

**Freedom that is not Absolute:
Ecological Ethics and Human-Nature Relationship in the Qur'an**

Wolność, która nie jest absolutna:
Etyka ekologiczna i związek człowieka z naturą w Koranie

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Received: 9 May, 2024; Revised: 11 Jul, 2024; Accepted: 12 Jul, 2024;

Pre-published: 13 Jul, 2024

Abstract: This article presents an analysis of ecological ethics in the holy scripture of Islam through the intellectual interpretations of Muslim scholars. The primary focus is on discussing the limitations of human rights in utilizing ecology and the obligation to preserve it according to the perspective of the Qur'an. This discussion is particularly relevant for Indonesia, a country with a majority Muslim population, which is experiencing increasing ecological degradation. The article urges Muslims in Indonesia to refer back to the ecological principles within Islam, avoiding capitalist ideologies that contradict Islamic teachings. The research methodology used is literature analysis, drawing from the texts of the Qur'an and its exegesis, analyzed through thematic and descriptive-analytical interpretative approaches. Two main themes discussed are the limitations of human creativity towards ecology and the relationship between humans and nature. Research findings indicate that the Qur'an explicitly prohibits human behavior that can harm environmental sustainability. Although nature was created to meet human needs, humans are still forbidden to treat the environment carelessly. The Qur'an emphasizes the importance of maintaining ecological balance, forbids *isrāf* (wastefulness), and warns of punishment in the afterlife for those who damage the environment.

Keywords: human-environment relationship, environmental ethics in Islam, Qur'anic perspective on ecology, limits of human freedom in nature.

Streszczenie: Niniejszy artykuł przedstawia analizę zagadnienia etyki ekologicznej w świętej księdze islamu w perspektywie jej intelektualnych interpretacji muzułmańskich uczonych. Główny nacisk położony jest na wytyczne Koranu w kwestii ograniczonych praw człowieka do korzystania ze środowiska naturalnego oraz nakazu jego ochrony. Dyskusja ta jest szczególnie istotna w przypadku Indonezji, kraju o większości muzułmańskiej, który to doświadcza

rosnącej degradacji ekologicznej. Artykuł wzywa muzułmanów w Indonezji, aby odnieśli się do zasad ekologicznych islamu i unikali ideologii kapitalistycznych, które są sprzeczne z naukami ich religii. Zastosowaną metodologią badawczą jest analiza literatury, czerpiąca z tekstów Koranu i jego egzegezy, dokonana w ujęciu tematycznym i opisowo-analitycznym. Dwa główne omawiane tematy to ograniczenia ludzkiej działalności w obszarze środowiska naturalnego oraz relacje między człowiekiem a przyrodą. Wyniki badań pokazują, że Koran wyraźnie zabrania wszelkich działań, które mogą zaburzyć równowagę środowiska naturalnego. Chociaż przyroda została stworzona, aby zaspokajać ludzkie potrzeby, to jednak ludzie nie mogą korzystać ze środowiska naturalnego w sposób nierozważny. Koran podkreśla znaczenie utrzymywania równowagi w środowisku naturalnym, zabrania *isrāf* (marnotrawstwa) i ostrzega tych, którzy niszczą środowisko przed karą w zaświatach.

Słowa kluczowe: relacje człowiek-środowisko, etyka ekologiczna w islamie, koraniczne spojrzenie na ekologię, granice wolności człowieka w przyrodzie.

Introduction

The relationship between humans and nature has been a significant concern throughout the history of human civilization. It began with the philosophical theory of Thales, who claimed the purity and sacredness of nature. Subsequently, the theories of Plato and Aristotle emerged, with the view that the status of the natural environment is lower than that of humans (Sayem 2021b). The views of Plato and Aristotle on nature had some influences on contemporary life. Humans often feel superior to creatures above the universe because humans have two elements, namely intellect and physicality. In contrast, nature only has physicality without intellect. The understanding of human superiority is also often adopted in the thinking of commentators of the Qur'an, based on the premise that Allah created the universe and all its contents to be utilized by humans. All of this is considered as Allah's blessings to humans, with the hope that humans can think and ultimately believe in Allah (Al-Azhar 1393, 9/789).

