



The Environmental Ethical Crisis and Islamic Mysticism's Solutions for It*

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Abstract

Environmental ethics is an area of ethics that faces two fundamental challenges. On the one hand, moral responsibility in other domains can be explained based on respecting the rights of human beings who possess rights; however, regarding the environment, the object of morality in this domain is human individual or collective behavior toward the environment. The question is: how can an status be established for the environment such that human beings have a moral responsibility toward it? On the other hand, the environmental crisis is essentially a consequence of human arrogance toward nature. This arrogance is rooted in an anthropocentric and dominating worldview, which stems from the notion that God created the heavens and the earth for human utility and dominion, and after creation, placed humanity as the master of all

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creatures. Islamic mysticism can address these two challenges. On the one hand, by presenting the theory of love for God and, consequently, love for all creation—including nature and the environment—Islamic mysticism teaches humans to love the environment and, just as a lover never harms the beloved, to care for and nurture the environment. On the other hand, by introducing the environment (inanimate nature, plants, and animals) as a manifestation of God, it helps secure the moral status and dignity of the environment. Furthermore, by rejecting the anthropocentrism of creation, Islamic mysticism interprets the station of human vicegerency of God not as ownership of the environment, but as its preservation, considering humans as guardians and responsible stewards of the universe.

Keywords

Environmental Crisis, Environmental Ethics, Islamic Mysticism, Doctrine of Love, Doctrine of Divine Vicegerency, Doctrine of Manifestation.

Introduction

In past intellectual and ethical schools of thought, human beings were not the only entities considered valuable; all components of nature, including animals, plants, and even inanimate objects, were deemed valuable and held sanctity and reverence. The entire universe was regarded as the creation of a Wise Creator who created everything according to His wisdom and placed it in its proper position. This view was not unique to monotheistic religions; other religions and non-religious schools also shared it (Eslami, 2013, p. 8). Among these, the Quran introduces animals as beings possessing comprehension and social life: «وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَائِرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّا أُمَمٌ أَمْثَلُكُمْ ... ثُمَّ إِلَيَّ» "There is no creature on earth, nor a bird that flies with its wings, except that they are communities like you... Then to their Lord they will be gathered" (Quran 6:38), and it considers the entire nature as conscious and glorifying God: «تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ السَّمَاوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْأَرْضُ» "The seven heavens and the earth and whatever is in them glorify Him, and there is not a thing except that it glorifies [God] with His praise, but you [humans] do not understand their glorification" (Quran 17:44).

In contrast, in the modern era, nature loses its value, and the world becomes disenchanted. In this period, humanity is placed at the center of the universe, and life—or at least its superior and valuable rank—is exclusively attributed to human beings; consequently, other creatures are deemed worthless. Based on this shift in attitude, humanity, as the only rational being on earth, claims the right to take charge of its administration and manipulate it at will. From this perspective, nature and the living creatures within it are reduced to mere instruments for satisfying human needs, and the goal of science shifts from Aristotelian truth-seeking to the domination of the universe. At the end of the Renaissance and on the threshold of the

modern era, a clear and influential exemplar of anthropocentrism and the instrumental view of nature is Francis Bacon. Bacon explicitly regards humanity as the master of nature and presents the purpose of knowing natural laws as achieving dominion over it. He views nature as God's artifact, indicative of God's power, yet lacking any trace of a divine aspect within it (cf. Karbassizadeh & Shiravand, 2014, p. 476).

Bacon's perspective was pursued by subsequent thinkers and determined the future status of nature and the policies governing human behavior toward it. Descartes drove a wedge between humans and animals, denying the existence of a soul in other living creatures and reducing them to automata that operate meticulously yet without the need for a soul (Descartes, 1965, pp. 228–230). Kant advanced along this same path, establishing reason as the ultimate end and axis of value in ethics on the one hand, while denying the presence of reason in animals on the other (Kant, 2015, p. 93). Thus, according to Kant, humanity has duties solely toward other rational beings as independent ends, whereas animals and other components of nature possess no intrinsic value and serve merely as instruments for human ends; any obligations we may have regarding nature and animals stem from our duties toward other human beings.

