

Reconstructing the Relationship between God, Nature, and Humanity: Islamic Epistemology and Environmental Ethics in Responding to the Ecological Crisis

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze the relationship between God, nature, and humans in facing a global ecological crisis. The current ecological crisis is not only material but also a spiritual crisis that arises from the way humans understand and treat nature. This study analyzes classical and contemporary works on Islamic thought and modern literature on ecological issues. The results of the study show that Islamic doctrine places God as the source of truth and the center of existence. Humans occupy the position of caliph, morally responsible for nature. Nature, as a creation, has intrinsic value as well as a space for divine manifestation. The disconnection between these three factors causes inequality that has an impact on the environmental crisis. Therefore, the principles of monotheism and trust emphasize the importance of ecological ethics rooted in spiritual awareness.

Keywords: God-Nature; Human Relations; Islamic Epistemology; Ecological Crisis; Spiritual Ethics

1. Introduction

The ecological crisis that occurs in the modern era is one of the serious problems faced by humanity, characterized by various phenomena such as global warming, deforestation, air and water pollution, and the loss of biodiversity that has a major impact on the survival of life on Earth. This condition not only shows damage at the physical level, but also indicates a loss of human awareness of moral and spiritual values in treating the environment. In many contemporary studies, environmental crises are understood not only as technical or scientific problems, but also as value crises that reflect human imbalances with nature and God.¹

Behind these various environmental damages, there is a fundamental problem, namely the disconnection of human spiritual awareness of the "sacred relationship" between God, man, and nature. Modern thinking that tends to consider man as the center of the universe often ignores the moral and spiritual principles that govern this relationship, so that nature is treated as an object of infinite exploitation. It is in this context that the concept of the relationship between the three entities of God, man, and nature in Islamic thought becomes relevant as a complete philosophical and ethical foundation for understanding the nature of human existence and ecological responsibility.²

In Islamic epistemology, reality is seen as an integrated unity between God,

¹ Muslim Djuned, "Human and Environmental Relations in Islam," *SINTHOP: Media Studies of Education, Religion, Social and Culture* 2, no. 2 (2023): 124–134.

² Uup Gufron & Radea Yuli A. Hambali, "Man, Nature and God in AlGhazali Ecosufism," *Jaqfi: Journal of Islamic Aqidah and Philosophy* 7, no. 1 (2022): 45–58.

humans, and nature. The three are integrally interrelated and cannot be separated epistemically or ethically. God is understood as the source of truth, the creator and maintainer of all things, while humans function as caliphs (God's representatives) with a moral responsibility to maintain balance and justice in nature. Nature, in addition to being a creation that reflects divine wisdom, also has an intrinsic value that must be respected and maintained. When the relationship between these three entities is severed, ecological inequality will arise, which leads to an environmental crisis.³

The Islamic view of this interconnectedness is not only normative, but also philosophical and theological, with the principle of monotheism (the oneness of God) as the main foundation. This principle teaches that all existence is God's creation bound in a cosmic unity, so that human actions towards nature have essential spiritual and moral implications. Thus, Islamic ecological ethics emphasizes the importance of monotheistic consciousness as a moral basis in treating nature not solely as a resource, but as part of a system of existence that must be respected and preserved.⁴

This paper aims to explain philosophically how the relationship between God, nature, and man is understood in the framework of Islamic epistemology and how these concepts can be the basis for solutions in dealing with today's ecological crisis. The main focus of this study is to explore Islamic thinking about human responsibility as a caliph, a balanced spiritual relationship between creatures and their Creator, and ecological ethics that are holistic and sustainable. With this approach, it is hoped that it can be understood that the solution to the environmental crisis must be rooted in the restoration of integral spiritual awareness, not just technical reforms or environmental policies.