The utilization of nature by humans has been the focus of attention for theologians in developing their theological concepts, but it does not always lead to sustainable environmental preservation or ecology. This can be seen in the interpretation of Muḥammad al-Amīn bin 'Abd Allāh al-Hurārī (d. 2019 CE) of surah al-Naḥl 16:8, which explains that one of the proofs of Allah's mercy and blessings to humans is the creation of animals to be utilized and meet human needs (Al-Hurārī 2001, 15/145). Jābir bin Mūsā al-Jazāirī (d. 2018 CE) interpreted surah al-Naḥl 16:3-18 by focusing on the theological concept of *tadhkīr*, which emphasizes that all of Allah's creations in the world and all that is in it are intended for humans and can be utilized by them (Jābir b. Mūsā 2003, 3/100-106). The emphasis on the Oneness of God also stands out in interpretations with a Sufī perspective, as demonstrated by 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī (d. 1072 CE) in his work *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt*/Subtle Allusions. In several of his commentaries, he elucidates that Allah reminds humanity of the blessings bestowed upon them through the

creation of animals that can be utilized by humans in various conditions ('Abd al-Karīm, n.d., 2/286).

However, it does not mean that Muslim intellectual interpretations fully align with the theories of Plato and Aristotle. Muslim intellectual interpretations still maintain that the universe, albeit lacking rationality, has a spirit that must be respected by humans. This is evident from the commentary of exegetes when interpreting verses such as al-An'ām 6:38 and al-Isrā' 17:44, which state that everything in the universe constantly glorifies Allah, even though humans may not understand or hear this glorification (Al-Sha'rāwī 1997, 6/3607; Al-Marāghī 1946, 15/51; Ismā'īl Ḥaqqy, n.d., 5/127; Affandi et al. 2022). However, it cannot be denied that the attention of commentators to the preservation of nature and sustainable environment has not yet become the main focus. Commentaries from the commentators emphasize more the relationship between humans and Allah. With this approach, the understanding of readers tends to lean towards the absolute utilization of nature, viewing the creation of the universe solely as a facility for humans (Almirzanah 2020). However, such views are actually the cause of environmental damage.

As nature is considered a gift from Allah to humanity and lacks intellect, humans often exploit it beyond reasonable limits. Human concern for nature is also declining, prompting increased attention from various quarters understanding and awareness of the urgency of maintaining environmental balance (Llewellyn and Khalid 2024). Disseminating this understanding and awareness is deemed suboptimal without the involvement of religious elements. Therefore, Aimee Hope and Christopher Jones (Sayem 2019), Sayyed Hossein Nasr (Rodin 2017), and Md. Abu Sayem explain the urgency of religious leaders' participation in addressing ecology to cultivate awareness in people's minds about the importance of preserving environmental balance and understanding the relationship between humans and nature (Sayem 2021a).

The principle is that the holy book of Islam contains extensive discussions about the universe. Research by Dede Rodin shows that there are more than 750 verses in the Qur'an that discuss nature (Rodin 2017). Therefore, it is not an exaggeration if Syafaatun Almirzanah concludes that the main themes in the Qur'an are God, humans, and nature (Almirzanah 2020). When discussing divinity in the Qur'an, the discourse not only introduces humans to the One God but also emphasizes that humans have obligations that must be accounted for before Him, often referred to as *ḥaq Allah*/the Right of Allah. In discussing humanity, there are rights and obligations that regulate social life among humans, commonly referred to as *ḥaq al-*

Adamī/human rights. Similarly, when the Qur'an discusses the relationship between humans and nature, it emphasizes not only the utilization of nature but also the obligations that humans have towards nature, which must ultimately be accounted for before Allah. Thus, the relationship between humans and nature has certain boundaries. This latter part is the focus of this article. The purpose of this article is to show in-depth that Islam is not the cause of the ecological crisis, because its teachings do not advocate for anthropocentrism as suggested by Sally McFague, Arnold Toynbee, and Lynn White, but rather direct towards theocentrism (Gada 2014).