Such attitudes persisted to the extent that some thinkers imagined certain animals or plants to be superfluous, believing that humanity must reform nature and purge it of redundant fauna and flora. With the advent of the Industrial Revolution, manipulation of nature was facilitated; the earth's forests rapidly turned into deserts, factory toxic waste polluted the seas, and their dense smoke turned the blue skies gray (cf. Eslami, 2013, pp. 11–12).

Lynn White, in his famous and influential article "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis" (Pojman, 2005, vol. 1), argues that the environmental crisis in the West is rooted in Judeo-Christian

thought, according to which humans are chosen and serve as masters of nature. This biblical doctrine states that humans were created in the image of God: *"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him"* (Genesis 1:26–27; Siyar, 2014, p. 129). Alongside this gospel teaching that humans, following sin, were driven out of paradise to earth and condemned to live in this place of exile: *"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned"* (The New Testament, 1895, p. 248, Romans 5:12), an anthropocentric outlook has been engendered in Judaism and Christianity, according to which humanity is permitted to manipulate nature at will.

Regardless of whether we accept or reject the existence and role of such a Judeo-Christian interpretation in the environmental crisis, the claim that the human environment has gradually faced destruction, and that anthropocentrism and the notion of human superiority over other creatures have played a fundamental role in this crisis, cannot be denied. In the second half of the twentieth century, alarm bells regarding the state of the environment began to ring, as thinkers warned about the fate of the environment and animals, gradually giving rise to environmental ethics. Regarding the formation of environmental ethics, there are three conceptions: first, our behavior toward the environment is a function of how we think about it and the status and position we attribute to it. Second, the current environmental crisis demonstrates that our mode of thinking about the environment is incorrect and has failed to protect it by assigning an improper status to it. Third, to recover the environment and resolve

the crisis, we must change the mode of thinking and attitude that led to it. However, this change in perspective and the establishment of a system of environmental ethics requires a foundation that, on the one hand, considers an appropriate status for the environment, and on the other hand, possesses an acceptability that can encourage human beings to follow this ethics. It appears that Islamic mysticism possesses these two features. Firstly, Islamic mysticism has gained immense appeal in the contemporary period, as evidenced by the growing number of people who become interested in or convert to Islam through this path. Secondly, we demonstrate in this article that some of the fundamental doctrines of Islamic mysticism can provide an appropriate moral status for the environment.

1. Solutions of Islamic Mysticism

Three fundamental doctrines of Islamic mysticism can serve as a foundation for establishing environmental ethics to help resolve the environmental crisis. The first doctrine is the transformation of the relationship between humans and God from a relationship of servitude into a relationship of love among early mystics. The second doctrine is that the entire universe is the manifestation (Tajalli) of the Truth, and such a status necessitates a specific mode of behavior toward the world. The third doctrine is the doctrine of divine vicegerency (Khilafah) and the Perfect Human (Insan al-Kamil), according to which the Perfect Human is both the intermediary of grace and entrusted with the duty of preserving and protecting all creatures. All three doctrines ultimately trace back to the specific understanding that Muslim mystics hold regarding the relationship between humans and God.

1-1 The Doctrine of Love

What has traditionally existed in the minds of us Muslims regarding

the relationship between human beings and God is that we are servants of God and God is our Master. In other words, the relationship between us and God is one of servitude and worship: we are the servants and God is the Worshipped; we are slaves and God is the Lord. This relationship is one-sided, meaning that God commands and we obey, and this constitutes our greatest honor in the station of His servitude. This theme has also appeared in religious texts, and the mindset of us Muslims has been shaped accordingly. We must follow God's commands so that, in return, we may enjoy divine reward and attain felicity. In the Holy Quran, numerous verses emphasize the relationship of servitude between God and man. For instance, God says: "O mankind, worship your Lord" ("يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ"), (Quran 2:21), and He also says: "So prostrate to God and worship [Him]" (Quran 53:62). This subject appears even more explicitly in the Holy Quran. God states: "And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me" ("فَأَسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ وَاعْبُدُوا"), (Quran 51:56). However, alongside this one-sided relationship, Muslim mystics proposed another relationship as well.