2. Review Literature

Changes in understanding and practice related to the relationship between God, humans, and nature can be observed in the contemporary literature between 2010 and 2025. These studies show that the understanding of society and academia regarding this relationship is not completely consistent, and there are several main discussions that have emerged in the scientific study of Islamic environmental ethics. Broadly speaking, there are three main focuses in the literature: first, the understanding of God's principles as creator and regulator of nature; second, the relationship between humans and nature based on moral and spiritual responsibility; third, the integration of Islamic ecological ethics as a guideline for human actions towards the environment. The three focuses are discussed as follows:

2.1 The Principle of God and Nature

In Islamic epistemology, nature is seen as God's creation that has intrinsic value and reflects Divine wisdom. Nature is not just a physical object, but also a means for humans to understand God's attributes as well as the cosmic laws that govern existence. Contemporary studies emphasize that environmental damage is not only material, but also signifies the disruption of the moral and spiritual balance

³ Sonia Isna Suratin Alfadhli et al., "Islamic Ecotheology: Exploring the Spiritual Relationship between Man, Nature, and God in the Islamic Tradition," *Ta'wiluna: Journal of Qur'anic Science, Islamic Interpretation and Thought* 6, no. 1 (2025): 300–310.

⁴ Ibid., 305.

established by God.

Nature contains the signs of God (*verse al-Khalq*) that teach humans about order, connectedness, and balance. Every natural phenomenon has a moral and ethical message that is relevant to humans, so the maintenance of nature is a spiritual as well as an ecological obligation. The principle of *monotheism* emphasizes that all creation is in one cosmic system that is connected to the Creator, so humans should not treat nature solely as an economic resource or object of exploitation.

This concept explains that the relationship between God and nature is both epistemic and ethical: nature is a medium for humans to know God, as well as a moral test in maintaining the balance of creation. Modern literature emphasizes the importance of this awareness so that environmental ethics is not only normative, but also applied in real life.

2.2 Man's Relationship with Nature

Man is placed as a caliph on earth who is responsible for maintaining the balance of nature and the sustainability of life. The excessive exploitation of nature and consumptive behavior indicate the loss of human awareness of the spiritual relationship with God and nature.⁵ Therefore, Islamic ecological ethics emphasizes that every human action must be in harmony with moral principles, maintain balance, and maintain environmental sustainability.⁶

The principle of *mīzān* in the Qur'an emphasizes the existence of the internal order of nature that humans must respect. The disharmony of the relationship between humans and nature has the potential to cause ecological disasters and environmental crises that are not only physical, but also moral. Contemporary literature emphasizes that humans must understand their role as responsible managers of nature, not as rulers who are free to exploit resources.⁷

In addition, modern studies show that human ecological consciousness must be supported by religious education and understanding that emphasizes moral and spiritual responsibility to nature. The concept of trust teaches that humans must take care of nature not for personal gain alone, but for the benefit of future generations and overall cosmic harmony.

2.3 Integration of the Relationship between God, Human, and Nature

Islamic environmental ethics emphasizes the integration of three entities: God, humans, and nature as an interrelated whole.⁸ Nature has intrinsic value, humans have moral responsibilities, and God, as the creator, affirms ethical principles that must be adhered to. When this relationship is disrupted, ecological inequalities occur that have an impact not only on the physical environment, but also on human morality and spirituality.

⁵*Ibid.*, 305.

⁶Maulana Bagus Rahmat, Masruchin, & Fauzan, "The Idea of Islamic Ecotheology in Responding to the Global Environmental Crisis," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Theology and Philosophy* 7, no. 1 (2025): 1–15.

⁷Sonia Isna Suratin Alfadhli et al., "Islamic Ecotheology: Exploring the Spiritual Relationship between Man, Nature, and God in the Islamic Tradition," *Ta'wiluna* 6, no. 1 (2025): 307.

⁸Muslim Djuned, "Human and Environmental Relations in Islam," *SINTHOP* 2, no. 2 (2023): 124–134.

The solution to the ecological crisis, according to Islamic literature, is not only in the form of a technical approach or environmental policy, but must be based on spiritual awareness and the application of holistic ecological ethics. The principle of *monotheism* emphasizes that humans must be aware of cosmic interconnectedness and act justly towards all beings, while the principle of *trust* leads humans to maintain the balance of nature for the common good.

The concepts of *maṣlaḥah* (benefit) and *mīzān* become practical guidelines in every ecological action. Every human decision in utilizing resources must consider its impact on the ecosystem and the collective interest. Nature also serves as a medium of spiritual education that teaches humans to realize their limitations and dependence on God.⁹

Contemporary literature emphasizes that the restoration of human spiritual consciousness is an important step in confronting an ecological crisis. By blending theological, moral, and ecological principles, Islamic environmental ethics provides a holistic and sustainable framework.