1. The Phenomenon of Human Behavior Towards Nature in Indonesia

The view that nature is merely a wealth-generating machine, worthless without human creativity, and lacking intrinsic meaning has become a common understanding among the majority of modern humanity (Paglia 2015). İbrahim Özdemir explains that this understanding emerged from Western civilization, but quickly spread worldwide, including to Islamic countries (Özdemir 2003).

Ecological observers agree that the main factor driving the ecological crisis is human exploitation of nature as an economic resource. This is evident from government programs that constantly push for economic growth (Mondry 2023). Efforts to boost the economy often lead to a loss of environmental balance due to excessive exploitation of natural resources (Ulfat Sadiqa and Rafi 2022). Environmental degradation due to economic dominance is particularly evident in Indonesia. The development of industries presents a dilemma, as it raises the economy on the one hand but damages the environment on the other (Putra 2022). In 2019, reports indicated that 11 companies in Indonesia caused environmental damage through forest fires and deforestation to clear land for palm oil plantations, as claimed by Scott Adam and Felix Heiduk (Murad 2010; Edwards and Heiduk 2015; Thompson 2001; Putri 2019). Additionally, environmental damage is exacerbated by widespread legal and illegal mining activities across various regions in Indonesia.

The Provincial Environmental and Forestry Service of Banten released three main negative effects of human creativity in exploiting nature freely (<https://dlhk.bantenprov.go.id/> 2018):

- 1) Increasing landslide and soil mass movement threats,
- 2) Erosion and sedimentation, and
- 3) Stripping of topsoil and loss of vegetation due to soil excavation activities.

Not to mention the cases of industrial waste that add to the burden of environmental damage. All of these represent forms of unlimited exploitation, which ultimately disrupt the balance of nature and endanger humans themselves. Jean-Jacques Dethier documented Indonesia's failures in managing waste, air pollution, and freshwater pollution in major urban areas. The lack of public awareness, minimal government attention, and increasing population every year are the basic analyses of Dethier's documentation (Dethier 2017).

Environmental damage in Indonesia is caused by a lack of awareness starting from the largest community, namely the state, to the smallest, namely the family. YUSDIAN and JANUARIANSYAH ARFAIZAR analyzed that households produce an average of 1.46 liters of waste per person per day, following the Indonesian National Standard (SNI) 19.3964-1994 for small city waste generation. The composition of waste consists of 47% organic waste, 15% paper, 22% plastic, and 16% metal (YUSDANI 2023). The abundance of waste and inadequate storage facilities have a negative impact on the environment.

The data mentioned above is only a part of the issue of environmental damage in Indonesia that has attracted the attention of foreign researchers. This damage is the result of human exploitation of nature. Unlimited exploitation of nature and the view that nature is merely an economic resource are among the biggest causes of environmental damage. On the other hand, the poverty rate in Indonesia is very high. The government seeks to alleviate poverty, but according to the research of A. SETYADHARMA, if the government wants to alleviate poverty, achieving good environmental quality is difficult. Conversely, if aiming to improve environmental quality, it is difficult to reduce the poverty rate (SETYADHARMA et al. 2020).

2. Humanity and the Limits of Nature

In Islamic teachings, the endeavor to fulfill needs and pursue economic betterment is a directive embedded within the Qur'an. The holy book elucidates that Allah created and sustained the Earth as a habitation for humans and a source of life, a principle reflected in several verses such as surah. al-Baqarah 2:22, Tāhā 20:53, al-Ghāfir 40:64, and al-Mulk 67:15. These verses expound on the creation of the universe, with commentators concurring that everything was prepared by Allah for the benefit of humans, enabling them to inhabit and manage the Earth. The Earth is spread out and the heavens send down rain to nurture plants, all intended for human utilization. Thus, the primary purpose of creating nature is for humans to acknowledge the oneness of Allah and express gratitude for the abundant blessings bestowed

upon them (Al-Şābūnī 1997, 3/394; Al-Azhar 1995, 1/842; Al-Ĥijāzī 1413, 2/491; Al-Nāşirī 1985, 5/399; Al-Tafsīr 2009, 1/4).

