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Ontological-Integrative Islamic Ecotheology: A Comparative Analysis of Badiuzzaman Said Nursi and Achmad Asrori Al-Ishaqi

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ABSTRACT

The contemporary ecological crisis reflects not only environmental degradation but also an ontological and spiritual crisis rooted in the dominance of anthropocentric paradigms that separate humans from their existential relation with nature. In this context, this study aims to reconstruct Islamic ecotheology through an ontological-integrative approach by examining the thought of Badiuzzaman Said Nursi and Achmad Asrori Al-Ishaqi. This research employs a qualitative method with a library research design and a comparative-conceptual approach, using content analysis within an interpretative framework. The findings reveal that Nursi develops a rational-theocentric approach that views nature as divine signs, while Al-Ishaqi, although not explicitly addressing ecological issues, provides a Sufi cosmological and epistemological framework that enables ecotheological reconstruction through the concepts of divine manifestation and the integration of reason and heart. The study concludes that integrating theological rationality and Sufi spirituality produces a transformative model of Islamic ecotheology grounded in ontological awareness and spiritual experience in understanding the human–nature relationship.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of various environmental problems, both in Indonesia and elsewhere in the world, is increasingly worrying. Extreme climate events such as heat waves in Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America (Hakim, 2023). Furthermore, forest destruction, water pollution, and air pollution remain environmental crises to this day. For example, the forest and land fires in the Mount Bromo area of East Java that occurred in September 2023 caused forest destruction, air pollution, and ecosystem damage.

This phenomenon should not be viewed merely as a technical failure or an economic policy issue. Environmental degradation is a manifestation of an ontological and spiritual crisis—a "crisis of perception" in which humans have lost awareness of their existential interconnectedness with nature. As Fritjof Capra stated, and as later quoted by Abdul Quddus, the environmental crisis is caused by humanity's perspective on nature and human greed. Anthropocentrism is a human perspective that

views nature as an object that can be exploited without limit. Human greed—whether stemming from poverty, ignorance, or the desire for great wealth—can also drive humans to overexploit nature (Abdul Quddus, 2017).

In several articles it is stated that various environmental problems occur due to inappropriate human behavior and a lack of morals in environmental management (Atikawati et al., 2019), and the proposed solution is to explore religious concepts, which are then called ecotheology. Ecotheology is an approach that seeks to understand the relationship between God, humans, and nature within a theological framework. One such approach is Islamic ecotheology. Some utilize the principles of monotheism, trustworthiness, caliphate, and akhirah (Quddus, 2017). In addition, there are also those who explore the concept of Khalifah fi al-Ard which originates from the Qur'an and is also considered very relevant to the environmental ethics of biocentrism and ecocentrism (Atikawati et al., 2019). In line with this concept, it is also found in Marjan Fadil's article, namely that the principles in the Al-Qur'an are applied to return Muslims' attention to nature with an emphasis on the pillars of monotheism, *khilafah*, and *akhirah* (accountability) (Fadil, 2019). In this perspective, nature is not only understood as a material entity, but as part of a system of signs (*ayat*) that is related to divine reality (Rizal, 2024). Thus, the ecological crisis is not only a technical problem, but also reflects a crisis in understanding the ontological dimension of human relations with nature.

Another concept of ecotheology is that written by Parid Ridwanuddin about ecotheology in the thought of Badiuzzaman Said Nursi. In Said Nursi's thinking, to resolve the environmental crisis, the first step is to improve the human mindset and heart by replacing materialism with spiritual awareness or faith (Parid Ridwanuddin, 2017).From these studies, it can be said that one of the main causes of the current ecological crisis is human behavior and mindset, and to overcome this problem, it must begin by improving the human mindset that tends towards an anthropocentric view with concepts that exist in religion, especially Islam (Umam, 2024).

Besides Badiuzzaman Said Nursi, there is also Seyyed Hossein Nasr who contributed to the principles of ecotheology. In his ecotheological ideas, Seyyed Hossein Nasr wants to remind humans that nature is a "representation of God's presence" in the world (*wajh Allah*) and humans as "means of the manifestation of God's will" on earth (*khalifatullah fi al-ardi*) are a cosmic unity that cannot be separated from one another. There is also a theologian from the Christian tradition, namely Sallie McFague who reminds humans as partners of God to always be aware that this universe is "God's body" that needs to be respected and cared for as a form of responsibility for our common home (Purniawan, 2020). A comparative study between Said Nursi and Seyyed Hossein Nasr shows that the modern ecological crisis is closely related to the process of desacralization of nature due to the dominance of materialistic perspectives, so that efforts are needed to restore the sacred dimension in understanding the cosmos.

