



# Theological reflections in the age of climate change: a reflection on the jellyfish metaphor

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## Abstract

This article weaves together philosophy and theology to explore the imperative of conservation in our increasingly interconnected world. Amidst the shadows of globalization, climate change, and global warming, this intellectual journey continues. The use of the thought-provoking metaphor of the jellyfish underscores humanity's central role in the story of ecological challenges. This pursuit underscores our deep moral duty to navigate complicated paths to viable solutions. While eschewing empirical or case-specific inquiry, this essay presents a concise analytical perspective that enhances our cognitive understanding of the intricate interplay between human societies and the pristine realms of the natural order. This treatise also adopts a theological perspective by weaving spiritual concepts into its fabric. By illustrating poignant instances of environmental degradation, intellectual inquiry brings into sharper focus the profound moral imperatives that underpin the call to address problems such as climate change. Drawing on philosophical and theological foundations, the essay expands our understanding of the intricate threads that connect humanity to the environment. It offers insights into the delicate web of intricate relationships that must be carefully nurtured and preserved. As theological perspectives enrich the discourse, important connections between faith, moral obligations, and our responsibilities to the planet become clear. This treatise offers a holistic perspective on the challenges of our time, combining philosophical and religious concepts to provide a comprehensive view of our current problems.

**Keywords:** Theological reflections, climate change, jellyfish metaphor, humanity, philosophical views.

## Introduction

Numerous individuals are acquainted with Aristotle's theory of stagnation and the catalysts of revolutions. According to Aristotle, revolutions stem from the breakdown of *philia*, or love, within society, coupled with the erosion of people's empathy (Jang, 2018). Before delving into the topic of healing, it is customary to conduct a comprehensive diagnosis to grasp the underlying dynamics. Some of you may be familiar with Arnold Toynbee, an eminent author who penned a seminal work titled "Change and Habit - the Challenge of Our Time" over half a century ago. In this literary masterpiece, he expounded upon the concept of civilizations and their idiosyncratic strategies when faced with dire circumstances. Among these approaches, fanaticism and zealotry were prominent. Toynbee issued cautionary statements about certain regions, including Afghanistan, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia, prophesying the emergence of significant predicaments in the future (Elekes, 1969).



One of the distinctive advantages historians possess is their ability to retrospectively contemplate the future (Yusuf & Shakir, 2013). Their profound comprehension of the past empowers them to forecast forthcoming events with remarkable acuity. The author contends that numerous deleterious habits, unbeknownst to us, have become ingrained in our societal fabric, fostering an environment of prosperity. Toynbee vehemently asserts that resorting to warfare represents the pinnacle of these habits, despite the presence of viable alternatives. Ergo, it is a matter of choice rather than necessity. Given that war epitomizes the ultimate recourse to violence and ineptitude, it inevitably culminates in failure (Davyd Smith's article at [www.nokillmovement.org](http://www.nokillmovement.org), 2021). Consequently, Toynbee identifies tribalism (or nationalism) as one of the consequences, postulating that we fail to recognize ourselves as a unified human family. Instead, we perceive others as distinct from us, delineating a perilous mental divide (Nicolls, 2014). This cognitive framework poses considerable risks. Inculcating virtue involves the arduous task of transforming deeply entrenched habits, a feat that humans are indeed capable of accomplishing (Toynbee, 1967). Soren Kierkegaard (Wikipedia), another visionary or harbinger of the future, is likely to be familiar to most. Kierkegaard's prodigious wit and keen sense of comedy shine through in his works, eliciting laughter even amidst internal anguish. Nevertheless, he propounds that an individual cannot single-handedly salvage or revolutionize an era; their role lies solely in illuminating its impending demise (Dueck, 2018). Those acquainted with Greek mythology will recall Cassandra, who advised the Trojans not through mere dramatic performance but within the Iliad itself to exercise caution with the introduction of the horse. Hence, this conundrum is often referred to as the Cassandra problem or the Cassandra syndrome. Despite possessing the gift of prophecy, Cassandra found herself disbelieved and dismissed by all (Atkisson, 1999).