The numerous spiritual exercises and mystical experiences undergone by Muslim mystics over long periods enabled them to comprehend matters from the Holy Quran and other religious texts, such as the traditions of the Prophet and Imam Ali, which were not so evident to others. One of these matters is "divine love or affection," which Muslim mystics heavily emphasize and consider to be derived from verse 54 of Surah Al-Ma'idah. In this verse, God states: "O you who have believe, whoever of you turns back from his religion—God will bring forth a people He loves and who love Him" ("يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَنْ يَرْتَدَّ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ"), (Quran 5:54). There are many opinions in the exegesis of this verse, including regarding the identity of those "other people," but the most significant inference

Muslim mystics drew from this verse pertains to the final part where God acknowledges that "He loves them and they love Him." Unlike servitude, loving is a two-way relationship. In a relationship based on servitude, we could only be obedient to God without being able to command Him, whereas in a relationship based on friendship and love, we too can love God and be in love with Him.

Although this interpretation of the verse did not initially provoke a negative reaction among the devout, as mystics gradually began using the word "love" ('ishq) to express the relationship between human beings and God, numerous negative reactions emerged. The primary objection raised against the mystics was, first, that in its etymological root, love was coined to express the relationship between a man and a woman, and applying it to humans and God constitutes a form of disrespect toward the Divine Realm. Second, since words and terms pertaining to God are restricted (tawqifi) and must be issued by the Lawgiver, we cannot use the term love—which has not been employed in religious texts—to describe the relationship with God (Pourjavady, 2003, vol. 7, pp. 385–386).

The application of the word love by mystics to express the relationship with God and to consider humanity and God as lover and beloved led to a situation where the entire collection of states, emotions, and consequences of love that arise for human beings was also envisioned and explained regarding God. In other words, once we establish that a lover-beloved relationship exists between God and His servant, we must accept the implications of love within the loving servant. For instance, the difficulties that lie in the path of the lover to attain the beloved also exist for the servant who loves God. For example, the lover becomes restless and sleepless, and life departs from its natural routine. Sa'di Shirazi uses the expression "yellow-facedness" (ruy-zardi) to describe the states of the lover: "Did you see

how yellow-facedness resulted from the claim of love?" (Sa'di Shirazi, 2006, p. 1004). This term "yellow-facedness" symbolizes all the hardships that befall the lover on the way to reaching the beloved. Love creates troubles for the lover both outwardly and inwardly. As an example of outward troubles, one can point to the reproaches of those around them, yet none of these reproaches matter to the lover, and this issue goes so far that the lover is accused of madness and insanity by others. Perhaps this tradition (hadith) of the Prophet who stated: «أَكْثَرُوا ذِكْرَ اللَّهِ حَتَّى يَقُولُوا مَجْنُونٌ» "Remember God so much that others say, 'He is mad'" (Ahmad ibn Hanbal, 1996, vol. 18, p. 195) refers precisely to this stage of divine love.