The impression that the earth was created to serve humanity is also evident in Lynn White's view, who claims the Gospel as the main source of the ecological crisis. Ryszard F. Sadowski identified two aspects of the Gospel used by White: 1) the primary purpose of nature is to serve humans, and 2) by God's will, humans are endowed with unlimited authority over nature (Sadowski 2023). Consequently, some environmentalists argue that religious teachings contribute to environmental degradation, as it is believed that religion asserts that the universe was created solely for human exploitation. White even suggested elimination of religion for environmental sustainability. However, this argument is refuted by religious scholars who argue that White did not deeply understand religious sources (Sayem 2019; Sadowski 2023; Sayem 2021a).

In principle, Islam indeed explains that the earth was created to fulfill human needs, as described in some of the verses above. However, this does not mean that humans can freely exploit the earth. The Qur'an also contains verses that clearly limit human creativity towards the earth, ensuring the preservation of the environment. This can be evidenced from surah Al-Baqarah 2:30, which narrates the question of the angels to Allah when creating *Khalīfah*/Adam and his descendants on earth (Llewellyn and Khalid 2024, 19). The angels argued that Adam and his descendants could harm the earth. However, Allah created humans with regulations to be obeyed. Part of the guidance that humans must adhere to is to protect the earth from destruction. This is illustrated in surah Al-A'rāf 7:85:

وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ
“and do not cause corruption on the earth after its reformation. That is better for you if you are true believers.”

The teachings of Islam require humans to protect the earth from destruction. Prohibitions against harming the earth and acting recklessly towards it are explained in several verses, such as surah. al-Baqarah 2:205, al-A'rāf 7:56 and 85, Hūd 11:85, al-Ra'd 13:25, al-Mu'minūn 23:71, al-Shu'ārā' 26:183, al-Qaşaş 28:77, and Muhammad 47:22. The essence of the interpretations by commentators of surah al-Baqarah 2:205 is that those who harm the earth, such as burning trees and causing harm or killing animals arbitrarily, are judged as those who commit transgressions against Allah (Al-Samarqandī 1413, 1/136; Al-Azhar 1393, 1/442; Al-Ĥijāzī 1413, 1/124; Al-Şābūnī 1997, 1/119; Al-Ījī 2004, 1/622). Abū Layth adds that this verse applies to all humanity, not just Akhnas bin Sharīq. Thus, anyone who behaves destructively

towards the Earth will face severe punishment in the afterlife (Al-Samarqandī 1413, 1/136). This is because humans were created on the Earth to spread goodness, not destruction (Al-Azhar 1393, 1/442). Aḥmad bin Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī adds that those who harm the Earth are akin to those who do not experience the guidance of Islam and the Qur'an (Al-Marāghī 1946, 2/111).

The command to preserve ecology can also be found in the interpretation of Muḥammad Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī regarding surah al-A'rāf 7:56 and 85. He asserts that Allah created the universe with remarkable perfection, sent His messengers, and explained the right and wrong paths. Allah prohibits the destruction of His creation (the universe) in any form, including harming lives, property, lineage, intellect, and beliefs (Al-Qāsimī 1418, 5/104). Muḥammad Ṣadiq Khān noted that damaging ecology is a clear prohibition in Islamic teachings. He illustrates the kinds of damage often inflicted by humans, such as murder, arson, deforestation, and river diversion (Ṣadiq Khān 1992, 4/379). Such interpretations can also be found in the works of Sa'īd Ḥawwā as he seeks to understand the meaning of surah Hūd 11:84-85 and al-Shu'ārā' 26:183. He concludes that these verses primarily address Islamic propagation, promote principles of justice and fair-trade practices, and emphasize the prohibition of ecological destruction (Hawwā 1424, 5/2592).