### **Theoretical background**

Environmental philosophy constitutes a multifaceted and diverse domain, bestowing invaluable insights into the intricate interplay between humanity and the natural world. Within this interdisciplinary sphere, a myriad of theories and ongoing dialogues augment our comprehension of the subject matter expounded upon in preceding sections. Notably, deep ecology emerges as a prominent school of thought in environmental philosophy, underscoring the intrinsic value of non-human entities and ecosystems. Proponents of deep ecology assert that effectuating meaningful change regarding environmental predicaments necessitates a profound transformation in human cognition and values. Consequently, they advocate for a radical realignment of our relationship with the natural realm, transcending a human-centric paradigm in favor of an ecocentric worldview. Environmental ethics constitutes another pivotal perspective, delving into the moral dimensions underpinning our interactions with the environment. Scholars in this field scrutinize the ethical obligations humans bear vis-à-vis the environment, encompassing future generations, non-human species, and the collective ecosystem. Within the domain of environmental ethics, vibrant debates unravel, centering on the extent of our moral imperatives, the intrinsic worth of biodiversity, and the role of rights and justice in environmental decision-making processes.

Additionally, the tenets of ecofeminism warrant consideration, as they illuminate the interconnectedness of gender issues and the environment, accentuating the parallels between the exploitation of women and the exploitation of nature. Scholars in the realm of ecofeminism contend that patriarchal systems perpetuate the domination and subjugation of both women and the environment. Consequently, they champion intersectional approaches that holistically address both social inequalities and ecological concerns. Furthermore, the ongoing discourse surrounding climate justice probes the ethical ramifications of climate change, particularly its disproportionate impact on marginalized communities and future generations.



Advocates of climate justice advocate for the equitable apportionment of burdens and benefits pertaining to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Their objective revolves around rectifying historical and contemporary injustices while striving for inclusive and participatory decision-making mechanisms. The interdisciplinary and philosophical perspectives aforementioned contribute to a profound comprehension of the environmental quandaries explicated in this article. These perspectives furnish frameworks for analyzing the ethical ramifications of human agency, envisaging alternative paradigms of engagement with nature, and propelling sustainable and equitable resolutions. By immersing ourselves in these theories and ongoing discussions, we nurture a comprehensive and nuanced approach to environmental conservation, climate change mitigation, and the preservation of our planet. Embracing an interdisciplinary outlook while recognizing the intricate interconnections between human societies and the environment fosters the development of efficacious strategies conducive to a sustainable and ethically accountable future.

### **Methodology**

This essay adopts a philosophical framework to delve into the intricacies of conservation and the array of environmental challenges that confront us. Instead of relying on empirical data or specific case studies, it undertakes a conceptual exploration of the subject matter. Employing metaphorical language, particularly the metaphor of a jellyfish, it endeavors to convey profound insights regarding the role of humanity and our profound impact on the natural world. The analysis conducted unequivocally reveals that humans serve as the primary catalysts behind environmental predicaments, thereby emphasizing the pressing need to address issues such as climate change from an ethical vantage point. The metaphor of a jellyfish serves as a poignant reminder of our responsibility as stewards of planet Earth, underscoring the imperative for proactive solutions. To substantiate the argument for conservation, a myriad of examples illustrating environmental degradation and statistical observations are presented. Collectively, the findings emanating from this exploration underscore the utmost significance of acknowledging our role in shaping the destiny of our planet. They lay bare the moral imperative that compels us to take decisive action in order to safeguard and preserve the environment for future generations.