Love also brings about changes within the lover, among which is the expansion of love. If up to this stage only the beloved mattered and was sacred to the lover, now all attachments related to the beloved also become sacred to him—anyone and anything crafted by the beloved or in some way connected to the beloved. In the story of Layla and Majnun, Majnun remarks at one point: "I pass by the dwellings, the dwellings of Layla, kissing this wall and that wall. «أَمُرُّ عَلَى الدِّيَارِ دِيَارِ لَيْلَى / أَقْبَلُ ذَا الْجِدَارِ وَذَا الْجِدَارِ / وَمَا حُبُّ الدِّيَارِ شَغَفَنَ قَلْبِي / وَلَكِنْ حُبُّ مَنْ سَكَنَ الدِّيَارِ» It is not love for the dwellings that has captivated my heart, but rather love for the one who dwells in the dwellings" (Qays ibn Mulawwah, 1979, p. 131). In our discussion as well, God possesses creations and artifacts. When an individual falls in love with God, these creations and artifacts also become the objects of this person's love. In our mystical literary tradition, among these creations, humans, animals, and plants have received the greatest attention. One who has reached the stage of divine love naturally loves all humans, animals, plants, and generally the entire nature; this very love prevents the mystic from making any inappropriate or undue interference in nature to the extent possible.

We have numerous anecdotes regarding the compassionate treatment of animals and plants by Muslim mystics. For instance, one of the companions of the Prophet named Abu Darda (died: 653 CE), who is counted among the early mystics in our mystical heritage (Abu Nu'aym, 1979, vol. 1, pp. 208–227), whenever he saw children shooting sparrows with bows and arrows, would run after them, buy the sparrows from the children, set them free, and tell them, "Sparrows, go and live" «وَعَنْ أَبِي الدَّرْدَاءِ أَنَّهُ كَانَ يَشْتَرِي الْعَصَافِيرَ مِنَ الصَّبِيَّانِ فَيُرْسِلُهُنَّ وَيَقُولُ: «اذْهَبْنَ فَعِيشْنَ» And on the authority of Abu al-Darda', that he used to buy sparrows from the children, set them free, and say: 'Go and live.'" (Ibn Sa'd, 2001, vol. 4, p. 354). In another anecdote narrated about Sayyid Ahmad Rifa'i (died: 1182 CE), the founder of the Rifa'iyyah tariqa, it is related that once when he wanted to go to the mosque to perform prayer, he noticed a cat sleeping on the sleeve of his garment. He waited for it to wake up, but the cat did not wake, and the time for prayer was growing short. Rifa'i cut off his own sleeve with scissors, put on the sleeveless garment, and went to the mosque. When he returned home, he saw that the cat had left. He picked up the sleeve, sewed it back onto his garment, and said, "Nothing significant has happened" «وَقِيلَ: إِنَّ هَرَّةً نَامَتْ عَلَى كُمِ الشَّيْخِ وَجَاءَ وَقْتُ الصَّلَاةِ فَقَصَّ كُمَهُ وَلَمْ يَزْعَجْهَا وَعَادَ مِنَ الصَّلَاةِ فَوَجَدَهَا قَدْ قَامَتْ فَوَصَلَ الْكُمَ بِالثَّوْبِ وَخَيْطَهُ وَقَالَ: مَا تَغْيِيرُ شَيْءٍ» A cat fell asleep on the sleeve of the Sheikh, and the time for prayer arrived. He cut his sleeve so as not to disturb it, returned from the prayer and found that it had stood up, attached the sleeve back to the garment and sewed it, and said: 'Nothing has changed (Al-Subki, 1964, vol. 6, p. 24).

Regarding plants as well, there are many such anecdotes. Some mystics would not uproot or consume living plants, believing them to be living entities and glorifiers of the Truth. They would only make use of a plant once it had dried and was no longer alive. For