The same interpretation is also found in surah al-Ra'd 13:25 and al-Mu'minūn 23:71, which prohibit the destruction of the earth. Muḥammad Maḥmūd al-Ḥijāzī explained that those who damage the earth are equivalent to those who break their covenant with Allah. Examples of this destruction include inciting war, devastation, demolition, and destruction (Al-Ḥijāzī 1413, 2/229). Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Abū Zuhrah added that a person cannot be considered a believer if they exhibit three traits: breaking promises with Allah, disregarding His commands, and harming the earth (Zahrah, n.d., 8/3939). From Abū Zuhrah's interpretation, it is clear that those who damage the environment are essentially devoid of faith in Allah and are far from the attributes of Muslims.

Another verse that elucidates the prohibition of damaging the environment is surah al-Qaṣaṣ 28:77. Ibn Kathīr and al-Marāghī interpret this verse as a prohibition against harboring intentions to harm the earth and committing wrongdoing against Allah's creation (Ibn Kathīr 1420, 6/254; Al-Marāghī 1946, 20/90). While humans are permitted to utilize the earth, they must not exceed the bounds of moderation that could lead to ecological damage. Ibrahim al-Abyārī also explains that harming the earth entails exceeding the limits of moderation (Al-Abyārī 1405, 10/492). Therefore, Islam earnestly warns against human excess (*isrāf*) in

exploiting the earth, as elucidated in surah al-An‘ām 6:141 and al-A‘rāf 7:31. The Quran’s prohibition against excess does not imply an absolute prohibition, but rather emphasizes balance/justice (الشروني 2019). From this, it can be understood that humans are permitted to utilize the universe but within reasonable limits/without excess/with justice. With this concept, ecological balance and sustainability are maintained. This is categorized as a righteous deed in the Quran.

The concept of justice in the Qur’an is not only limited to the relationship among human beings but also encompasses the relationship with nature. Although the earth was created for humans, justice towards nature must still be upheld. Humans were created by Allah with the primary purpose of worshiping Him and preserving the earth. Therefore, humans are not absolute rulers over the earth but rather stewards responsible for its preservation (عزيز نظمى 2018). As such, one of Allah’s messages to humans while living on Earth is to "وَعَمَلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ" (do good deeds) in a general formulation. This generality leads to the understanding that doing good extends beyond just fellow humans but also encompasses all creations of Allah, including the universe.

From the brief explanation above, it is clear that the Qur’an does not grant absolute freedom to humans in managing the universe. The Qur’an establishes boundaries that limit human creativity towards nature, not only based on faith in Allah, but also on the responsibility to preserve all of His creations. This is part of the teachings of Islam, as reflected in the verses of the Qur’an. The Qur’an also emphasizes the difference between those who believe and do good deeds and those who cause harm to the earth, as seen in the comparison between the righteous and the sinners. This portrayal can be found in surah Şād 38:28, which asks, “Should We treat those who believe and do righteous deeds like those who spread corruption on earth? Should We treat those who fear Allah like the wicked?”

Utilizing the resources of the earth to sustain human needs is a command from Allah, as explained in surah al-Qaşaş 28:77, which states “لا تنس نصيبك من الدنيا” (and do not neglect your share of the world’s goods). This passage shows that Islam rejects the notion of excessive advancement of time or civilization, as portrayed in some Orientalist theories (Muhammad 2021). However, it is essential always to consider justice to avoid damaging Allah’s creation, as implied in the phrase “وأحسن كما أحسن الله إليك ولا تبغ الفساد في الأرض” (and do good as Allah has done good to you, and do not seek corruption in the land). Therefore, it is not an exaggeration to categorize a Muslim who deliberately damages the earth as someone whose understanding of Islamic teachings is questionable. This is evidenced by its connection to the verses in surah

al-Māidah 5:23, which state that those who cause corruption on earth are equivalent to killing all mankind “مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا” (Whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land - it is as if he had slain mankind entirely). This verse highlights the profound consequences of damaging the earth, as such actions can indirectly cause the death of innocent humans (Llewellyn and Khalid 2024, 49). Environmental degradation, driven by human activities, can lead to devastating natural disasters such as flash floods, landslides, and other calamities (bbc.com 2023). These disasters harm the environment and endanger human lives, illustrating the interconnectedness of ecological balance and human well-being. Thus, maintaining the balance (*al-Mīzān*) created by Allah is essential for protecting both nature and humanity.