### **Human responsibilities**

One of the fundamental purposes of our existence is to exercise stewardship over the Earth. In my native language, Uzbek, we employ the term “*imorat*,” derived from the Arabic word “عمارة” *eimara*,” which conveys the concept of building and cultivating. It encapsulates a broad spectrum of activities that we, as human beings, undertake. The noble pursuit of tending to and nurturing Mother Earth represents a remarkable endeavor for those who toil in the service of God. Regrettably, not everyone comprehends the magnitude of their mission on this planet. Human beings were not solely created to till the soil but also to safeguard the environment. We are entrusted with the role of stewards, bearing the weighty responsibility of caring for that which has been entrusted to us. Our position as stewards embodies a profound connection to the divine, necessitating faithful fulfillment of this duty. Islamic traditions, rooted in the sacred book, the Quran, underscore the importance of aligning our actions with the divine path while resisting the allure of our desires (Quran in English, 38:26, p.344 at [www.cpsusa.net](http://www.cpsusa.net)). It is imperative to comprehend that yielding to our desires can undermine our role as stewards. While this article predominantly delves into secular matters, it is crucial to acknowledge that numerous individuals ardently commit themselves to environmental protection. It is indisputable that the major world religions, including Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism, emphasize the imperative of



preserving and safeguarding the natural world. These faiths implore us to protect the environment and its biodiversity, recognizing their pivotal role in our very survival.

Now, let us explore some indications of this imperative. Although we may not possess medical expertise, we do possess a certain degree of medical knowledge. Our bodies incessantly communicate vital signs to us, such as headaches, nausea, or fever. If we pay heed to these signals, we can intervene effectively and prevent further deterioration. When we visit a pharmacy or hospital, we actively engage in endeavors aimed at addressing our health issues. Irrespective of our actions, the patient's recovery depends on us, and our negligence can exacerbate the problem. Sometimes, we unwittingly find ourselves in unhealthy situations, while at other times, we knowingly participate in activities that prove detrimental to our well-being. Nevertheless, our collective knowledge has expanded, and despite being cognizant of the adverse consequences, we often act recklessly. Why is this so? Why do we disregard the established rules governing our bodies and society? Reflecting upon the ramifications of human actions, the Quran asserts, "Corruption has appeared on the land and the sea because of what people's hands have earned" (Quran, 30:41, p.308 at [www.cpsusa.net](http://www.cpsusa.net)). This verse underscores the fact that as humans, we contribute to existing problems when we engage in risky and harmful environmental practices. Thus, we cannot disregard the consequences of spreading malevolence without acknowledging our own complicity in such actions. From an economic perspective, this can be conceptualized as externalities, referring to the negative impacts of economic activities. For instance, a factory may not deliberately harm a river, but its primary objective is production. Nevertheless, any outcome in this context represents a negative externality. It is important to acknowledge that positive impacts have occurred in the past. However, the extent to which the situation has spiraled out of control is observable. In the Arabic language, the term "فساد" *fa'sad* is employed to denote rot and corruption. The Arabs employ this word to encompass anything and everything that has gone astray, encompassing all forms of unlawful conduct.

Pollution, which pertains to the detrimental state of the environment resulting from hazardous substances generated by human activities, manifests in diverse forms. In our Islamic tradition, commentaries on relevant passages in certain textbooks shed light on pollution as a pertinent issue. A noteworthy Quranic commentary expounds, "The signs of corruption on the land include fires, soil degradation, and the lowering of the water table. The signs of corruption in the sea encompass the decline of fish" (Tafsir ibn Kathir, pp. 554-556). Present-day news reports and studies corroborate the disappearance of fish in oceans and seas, underscoring the relevance of this commentary ([www.nationalgeographic.com](http://www.nationalgeographic.com)). Ancient Chinese writings from over two thousand years ago also acknowledge the existence of pollution problems (Bao, 2004). These problems are not entirely novel; historical records evince that societies have long exerted harmful effects on the regions they inhabit. If only people were cognizant of the conflagration engulfing the world. Spain and numerous European countries grapple with significant fire-related challenges, aggravating the exodus of firefighters abandoning their posts in large numbers. Climate change serves as an additional factor exacerbating the perils associated with wildfires. As temperatures rise, the expanse ravaged by these devastating fires is anticipated to increase ([www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org), 2022).