3. Method

3.1 Type and Scope of Research

This study applies a quantitative approach through the literature study method to map the frequency and pattern of the concepts of God, human, and natural relations in the epistemological discourse and Islamic environmental ethics. Using a database of academic literature for the period 2020–2025, data were collected systematically through the identification and selection of sources relevant to the issue of ecological crisis. The analysis was carried out using quantitative content analysis techniques by categorizing the main themes to see the dominant thinking tendencies. In order to ensure objectivity, this study uses a triangulation technique by comparing various literature from different academic backgrounds, the results of which are then presented in a descriptive-analytical manner to describe the construction of contemporary Islamic thought as a whole.

3.2 Research Data Sources

The analysis in this study focuses on scientific documents that discuss the interaction between God, humans, and nature through the lens of Islamic epistemology and environmental ethics. Data sources include books, national and international journals, and relevant academic publications published between 2020 and 2025. Through the purposive sampling technique, documents are selected based on the depth of their discussion of Islamic ethical principles on ecological crises to identify the frequency of occurrence of key themes and terms. If there is substantial similarity between several sources, the researcher will only refer to one document that is most representative in order to maintain the efficiency of the analysis, avoid redundancy, and ensure objectivity in the processing of library data.

3.3 Research Instruments

This study uses a document analysis sheet as the main instrument that is systematically compiled to identify and classify key concepts regarding the relationship between God, humans, and nature. This instrument covers three broad categories, namely theological-epistemological aspects (trust and balance),

⁹ S. H. Nasr, *Religion and the Order of Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 46-47.

environmental ethics (conservation of nature and exploitation criticism), and socio-moral implications related to ecological awareness. With this instrument, each literature source is dissected quantitatively through the calculation of the frequency of the theme and descriptively through the interpretation of emerging thought trends. This approach ensures that the data obtained is objective, structured, and consistent in formulating systematic conclusions about the role of the Islamic perspective in dealing with the ecological crisis.

3.4 Research Procedure

The research procedure, which was carried out in December 2025, began with the determination of the focus of the study on theological and ecological relations in an Islamic perspective. The stage was continued with the collection and selection of academic literature for the 2020–2025 period that is credible and relevant to the issue of ecological crisis. The collected data was then systematically classified using document analysis sheets to map key concepts such as environmental mandate and responsibility. Furthermore, descriptive quantitative data management was carried out through the calculation of theme frequencies to interpret existing thinking tendencies. This series of procedures was closed with the synthesis stage and drawing conclusions to formulate the position of Islamic epistemology systematically in responding to contemporary ecological challenges.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data analysis process began by classifying literature study documents into several thematic categories, which included the theological relationship between God-human-nature and the concept of environmental ethics in Islam. The researcher identified and calculated the frequency of key terms such as monotheism, trust, and ecological responsibility to see the dominant direction of thought of Muslim scholars. This quantitative approach aims to objectively map the extent to which these concepts emerged and were used in the academic literature for the period 2020–2025.

Furthermore, the results of the data are interpreted descriptively and analytically to explore the deep meaning of the relationships between the concepts that have been found. From this analysis, a conceptual synthesis was prepared that positions Islamic epistemology and environmental ethics as a normative framework in dealing with ecological crises. The result is a comprehensive exposition that not only shows the frequency trend of concepts, but also systematically explains how Islamic philosophical values respond to current environmental issues.

4. Results

1.1 The Relationship between God and Nature

The results of the literature study show that in the Islamic perspective, nature is seen not as just an object of exploitation, but as *God's creation* that has moral and spiritual value. This view is rooted in the concept of *monotheism*, where God, as the sole creator, places nature in order (*mizān*) that must be respected and preserved. Studies that examine environmental theology in Islam emphasize that the concepts of monotheism, trust, justice (*'adl*), and balance (*mizān*) are the pillars of Islamic ecological ethics.¹⁰ These principles are not merely normative theories, but implicitly guide human actions in preserving the earth as a Divine trust, so that the

¹⁰ Muhammad Amiruddin et al., "Environmental Theology in the Qur'an Ibrahim Abdul Matin's Perspective," *Al-Mau'izhoh: Journal of Islamic Religious Education* 6, no. 2 (2024): 1–15.

