that there is no demarcation between what the Qur'an reveals and what nature manifests (Iqbal, 1958). What was "the Qur'anic weltanschauung," or Qur'anic worldview, that is, the Qur'anic vision of the universe, to use Izutsu's wording, and how did it develop during the 23 years of revelation? More importantly, how was this new Qur'anic weltanschauung received by early Muslims? (Izutsu, 2008, p. 3). To understand the major features of the Qur'anic weltanschauung, Izutsu tries to understand the development of Arabic vocabulary within the Qur'anic context. In other words, he identifies some major key Qur'anic words.

Izutsu gives us his idea of the science of linguistics or semantics through which he wishes to understand the Qur'an, "Semantics as I understand it is an analytic study of the key terms of a language with a view to arriving eventually at a conceptual grasp of the weltanschauung or world-view of the people who use that language ..." (Izutsu 2008, p. viii). Here, I think, the role of language is evident in the making of any given world-view. Because it is "through language, *a world is disclosed; a world in which features are located*, which is also a locus of strong goods, of objects of the specifically human emotions, and of human relations" (Taylor, 1995, p. 120). Therefore, any

argument about the Qur'anic worldview should also consider the role of language, especially in the formation period of that worldview. Rahman summarizes the main feature of what that constitutes for Izutsu. He argues that the first thing Izutsu discovers in this context is “a fourfold relationship” between God and man as follows:

- God is the creator of man;
- He communicates His Will to man through Revelation;
- There subsists a Lord–servant relationship between God and man;
- The concept of God as the God of goodness and mercy (for those who are thankful to Him) and the God of wrath (for those who reject Him).

The believers in this fourfold relationship between Allah and man constitute a Community (*Ummah Muslimah*) by themselves and believe in the Last Day, Paradise, and Hell (Izutsu, 2008, p. ix). Rahman underlines that “Izutsu’s description of the historical evolution of these concepts in pre-Islamic Arabia up to the appearance of Islam is quite rich and valuable” (Rahman, 1980). I agree with Rahman and even want to suggest that Haq’s main argument can be enriched with the findings of Izutsu and philosophy of language when he argues that “The Qur’an abounds in references to the bounty of nature as an undeniable expression of God’s mercy.” As Haq puts it, it would be more meaningful to try to understand them in the context they are revealed and how it began to change and shape the life and attitude of its first readers in particular, and the Muslim *ummaḥ* in general. The poet-philosopher Sir Muhammad Iqbal, for example, with his poetic sensitivity and intuition on one hand and penetrating philosophical mind on the other, understands the full implications of the Qur’anic weltanschauung. As an advent and sincere student of the Qur’an he

observed that “The purpose of Qur’an is to awaken in man the higher consciousness of his manifold relations with God and the universe.” Moreover, he argues convincingly that the major character of the universe presented to us in the Qur’an, is a dynamic, active, and ever-growing universe (Iqbal 1958, 8–9).

While underlining the importance of the Qur’anic weltanschauung for a Muslim environmental ethics, Haq’s suggestion that the Qur’an may be read in a “secular” context, that is, containing guiding principles valid for all communities of the world, Muslim or non-Muslim, is very interesting and demanding. When remembering the tension among religious and secular Muslims in different Muslim countries, this suggestion can be very helpful to overcome prejudices and reach a better understanding not only regarding natural environment, but also social environment. Therefore, I think, it deserves more elaboration and discussion. As Haq argues eloquently “nature serves as a means of God’s *tanzil* (sending down) of guidance to humanity” and “the whole cosmos was but an embodiment of God’s bountiful signs (*ayat*).” Moreover, as “the natural world is an embodiment of God’s signs (*ayat*),” “it is an expression of God’s mercy (*rahma*).” Haq argues that “we have here a case of a unique metaphysical equivalence between nature and prophecy, and thereby between natural entities and Revelation.” I think this argument can be furthered and many examples for such understanding can be provided from Islamic rich intellectual traditions, especially Sufi traditions. Moreover, it can help us to overcome the boundaries of what Arne Naess, the founder of deep ecology, calls shallow environmentalism and develop a deep Muslim environmental ethic on the Qur’anic bases. One of the major problems of Muslim environmentalists is that they have pains to explain the current attitude of Muslim societies toward environment; and the insensitivity of Muslims, even

imams, to actively participate in anti-environmental problems. I wonder if we Muslims can produce a new environmentally friendly Muslim awareness through discourse ethics. That said, I am aware of the shortcomings and secular nature of discourse ethics, as coined by the philosophers Habermas and Apel.

To conclude, God has created this world and entrusted it to human beings alone. So they are not the owners and masters of the natural environment. They are only trustees, stewards on earth. More importantly, this stewardship includes the maintenance and utilization of the natural environment in accordance with what God created these things for, and to take into account the order and the ecological balance of nature.

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