instance, Tusi (1957) in *Jami' al-Sitin*, in his exegesis of Surah Yusuf, recounts a narrative that serves as a fitting witness to our discussion. In this anecdote, Ibrahim ibn Shayban al-Kirmanshahi (died: 941 CE)—one of the great mystics of Kermanshah and a student of Abu Abdallah al-Maghribi (died: 912 CE)—relates: *"One day, I went out to the desert with Abu Abdallah al-Maghribi. I plucked a plant by its stalk, played with it for a bit, and then threw it away. Abu Abdallah al-Maghribi turned to me and said: 'Why did you do this? By disregarding and disrespecting the life of this plant, you have committed five errors: First, you engaged in playful amusement and a futile act. Second, this plant was alive and glorifying the Truth; you took its life, and the glorification of the Truth was severed, whereas "and there is not a thing except that it glorifies [God] with His praise" (Quran 17:44). [Note: the verse citation in the text refers to Quran 17:44, though cited as Muhammad: 13 in the source]]. Third, you are a prominent Sufi, and others imitate your actions; thus, you led others astray in a way. Fourth, you plucked that stalk without any need. Fifth, you threw that stalk away and derived no benefit from it."* Generally speaking, causing no harm to humans, animals, plants, and the environment was an axiomatic principle for Muslim mystics, and they could conceive of nothing other than this.

After being introduced by the mystics, the doctrine of love gradually influenced ordinary Muslims to varying degrees, gained widespread acceptance, and found its way into the realms of literature and art. Abundant evidence of this doctrine's impact can be found in literary works. For example, when Sa'di says:

I am happy with the world because the world is happy through Him;

I am in love with the entire universe because the entire universe belongs to Him (Sa'di Shirazi, 2006, p. 577)

The expression "I am in love with the entire universe" precisely evokes this very doctrine (for further insight into the doctrine of love among early mystics and the course of its evolution, see: Pourjavady, 2007).

1-2. The Doctrine of Manifestation (Tajalli)

The mystics consider God to be an absolute reality beyond any determination and individuation, while viewing the universe as determined multiplicities and limited individuations. Therefore, to explain the relationship between the absolute Essence and the limited individuations and multiplicities of the universe, they propound the doctrine of manifestation and appearance. The meaning of God being absolute from individuations is that God, in the station of absoluteness, encompasses all individuations and perfections of existing things; however, in this station, no individuation exists distinct from another in such a way as to restrict the absolute Essence. In other words, in the station of absoluteness, none of the perfections take precedence over another. Then, whenever these perfections become manifest and reach the stage of tajalli, multiplicities emerge which are in fact the manifestations and appearances of that very single Reality. The meaning of appearance and manifestation is not that something separates from the Divine Essence and causes the generation of existents that possess meaning parallel to the existence of the Truth; rather, the very attributes and perfections that were present in a concentrated manner within the absolute Essence of the Truth unfold, and these multiplicities are His own states and appearances. Shams al-Din Lahiji (died: 1506 CE) writes in his commentary on Golshan-e Raz: "Know that the Essence of the Truth, by virtue of His manifestation and appearance in the loci of manifestation, is identical to all things, and all things exist through the Truth and are nonexistent without the Truth" (Lahiji, 2018, p. 525).

It is necessary to note here that what is intended is the ontological meaning of the term *tajalli*, which corresponds to the downward arc (*qaws al-nuzul*) and relates to the external world, being independent of the mystic's perception and intuition. The term *tajalli* in the expression of the mystics has another meaning as well, which pertains to the upward arc and is an epistemological term; there is no need to explain that meaning here (for further study, see: Yazdanpanah, 2009, pp. 216–229).

Based on the doctrine of *tajalli*, all creatures are manifestations and appearances of God and possess no existence distinct from the Essence of the Truth. This matter is not exclusive to a specific creature; it includes animate and inanimate entities as well as the entire nature. All creatures are the various loci of manifestation for the singular names of the Truth; the only difference among creatures is that each is the manifestation of a divine name, such as the Living (*Al-Hayy*), the Knowing (*Al-'Alim*), and the Capable (*Al-Qadir*). Therefore, one who believes in this doctrine considers the entire universe to be the manifestation and appearance of God and holds it in reverence; animate and inanimate entities do not differ for him inasmuch as all are appearances and manifestations of God. The corollary of respecting creatures is neither killing living beings beyond the measure permitted by God nor altering and destroying nature beyond permissible limits.