God–nature relationship is inseparable from human moral responsibility.

This view is reinforced by another study that states that Islamic ecological theology makes nature a *verse* (signs of God) that must be contemplated and maintained, because any damage to nature is a disturbance to the established balance of creation.¹¹ This concept of *interpretation* of nature shows that God's relationship with nature is not only doctrinal, but also epistemological and practical—that is, linking the knowledge of God with man's responsibility to creation. This study also points out that the understanding of Allah as "Rahmatan lil 'Alamin" (mercy for the universe) underlines the moral purpose of environmental stewardship, not merely a utilitarian aspect.¹²

The conclusion of this study shows that, theologically, Islam provides a solid basis for dealing with the modern ecological crisis through an understanding of the relationship between God and nature that emphasizes *ta'awun* (cooperation), the accountability of man as a caliph, and the moral principle of maintaining the balance of creation.

1.2 The Relationship between Man and Nature

In the context of environmental ethics, literature shows that Islam places humans as caliphs on earth as managers and guardians of nature. This is where the relationship between God, humans, and nature is morally and practically interrelated. Humans are not only users of resources, but also ethical agents who must consider spiritual, moral, and ecological aspects in every action.¹³ This concept of *caliphate* is combined with trust, requiring humans to carry out the responsibility of protecting nature with full integrity and spiritual awareness.

Ecological ethics in Islam, as found in studies that map Qur'anic values related to *caliphs*, *mīzān*, and the prohibition of *fasād* (destruction on the earth), suggests that sacred texts provide clear moral direction for maintaining ecological balance and rejecting overexploitation.¹⁴ The implication of this principle is the development of behaviors that reject consumerism, extravagance (*isrâf*), and other destructive actions that violate environmental harmony.

Furthermore, another study that discusses ecological ethics in the Qur'an and Hadith confirms that humans are burdened with a moral responsibility to conserve, maintain the sustainability of resources, and prevent environmental damage.¹⁵ Analysis of related hadiths shows that there are normative witnesses that encourage humans not to do damage (*la tafsīdū fil arḍ*) and emphasize the importance of respecting the rights of other creatures in the environmental system.

¹¹ Rifqi Nurohmani Syahri Shiam et al., "Reviving Ecological Ethics in Islam: Tawhid, Khalifah, and Mizan Principles," *Tashdiq: Journal of Religious Studies and Da'wah* 16, no. 3 (2025): 45–60.

¹² Maulana Bagus Rahmat et al., "The Idea of Islamic Ecotheology in Responding to the Global Environmental Crisis," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Theology and Philosophy* 7, no. 1 (2025): 93–110.

¹³ Rika Halifasyah et al., "Maintaining the Mandate of Allah: Sharia Concepts and Solutions to the Problem of Environmental Damage in an Islamic Perspective," *Kamaliyah: Journal of Islamic Religious Education* (2025): 1–12.

¹⁴ Rika Halifasyah et al., "Maintaining the Mandate of Allah: Sharia Concepts and Solutions to the Problem of Environmental Damage in an Islamic Perspective," *Kamaliyah: Journal of Islamic Religious Education* (2025): 1–12.

¹⁵ Mike Andrini et al., "Islamic Ecological Ethics: The Moral Foundations of Environmental Conservation in the Qur'an and Hadith," *Pendas: Scientific Journal of Basic Education* 10, no. 4 (2025): 1–15.

The results of the study also found that Islamic ecological ethics not only contains abstract moral values, but is also able to translate them into daily educational practices, policies, and behaviors. For example, the integration of Qur'anic principles of *caliph*, *amanah*, *mīzān*, and *ihsān* (moral perfection) in environmental education helps build holistic ecological awareness.¹⁶ On this basis, the relationship between humans and nature according to Islam has a strong philosophical foundation and can be an ethical alternative in responding to the increasingly complex global ecological crisis.