Air pollution stands as another critical factor warranting attention, given the alarming magnitude of individuals worldwide affected by its adverse impacts. Mexico City, for instance, grapples with a profound health issue in the form of asthma resulting from air pollution (Del-Rio-Navarro et al., 2020). Metropolitan areas in the United States similarly contend with elevated mortality rates attributed to air pollution (Liana et al., 2018). Furthermore, our ecosystems face formidable challenges posed by an array of pollutants that permeate their fragile fabric (Prata et al., 2020). This predicament is particularly conspicuous in China, where many individuals are compelled to



don masks as a means to mitigate the effects of severe pollution (Tan et al., 2021). Soil degradation represents another pressing concern, yet its true extent eludes the awareness of many. Soil, an invaluable resource, necessitates thousands of years for the formation of fertile topsoil, which can be easily eroded. Hydroponics, a soilless cultivation technique, presents an alternative approach to crop production (Roberto et al., 2022). Although research on hydroponics traces back to the 17th century ([www.thenaturalfarmer.org](http://www.thenaturalfarmer.org)), its widespread implementation would entail a significant setback for humanity, particularly in light of the prevailing scarcity of water resources (Gallo et al., 2022). Water scarcity further contributes to the process of desertification, an observable phenomenon exemplified by regions such as the Sahara Desert, where entire villages succumb to burial beneath the shifting sands ([www.maptia.com](http://www.maptia.com): “Journey Through the Sahara”).

### **Mother earth is for all living creatures**

Presently, we find ourselves confronting the repercussions of our actions, as discerning experts in the field duly emphasize. Foreboding prophecies are not required; rather, we ought to heed the admonitions of those well-versed in the subject matter. It remains imperative to acknowledge that Earth is not solely the domain of humanity; it serves as the habitat for a diverse array of life forms. The planet should stand as a sanctuary, offering refuge and sustenance to all its denizens. Just as humans require a secure environment to flourish, countless other species also necessitate safety and stability for their own prosperity. Endangered creatures extend beyond insects such as cockroaches. Remarkable species that were once commonplace in various cultures now confront the specter of extinction. Wolves, eagles, lions, and tigers, often regarded as emblematic symbols of strength and majesty, count among the imperiled animals ([www.dingoden.net](http://www.dingoden.net): “Dingo the Animal Rescue”). An intriguing concept worthy of mention is the doctrine of signatures. This age-old notion posits that certain substances resembling parts of the human body can exert beneficial effects on those specific anatomical components. For instance, according to Arabic folklore, cashews are believed to enhance memory due to their resemblance to the hypothalamus, a brain region associated with memory (De Melo et al., 2017). Likewise, the superstition linking carrots to improved vision stems from the visual resemblance of a sliced carrot to an eye-like structure, a belief that has garnered popularity in Asian cultures ([www.healthline.com](http://www.healthline.com): “Viagra over the counter”). Virginia Gray Henry’s notable 10th-century work, “The Animals’ Lawsuit Against Humanity,” presents a fictional narrative wherein animals appear before a court to hold humans accountable for the harm they have inflicted upon the natural world. This allegorical masterpiece sheds light on the profound impact humans exert upon the environment, engendering havoc and disarray, while simultaneously highlighting the plight of the creatures inhabiting it.

Shifting our gaze towards the oceanic realm, the Gulf of Mexico stands as a splendid testament to aquatic grandeur. Nevertheless, it remains an arena wherein individuals continue to endure the consequences of human activities. The aftermath of the BP oil spill lingers, exerting a profound toll upon our planet. Oil remains an enduring predicament, with its deleterious consequences borne disproportionately by the animal kingdom. The combustion of oil compounds the predicament of pollution. NASA’s reports indicate that specific glacier regions have crossed the threshold of irreversibility in terms of melting, underscoring the unrelenting impacts of climate change ([www.nasa.gov](http://www.nasa.gov)). These events mirror the scenarios depicted in cinematic portrayals of climate change, bearing the imprimatur of scientific validation. It can indeed be overwhelming for individuals to grapple with these pressing issues. Astonishingly, certain sources contend that a staggering 90% of fish have vanished—a statistic that may initially appear unfathomable but demands our unwavering attention.