From this perspective, it is prohibited for followers of Islam to damage the ecology created by Allah merely to seek economic gains. Forest fires claimed by researchers and environmental activists, intentionally set for palm oil plantation expansion, water or air pollution, and disposal of waste that threatens the earth’s sustainability are all clearly wrongful acts according to the principles of Islamic teachings. The prohibition against ecological destruction, as explained above, provides a strong foundation that humans are forbidden from treating the earth as they please, as Allah mandates humans to preserve ecological balance and prevent damage by treating it with utmost care.

Furthermore, for those who excessively treat the ecology which could lead to damage, Allah’s promise for them is a severe punishment, as explained in the surah al-Ra'd 13:25 with the phrase “أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوءُ الدَّارِ”, interpreted by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī as “they are abandoned by Allah in goodness in the world and the hereafter, and they deserve hellfire” (Al-Rāzī 1420, 19/38). Therefore, damaging the ecology is a prohibition reminded to the Muslim community due to the sanction it entails. Conversely, if there is no sanction for prohibited actions, then the prohibition is not binding, as understood from legal theory.

From the explanation above, it is clear that the Qur’an is highly concerned with the preservation and sustainability of ecology. Humans are allowed to utilize the universe, but within limits so that they do not harm it. The Qur’an strongly condemns ecological damage caused by human creativity and explains the sanctions for its perpetrators in the afterlife. Therefore, it is fair to say that the Qur’an is a holy book that is very friendly to the environment, nature, and ecology. The argument that religion is the main cause of ecological damage is unsubstantiated and only comes from those who do not understand religion well. What is

needed now is a new interpretation that focuses more on ecology, not just on theological concepts.

3. Human-Nature Relationship in the Qur'an

The relationship between humans and nature according to the Qur'an, is not merely about unlimited exploitation, treating nature as if it were only a material object, as argued by capitalists, where humans can freely manipulate nature. It is true that the Qur'an commands humans to utilize nature as a source of livelihood, as stated in surah al-A'rāf 7:10 "And We have certainly established you upon the earth and made for you therein ways of livelihood. Little are you grateful," and surah al-Ḥijr 15:20 "And We have made for you therein means of living and [for] those for whom you are not providers." However, this does not mean that humans can damage nature. This is because Allah created humans and nature to complement each other. Therefore, if humans damage nature, it also means damaging Allah's creation, which in turn can harm humans themselves.

The evidence that humans and nature complement each other is that nature as a manifestation of the existence of Allah. Ibn 'Arabī stated that everything in nature manifests or reflects the names and attributes of Allah, and through the nature, humans can know Him (Almirzahan 2020). From this, it can be understood that with the destruction of nature, a small part of the evidence of Allah's manifestation is lost "for those who reflect." Many verses of the Qur'an explain that nature is evidence for humans of the existence of an absolute God, as in surah al-Mu'minūn 23:80, al-Jāthiyah 45:12, and al-Ḥadīd 57:17.

Human beings must acknowledge that they are indeed subject to nature (Hariyono and Aryati 2018). One concrete proof of this is that human food sources are derived from nature, and efficient food production relies on fertile soil, clean oceans free from waste pollution, and air free from contamination. This demonstrates that human life is heavily dependent on the balance of nature. This perspective is reinforced when reflecting on verses from surah al-Nahl 16:3-18. Unfortunately, awareness of the harmonious relationship between humans and nature is currently declining, with some individuals attempting to dominate nature in ways that exceed reasonable limits, a behavior referred to in the teachings of the Qur'an as excessive consumption (*Isrāf*) and is strongly condemned by Allah.