This doctrine of the mystics does not remain merely at the level of theory; rather, it is also evident in the accounts of the lives of mystics and Sufis that have reached us, some of which we alluded to earlier. Numerous accounts exist in various sources that narrate the harmlessness of mystics toward animals—ranging from the smallest harms to killing and consuming animals (to see a number of these accounts, see: Pourjavady, 2010, pp. 56–59). One of the famous anecdotes in this

regard is the account recorded by 'Attar Nishapuri in *Tadhirat al-Awliya* concerning Bayazid Bastami (died: 874 CE), who is said to have unknowingly brought two ants with him from Hamadan to Bastam. When he realized this, he returned to Hamadan and placed the ants right back where they had been.

Harmlessness toward animals can have two possible reasons. It is possible that the care for animals stems from the code of chivalry (*javanmardi*); and it may stem from the overflow of love for God onto His manifestations and appearances. In support of the second probability, one can cite an anecdote by Ahmad Ghazali in *Sawanih*: "Majnun had not eaten food for several days. A gazelle fell into his snare. He treated it honorably and set it free. When asked: 'Why did you do this?' he said: 'Something of Layla remains within it; cruelty is unbecoming'" (Ghazali, 1980, pp. 22–23). This anecdote points to a state of love wherein the lover sees something resembling the beloved in whatever he gazes upon. The mystic beholds the pervading of the divine name "Living" in animals, and just as Majnun, upon seeing the eyes of the gazelle, is reminded of Layla and sets it free, the mystic likewise, upon seeing animals, is reminded of the divine Beloved and neither harms nor kills them (cf. Pourjavady, 2010, p. 59).

Another aspect of refraining from destroying animals and plants can be gleaned from the anecdote previously narrated about Ibrahim ibn Shayban al-Kirmanshahi and his master, Abu Abdallah al-Maghribi. In this anecdote, Abu Abdallah al-Maghribi considers the pointless plucking of plants an error because, like humans and other animals, they glorify their Lord, and such glorification necessitates a degree of consciousness and awareness. The ruling that animals and plants glorify God based on the aforementioned noble verse—and therefore possess consciousness—is also observable in other mystical texts (including: Mustamli Bukhari, 1984, pp. 703–706) (cf. Pourjavady, 2008, pp. 7–8).

However, this glorification is not exclusive to living beings; inanimate objects (jamadat) also glorify God. Rumi (Masnavi-ye Ma'navi, Book 3, verses 1022–1024) has composed thus:

When you move toward the realm of the inanimate,
 How can you become privy to the souls of inanimate things?
 From the inanimate, you journey toward the world of spirits,
 And hear the clamor of the universe's constituent parts.
 Openly, the glorification of inanimate things will come to you,
 And the whisperings of [false] allegorical interpretations will not
 carry you away.

It is true that mystics primarily cite noble Quranic verses as the basis for their belief in the glorification by all creatures, but in elucidating this belief, they draw upon the doctrine of manifestation and appearance (tajalli). Regarding the glorification of creatures, Ibn 'Arabi states: "According to us, there is no silent existent in existence; rather, all of them praise God" (Ibn 'Arabi, 1994, vol. 12, p. 324).

1-3. The Doctrine of Divine Vicegerency (*Khilafah*)

The doctrine of divine vicegerency relates to the issue of environmental ethics in two respects. First, this Quranic doctrine might, according to certain interpretations, engender the notion that human beings, in the station of God's vicegerent, possess the right to any form of manipulation in the universe—an interpretation similar to that which in Christianity became the source of the claim that anthropocentrism and the assertion of human mastery over the universe caused reckless human intervention in nature and the destruction of the environment. However, based on mystical interpretation, such a notion is incorrect. On the other hand, the mystical doctrine of human divine vicegerency entails that the divine

vicegerent must be the protector of the environment.