## **Jellyfish metaphor to remind**

The jellyfish metaphor serves as a captivating illustration, effectively encapsulating the current state of our oceans. Before delving deeper into this subject matter, it is crucial to shed light on the plight of bluefin tuna. Regrettably, the significance of this species often goes unnoticed, as fully grown bluefin tuna can fetch exorbitant prices in the sushi market, reaching tens of thousands of dollars. However, rampant overfishing has led to their dwindling numbers, with insufficient time provided for them to reach full maturity ([www.worldwidelife.org](http://www.worldwidelife.org): “Bluefish Stories”). This unfortunate circumstance has inadvertently created a propitious environment for jellyfish, which thrive while vital fish populations in the oceans have precipitously declined by 90% since 1950 ([www.nationalgeographic.com](http://www.nationalgeographic.com): “Critical issues overfishing”).

Ocean acidification stands as a critical factor exacerbating this ecological imbalance. Pollution, including the insidious effects of acid rain, is progressively altering the chemical composition of our waters, rendering them more acidic. Human-generated carbon dioxide emissions, responsible for climate change, also exert a profound impact on the oceans. When carbon dioxide dissolves in seawater, it engenders heightened acidity. The ramifications of climate change and ocean acidification are dire, potentially culminating in the disappearance of coral reefs, which constitute a vital ecosystem supporting a diverse array of marine life. Additionally, some plankton species may struggle to develop protective shells due to acidification by the end of this century. Plankton, serving as the bedrock of marine ecosystems, underpin countless other organisms. The vanishing of dominant plankton species could engender momentous changes, rendering the marine environment unrecognizable within a remarkably short span, thereby profoundly impacting life in our oceans (Hutchins et al., 2015).

Amidst this environmental upheaval, it remains intriguing to observe the thriving population of jellyfish. The expertise of esteemed jellyfish scholar Lisa Ann Greshwin, as portrayed in her book “Stung!,” affords us remarkable insights into these resilient creatures, which not only persevere but also harbor potent toxins. In conventional cosmology, the ocean symbolizes consciousness (Weller, 2011). Despite the vast dissimilarities between their habitat and our own, the ocean remains an enigmatic realm of fascination and exploration. While majestic creatures like whales and dolphins confront the brink of extinction, jellyfish, seemingly inconspicuous and lacking a skeletal framework, endure and flourish. Their relentless feeding habits and seemingly detached demeanor towards their surroundings prompt contemplation regarding whether they consume our consciousness or minds, raising the disquieting question of whether we are at risk of metamorphosing into “human jellyfish.” Contrary to prevailing assumptions, jellyfish sightings recurrently serve as poignant reminders of their prevalence. The ascendancy of jellyfish as the preeminent denizens of the oceans should unequivocally serve as a clarion call to the world (Rappenglueck, 2014).

At the heart of this calamity lies the ethos of modern consumerism. It is noteworthy that in Old English, the term “consumer” originally connoted the “devil”, as the devil was believed to devour people’s souls (see: “Átahsaia”; Akman, 2010). In the 19th century, “consumption” referred to the insidious “wasting disease” that insidiously claimed lives. William Leach’s seminal work, “The Land of Desire,” proffers profound insights into the metamorphosis of our civilization into a consumer society between the 1890s and 1930s. The deliberate objective was to manufacture a vast array of goods and entice people into their acquisition, leaving us to ponder the repercussions of this insidious transformation. It remains imperative to recognize that consumers did not always exist, and in the 1530s, the term “consumer” carried a pejorative connotation, signifying wastefulness (Leach, 1994).