When we read the end of surah Al-Baqarah 2:30, it is emphasized with the phrase " قَالَ "إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ", indicating that Allah knows that some people will cause damage to the earth. Therefore, the greedy individuals are reproached by Allah in surah Ar-Rūm 30:41. From this

verse, it can be understood that ecological disasters do not always occur naturally but can be triggered by human behavior. This underscores that Islamic teachings assert that human actions toward nature will be held accountable in the afterlife. Hence, the verse in surah Ar-Rūm 30:41 serves as a reminder for those who cause such destruction.

Although humans are considered as *khalīfah* on Earth, it does not imply that humans have absolute ownership of the Earth. The earth remains the property of Allah, as emphasized in surah Al-Baqarah 2:107 and Al-Furqān 25:2. The duty of humans as *khalīfah* is to safeguard and preserve Allah's property (Zuhri 2017), rather than acting arbitrarily or even causing ecological damage (Llewellyn and Khalid 2024, 19). Moreover, when the Qur'an discusses the relationship between living creatures and water, as described in surah Al-Anbiyā 21:30, ecologically it can be interpreted as a prohibition against polluting water. The presence of clean water is crucial for the survival of all creatures, including humans, as explained in the Qur'an. However, the current crisis of clean water has become a reality experienced by humans due to industrial waste pollution. Perhaps for some people, economically, water is considered a cheap resource compared to the profits from modern industrial projects. However, without clean water, life cannot be sustained. The loss of awareness of this fact and excessive ambition in economic advancement are the main reasons for the lack of attention to ecology.

Treating nature as we treat ourselves is a principle taught in Islam. Fair treatment towards nature, just as fair treatment towards fellow human beings, is integral to Islamic teachings. From this, the relationship between humans and nature can be understood. However, such learning is not exclusive to Islam; it is recognized by all religions acknowledging the relationship between humans and nature (Wijsen et al. 2023). This is because every religion encourages its followers to strive for goodness and not towards destruction. For example, Christianity through the Laudato Si' Movement, initiated in January 17, 2021 (Braden 2021), and Judaism through the writings of its scholars advocating for ecological preservation and environmental sustainability (Minton 2023; Basri and Muhammad 2023).

If all religions teach the relationship between humans and nature, environmental ethics, and ecological sustainability, and religious leaders have fulfilled their role as conveyors of God's word, then adherents who neglect it indicate that humans today lack fear of Allah and the threat of punishment for environmental destruction. Perhaps the threat of punishment for those who cause damage outlined in religious teachings seems merely intimidating and unreal at present. On the other hand, humans today appear to have lost their sense of shame regarding

the morality of environmentally damaging actions. If humans still possess a sense of moral shame, then it is impossible for them to engage in ecological destruction (Klimková 2023).

Conclusion

In the teachings of Islam, the Qu’ran instructs believers that the environment is a divine gift from Allah, provided to sustain human life. It emphasizes that nature is not merely a resource to be exploited but rather a sacred trust bestowed upon humanity. Those who engage in actions that harm the environment are sternly admonished within Islamic doctrine. Such teachings underscore the gravity of environmental degradation and the imperative to preserve the earth’s ecosystems. Furthermore, Islamic teachings extend beyond earthly consequences, highlighting the spiritual repercussions of environmental destruction. It emphasizes the belief that individuals will be held accountable for their actions in the afterlife, including any harm inflicted upon the environment. This reinforces the idea that environmental stewardship is not only a worldly obligation but also a matter of spiritual responsibility. Despite the inherent creativity and agency granted to humanity, Islamic teachings emphasize that these freedoms are circumscribed by the divine law. While humans possess the ability to utilize natural resources, they are not entitled to exploit or despoil the environment recklessly. Instead, they are obligated to exercise responsible stewardship in accordance with the guidance provided by Allah.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, M.M., M.Z.N.Y., and F.H.R.M.; Methodology, M.M., M.Z.N.Y., and F.H.R.M.; Validation, M.M., M.Z.N.Y., and F.H.R.M.; Formal Analysis, M.M. and F.M.S.A.; Investigation, M.M.; Writing – original draft preparation, M.M.; Writing – M.M., M.Z.N.Y., and F.H.R.M.; Supervision, M.M. and F.M.S.A. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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