In itself and through its connection with the doctrine of the Perfect Human (*Insan al-Kamil*) and the divine trust, the doctrine of divine vicegerency possesses numerous details that addressing them lies beyond the scope of this article. Here, it suffices to examine it solely from the aspect relevant to environmental ethics. The first point regarding this doctrine is that, in mystical exegesis, the station of divine vicegerency is not a rank that God has bestowed upon all human beings; rather, it is exclusive to the Perfect Human. Ibn 'Arabi believes that only the Perfect Human is worthy of being God's vicegerent, and the only commonality between the imperfect human—who possesses animal attributes—and the Perfect Human is resemblance in physical form, not in the meaning of perfection (Ibn 'Arabi, 1990, vol. 1, p. 12). The characteristic of the Perfect Human, who is also expressed by titles such as the "Comprehensive Being" (*kawn-e jami'*) and the "Axis of the Universe" (*qutb-e 'alam*), is that he is the most perfect locus of manifestation for the Most Beautiful Divine Names (*al-asma al-husna*) and the complete mirror of God. The Perfect Human is the manifestation of the Greatest Name of God, while other creatures are the loci of manifestation for His other universal and particular names.

Among the characteristics of the divine vicegerent and the Perfect Human is that he is the intermediary between the Truth and creation, through whom the grace of existence reaches creatures from the Exalted Truth (Ibn 'Arabi, 1988, p. 35). Furthermore, the creatures of the universe are subjugated to him, and he has the capacity to manipulate and administer the universe (Ibn 'Arabi, 1987, p. 199). Yet his most crucial characteristic is that God preserves the world and its inhabitants through him. Ibn 'Arabi writes: "*The Perfect Human for the universe is like the bezel of a ring upon which an inscription is*

engraved, whereby the treasury of existence is preserved; therefore, he has been named the vicegerent of the Truth, because the Creator of existence, under the shadow of his existence, preserves the universe and its inhabitants. Thus, the universe shall endure as long as the Perfect Human exists within it" (Ibn 'Arabi, 1987, pp. 48–50).

From these characteristics, it becomes abundantly clear that in the mystical depiction, although the divine vicegerent—who is termed the Perfect Human—possesses the power to manipulate and administer the universe and the universe is subjugated to him, he is nonetheless the protector of the universe, and God preserves the world through him. Therefore, even if this station is extended to other humans in proportion to the perfections they acquire—whereby they become the loci of manifestation for one or more of the names of the Divine Presence—their proper status, by virtue of succeeding the Exalted Truth and acquiring the Most Beautiful Names, is to safeguard and protect the world, not to destroy and corrupt it.

Conclusion

We demonstrated in this article that in order to resolve the environmental crisis, we must change the mindset and attitude that led to it. Islamic mysticism can, on the one hand, establish an appropriate moral status for the environment and, on the other hand, possesses an acceptability that can encourage human beings to follow this ethics; thus, by altering our mode of thinking and attitude toward the environment, it can help resolve the crisis. Among the doctrines of Islamic mysticism, the three doctrines of love, tajalli (manifestation), and divine vicegerency can provide an adequate moral foundation for the environment. Based on the doctrine of love, Islamic mysticism arouses love for all of God's creations within us, demanding that we human beings become friends and supporters of plants, animals, and

objects, treating them with affection and avoiding causing them harm. Furthermore, based on the doctrine of tajalli, by introducing the environment (inanimate nature, plants, and animals) as the manifestation of God, Islamic mysticism helps secure the moral status and dignity of the environment; and through the doctrine of divine vicegerency, by rejecting the anthropocentrism of creation, it interprets the station of human vicegerency not as ownership of the environment, but as its preservation, considering humans as guardians and responsible stewards of the universe. Promoting these doctrines of Islamic mysticism, which are also manifested in the lifestyle and practice of Muslim mystics, can bring about a change in perspective toward the environment and resolve the crisis.

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