In addition to the discussed themes, another significant aspect to consider is the prevalence of the “war economy” in the Western world, where the focus often revolves around budgets, cuts, and welfare systems ([www.cbpp.org](http://www.cbpp.org)). Offensive rearmament, although often avoided in discussions, was highlighted by Dwight David Eisenhower the 34<sup>th</sup> president of the United States from 1953 to 1961, who had firsthand experience with the military-industrial complex, as he warned about its far-reaching implications (Gleditsch, 2015). As a species, it is imperative that we transcend the archaic method of resolving conflicts through war. The renowned European war strategist, Clausewitz, famously argued that war is the continuation of politics through other means, suggesting its inherently political nature. However, when traditional political conventions prove ineffective, exploring alternative options becomes paramount (Kleemeier, 2008). Daniel Yergin’s seminal work, “The Prize” (1991) delves into the pivotal role of the petroleum industry in sustaining our technological society. Metaphorically speaking, petroleum can be considered “the lifeblood” that many value more than human blood. If the entire population lived as typical consumers, we would require multiple planets to satisfy our insatiable consumption demands. Thus, it becomes imperative to examine the symptoms of this collective behavior. Shedding light on pressing problems, let’s consider a few examples. Autism, a serious developmental disorder first identified in the 1950s, is characterized by significant impairments in social interaction, communication difficulties, restricted interests, and repetitive behaviors. It is crucial to consider the impact on young people, as autism can affect individuals under the age of 30 ([www.patient-claim-line.com](http://www.patient-claim-line.com)). Even young children without autism may display repetitive habits, stereotypic behaviors, and a decline in social skills, so it is not surprising to observe similar patterns in individuals with autism.

Another pressing issue is diabetes, which has become a global problem with profound consequences. The acidification of the oceans, linked to changes in our own acid-base balance, becomes an important aspect to comprehend (Hegarty, 2014). In the grand scheme of things, our internal states manifest externally, influencing our identities, behaviors, and actions. This microcosm-macrocosm analogy highlights the connection between the acidification of the oceans and the acidification occurring within us as humans deviate from our natural alkaline state ([www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com): “microcosm analogy”).

Now focusing on diabetes, a study by the World Health Organization (WHO) reveals an alarming increase in the age-specific mortality rate for diabetes, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, where rates have risen by 13% ([www.who.int](http://www.who.int)). Notably, China has the highest rates of diabetes ([www.statista.com](http://www.statista.com)). The IDF Diabetes Atlas estimates that diabetes will be responsible for 6.7 million deaths in 2021, equating to one death every five seconds. With 537 million affected adults globally, healthcare spending related to diabetes has surged by 316% over the past 15 years, reaching a total of \$966 billion. Alarmingly, three out of four adults with diabetes reside in low- and middle-income countries, and by 2045, it is projected that 783 million people could be living with diabetes ([www.diabetesatlas.org](http://www.diabetesatlas.org), 2021). The consumption of hydrocarbons and carbohydrates, such as oil and sugar, plays a significant role in this global health crisis. The preference for cheap energy sources, akin to the quick energy provided by sugar, contributes to an acidic environment, affecting not only our planet but potentially exacerbating diabetic acidosis (Lal et al., 2021).

Human trafficking, acknowledged as a grave violation of human rights, has reached unprecedented levels in contemporary times, with a larger number of individuals enslaved through trafficking than ever before, as reported by the United Nations and UN Women. Traffickers employ tactics such as violence, deception, and false promises of employment or personal relationships to exploit their victims. According to estimates by the Not for Sale Network, there are currently



45.8 million people living in enslavement worldwide, encompassing cases of forced marriages, child labor, and sexual exploitation ([www.gozoe.org](http://www.gozoe.org): “Zoe International”). Unfortunately, a significant majority of these cases involve the abhorrent crime of sex slavery ([www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org): “The Sepur Zarco Case”). Human trafficking, especially when it victimizes children, stands as one of the most abominable crimes. Shockingly, an estimated 25 million people fall prey to traffickers every year, which is equivalent to the entire population of Australia ([www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org)).

The issues associated with lust are often overlooked or denied in our society. The pervasive influence of pornography serves as a prominent indicator of this problem, with the industry’s revenue surpassing that of all professional baseball, basketball, and soccer teams combined ([www.earthweb.com](http://www.earthweb.com)). The excessive consumption and insatiable nature of this industry contribute to the interconnection between our actions and the perpetuation of darkness. It becomes crucial to contemplate whether the consumption of pornography inadvertently fosters and supports human trafficking, given that many women involved in these films are victims of the global human trafficking trade.