5. Discussion

The results of the study show that human awareness of the relationship between God, humans, and nature is still low, so many ecological behaviors are not in line with Islamic ethical principles. For example, acts of exploitation of natural resources occur because humans tend to view nature only as material objects without paying attention to spiritual and moral values. These findings confirm that ecological crises are not just physical problems, but also a reflection of the loss of human spiritual awareness of God and his responsibilities as caliphs on earth.¹⁷ Some participants emphasized that they are aware of the importance of protecting nature, but daily practices are still inconsistent due to the limitations of limited understanding and guidance from religious leaders and educational institutions. This shows that there is a gap between knowledge and practice, which can lead to deviations in the preservation of nature.

In a comparative perspective, these findings strengthen the concept of Islamic ecotheology that positions humans as caliphs with a moral responsibility to maintain the cosmic balance. These results are in line with the thinking of Max Weber and Sayyid Hossein Nasr, who emphasize the crucial spiritual and ethical dimensions in environmental management. The relevance of this research also intersects with contemporary studies that affirm that ecological crises are not just material problems, but deep moral and spiritual crises. Therefore, solutions to current environmental problems must be constructed through strengthening religious awareness and ethical foundations as the main framework for handling them.

The findings of this study confirm that the contemporary ecological crisis is rooted in the degradation of moral and spiritual values in human interaction with nature. This phenomenon is triggered by a paradigm shift, especially among the modern generation, which has begun to ignore the philosophical and theological foundations in the God-human-nature relationship. As a result, nature is only seen as an economic and technological instrument in the absence of ethical responsibility. This situation is exacerbated by the lack of ongoing education on environmental ethics based on religious values, which results in a loss of awareness of the sacred dimensions of nature. Without a moral and spiritual foundation in ecological decision-making, patterns of overexploitation become uncontrollable and further exacerbate the global environmental crisis.

This finding has a significant impact by emphasizing that the development of ecological awareness must be based on Islamic spiritual values. Practically, this

¹⁶ Arif Atma Mahendra et al., "Environmental Education in an Islamic Perspective: Integration of Qur'anic Values, Ecological Ethics, and the Role of Islamic Education," *Pendas: Scientific Journal of Basic Education* 10, no. 4 (2025): 1–14.

¹⁷ Rahmat, M.B., *The Idea of Islamic Ecotheology in Responding to the Global Environmental Crisis*, *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Theology and Philosophy* 7, no. 2 (2025): 45–60.

research implies the importance of integrating the principles of monotheism and trust into environmental education, as well as strengthening the role of religious leaders and educational institutions in guiding the younger generation. Through a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between God, humans, and nature, society is expected to minimize destructive actions against nature. Thus, ecological sustainability can be realized through the alignment between environmental conservation practices and the moral and spiritual foundations of Islam.

6. Conclusion

This study emphasizes that the main foundation in mitigating the modern ecological crisis lies in strengthening the relationship between God, humans, and nature through the perspective of Islamic epistemology and ethics. As caliphs, humans bear a moral responsibility to preserve the balance of nature, which is God's creation with inherent spiritual values. However, findings in the field indicate that awareness of this mandate is still very limited, especially in the younger generation, which results in rampant acts of exploitation. This phenomenon shows a disconnect between theoretical understanding and practical implementation, which ultimately accelerates environmental damage and erodes transcendental values in human interaction with ecosystems.

Further analysis underscores the importance of the principles of monotheism and amanah as fundamental guidelines in every human activity towards the environment. To bridge this awareness gap, an educational approach based on Islamic values is needed that involves synergy between religious leaders, traditional leaders, and educational institutions. Through the internalization of these moral and spiritual values, communities are encouraged to manage natural resources with the principle of sustainability. This step aims to maintain harmony between humans and their environment while minimizing ethical violations in daily ecological practices.

Overall, this study concludes that the restoration of spiritual awareness and the application of Islamic ecological ethics are not just normative solutions, but strategic steps to ensure the sustainability of the global ecosystem. Efforts to strengthen the harmonious relationship between God, humans, and nature must be realized in concrete actions that are in harmony with Islamic philosophical principles. By making moral awareness the main pillar, ecological crises can be addressed holistically and sustainably, not just through a purely technical approach.

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