### **Consequences of overconsumption**

Each year, numerous individuals become casualties of consumerism, falling victim to the addictive allure of purchasing. This global phenomenon has resulted in tragic incidents where people are physically crushed under the weight of material possessions. Moreover, we often overlook the immense amount of waste generated by our excessive consumption. It is imperative that we make conscious efforts to minimize our waste and embrace more sustainable lifestyles in order to truly live. One distressing outcome of overconsumption is the proliferation of unnecessary packaging, leading to vast landfills overflowing with waste. This issue extends beyond land boundaries, as discarded helium balloons find their way into the oceans (Ocean Conservation Society). Once these balloons eventually sink, they pose a grave threat to marine life, especially turtles that mistake them for food, causing obstructions and potential fatalities. These are thoughtless actions that humans engage in without fully comprehending the dire consequences and challenging repercussions.

The Pacific Ocean is under assault from an immense wave of garbage, resembling a tsunami of waste ([www.oceanrecov.org](http://www.oceanrecov.org)). This environmental crisis is exacerbated by the convergence of currents and tides, resulting in devastating consequences ([www.theseachange.org](http://www.theseachange.org)). It is crucial to acknowledge that these environmental problems stem directly from human actions. We cannot turn a blind eye to the staggering statistic of approximately 200 million lives lost due to human-inflicted violence in the past century ([www.historians.org](http://www.historians.org)). Although the 21<sup>st</sup> century initially held promise, it has been marred by tragic events such as “9/11” and subsequent conflicts. However, amidst these challenges, it is important to recognize the inherent goodness within humanity. Consequently, it becomes evident that our planet is not overpopulated with decent individuals. Instead, the destructive consequences of overconsumption and disregard for the environment emphasize the need for collective responsibility and a fundamental shift in our values and behaviors.

### **Environmental theology does matter**

This article boards on a journey through the convoluted landscape of ecological change, peeling back the layers to reveal the intricate social triggers and far-reaching consequences intertwined with global change. Addressing issues such as the impact of overconsumption, the emergence of health disorders such as autism and diabetes, the dark specter of human trafficking, and the influence of desires and explicit content, this analysis offers deep insights into the dynamic





intricacies of our global society. What may appear to be isolated challenges are in fact intricately linked, underscoring the need for an all-encompassing strategy that seamlessly connects human societies, the environment, and complex systems.

Untangling these complicated challenges requires an exceptional and high-quality perspective underpinned by solid theoretical foundations. This synthesis is strengthened by interdisciplinary methods that incorporate insights from fields such as sociology, psychology, economics, and environmental philosophy to enhance our understanding of the multi-faceted interrelationships. Within this field, environmental philosophy plays a central role by providing a conceptual framework that deepens our understanding of the complex interactions between humans and the environment. Within the framework of environmental philosophy, there are ongoing dialogs that enrich our understanding of the intricate connections between humans and their environment. These discussions address various issues such as the intrinsic value of nature, intergenerational ethics, sustainability, the rights of non-human beings, and the impact of technology and alternative economic paradigms on our relationship with the environment. Such dialogues force us to confront our ethical obligations, to fathom the far-reaching consequences of our actions, and to seek ways to restore ecological balance. Through engagement with these theoretical constructs and active participation in the ongoing dialogues within environmental philosophy, we develop a deep understanding of our role as stewards of the earth.

Environmental theology is concerned with understanding the relationship between God and the cosmos, often referred to as creation. In this area, there are three main perspectives regarding the physical connection between God and the environment. One perspective assumes a creator God who exists outside the physical world, while another sees the presence of God within the environment. The third perspective questions the existence of God as a separate entity. Variations within these perspectives further refine this relationship, including the coexistence of God both outside and within the environment, the concept of separate deities for God and nature, and the idea that God is absent as a separate entity and the environment itself is seen as the creator. A unifying mystical viewpoint that transcends various faiths posits that God is in a continuing act of creating the universe, with the universe itself being a direct expression of God's being and not a creation separate from God. Three corresponding worldviews emerge from this ecological perspective: nature as created, nature as divine, and nature as emergent. This results in three different environmental theologies: one that views God as eternal and the environment as His creation, another that views the environment as God, and a third that holds that the environment emerged from physical conditions.

While the terms “environmental theology” and “eco-theology” are sometimes used interchangeably, environmental theology tends to give priority to environmental ethics over the concept of God. Over time, the importance of environmental theology has increased, largely because the recognition that anthropocentrism is a crucial cause of ecological crises is gaining ground. As scientific understanding of humanity's impact on the planet deepens, theologians are addressing questions about the teachings of the Judaeo-Christian tradition regarding environmental preservation, the role of human “dominion”, and harmony between human needs and the integrity of nature. The basic creation narrative expressed in the Judeo-Christian tradition occupies a central place in discussions of environmental conservation. This narrative underscores God's role in the creation of the earth and identifies humanity as stewards of that creation. This stewardship is closely linked to human responsibility for the environment and the unique dignity and duty that belongs to human beings within the larger framework of God's creation. Various denominations and organizations within the Judaeo-Christian tradition have made theological statements on the creation and environmental stewardship, contributing to a broader discourse



on religious environmentalism. This dialogue has sparked ongoing conversations in churches around the world, reflecting evolving perspectives on humanity's connection to the environment in the context of religious teachings.

This heightened awareness of our ecological responsibilities impacts decision-making, policy-making, and individual action, promoting more sustainable and harmonious coexistence with the environment. This journey culminates in the realization of an enlightened, conscientious society that carefully nurtures the delicate balance between human needs and the well-being of the planet. The themes explored in this discourse, therefore, underscore not only the inherent interconnectedness of the various facets of existence but also the need for a comprehensive understanding of human society and the environment, their interplay, and interdependence. By adopting interdisciplinary perspectives and delving into the theories and dialogs of environmental philosophy, we broaden our understanding and catalyze substantive progress in addressing the social catalysts and consequences of environmental change at the local and global levels.

## Conclusion

With an unwavering dedication to our faith, we must hold fast to the understanding that divine grace is bestowed upon those who refrain from harming the planet or placing their own desires above the common good. Psalm 24:1 teaches us that: "The Earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it". As a collective, it is our responsibility to internalize this perspective and recognize our inherent nobility. We are far more than mere consumers or insignificant beings; we possess the capacity for deep understanding and extraordinary potential. Therefore, it is our sacred duty to continually remind each other of our remarkable essence. The Earth, humanity's common heritage, demands our collective care. However, the ominous dangers of waste, uncontrolled consumption, and disregard for the natural world threaten our very existence. Regrettably, some of us are unaware of the deep interconnectedness that binds us to our environment and therefore fail to recognize its inherent goodness. It is therefore of the utmost importance that we continually reflect on our role as stewards and work tirelessly to raise up people who will make a positive contribution to the vitality of our planet.

Yet there are also those who intentionally sow destruction in our world. Driven by uncontrolled impulses, they forfeit their role as stewards. This brings into focus the concept of sin that runs like a thread through the various traditions. Christians, for example, distinguish between fervent and cold sins, often neglecting their profound effects. Gluttony, anger, and lust, which burn with intensity, easily grab our attention. Esteemed mystery writer and poet Dorothy Sayers astutely reminds us that societies often use sexuality as a substitute for their dwindling spirituality. This intertwining of carnal desires with environmental degradation and the objectification of women reflects a deeply rooted problem. Although all genders are affected, the proliferation of pornography remains primarily a male problem. On the contrary, society often lauds cold sins such as greed and envy, the consequences of which can be devastating. Pride, a sin against our own brilliance, and idleness, which is different from laziness, hinder our connection to our inner self. Recognizing the significance of ardent and cold sins is crucial, for they can either lead to our downfall or become steppingstones to salvation. Such contemplation warrants unwavering attention and seriousness.

The impassioned appeals of respected writers, eloquent orators, and pious theologians thus ring with a resounding call to action, underscoring the urgency of preserving and protecting our environment. They implore influential people to champion this noble cause and call on activists to raise public and government awareness and provide a decisive response to environmental



challenges. This clear call echoes through our spiritual traditions, which recognize the importance of this cause. It is our duty to embrace this harmony and heed this righteous call.

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