The growth of the literature on Islamic eco-theology between 2020 and 2025 shows a significant upward trend. A recent bibliometric study by Huda (Huda et al., 2026) reveals that the current discourse is dominated by the themes of tawhid, the mandate of khilafah, and sustainability. However, this trend highlights challenges regarding the integration of theological values into educational practice. This aligns with the view of Syafaruddin (Syafaruddin, 2025), who asserts that the response to environmental degradation in the Anthropocene era must aim for a holistic transformation of worldview.

In another article, humans in this era have a low percentage of ecological attitudes, meaning they are less concerned about ecological issues and phenomena occurring in their environment. According to Nurasyah Dewi Napitupulu et al., there is a need for integration between ecotheology and ecopedagogy to construct a conceptual understanding of ecological phenomena in society (Napitupulu et al., 2018). Meanwhile, Fifri Mahzumi, Suhermanto Ja'far and Ifah in their article, emphasize the

practical dimension of the theological paradigm in ecological management implemented by the Walisongo Tuban Islamic Boarding School (Hasan et al., 2022; Mahzumi et al., 2019). The studies mentioned above indicate that Islamic eco-theology has developed rapidly, ranging from normative-ethical approaches to the discourse on science and Islam popularized by Seyyed Hossein Nasr. Badiuzzaman Said Nursi himself has been extensively studied in relation to the theology of nature. However, the majority of this literature remains trapped in the dichotomy between theological rationality and spiritual practice. On the other hand, the thought of contemporary Indonesian Sufi figures such as Achmad Asrori Al-Ishaqi, particularly in his book **Al-Muntakhabat**, has scarcely been addressed within the framework of eco-theology. There is an academic gap in integrating Nursi's theological rationality with the depth of Al-Ishaqi's spirituality into a single ontological-integrative eco-theological framework.

Although Al-Ishaqi's scholarly writings do not explicitly address ecological issues, they contain a number of cosmological and epistemological concepts within the Sufi tradition that can serve as a foundation for further exploration. In this regard, the concept of nature as part of the cosmic structure related to divine reality, as well as the emphasis on the integration of reason and the heart in understanding reality, indicates the potential for examination from an eco-theological perspective.

Thus, this study does not proceed from the assumption that Al-Ishaqi's thought directly addresses ecology, but rather from the possibility of reconstructing its ecological dimension based on the ontological and epistemological framework he developed.

This study aims to 1) compare two schools of thought by describing the eco-theological constructs of Nursi and Al-Ishaqi; 2) reconstruct and synthesize both within an ontologically-integrative framework of Islamic eco-theology. This approach is expected to contribute to the development of Islamic ecotheology, particularly by presenting the integration of theological rationality and Sufi spirituality as a foundation for building a deeper ecological consciousness.

2. METHODS

This study employs a comparative approach to examine the thought of Badiuzzaman Said Nursi and Achmad Asrori Al-Ishaqi. This approach was chosen because it is considered the most appropriate method for systematically comparing and identifying the similarities and differences between the thought of Nursi and Asrori. The primary focus of this research is not merely on describing the thought of these two figures, but on the relational patterns that emerge through the comparative process. By conducting a comparison, the researcher can gain a sharper understanding of the factors influencing specific differences in outcomes or characteristics. In this study, the comparison is based on three main criteria: the ontology of nature, spiritual epistemology, and environmental ethics.

The research method employed is a literature review, meaning that all data were obtained from written sources such as books, scholarly articles, and journals. Primary sources in this study include Al-Ishaqi's works, namely the book **Al-Muntakhabat** and other relevant works. Secondary sources consist of previous studies, academic articles, and other supporting works relevant to eco-theology from ontological and epistemological perspectives.

The data analysis methodology in this study consists of three stages: (1) a basic description of general eco-theological concepts and the eco-theological thought of the two figures; (2) a philosophical analysis of their ontological and epistemological structures in understanding the universe; (3) an integrative comparison to reconstruct and synthesize the thought of the two figures within a single eco-theological framework.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Ecotheology and Ontological Critique of Human-Nature Relations

Ecotheology in Islamic Perspective

Ecotheology is an approach that examines the relationship between God, humans, and nature within a theological framework, where nature is not understood merely as a material entity, but as part of a cosmic order that is related to divine reality (Widiastuty & Anwar, 2025). Thus, ecotheology does not only talk about environmental ethics, but also touches on the ontological dimensions that underlie the way humans understand the existence of nature.

In Islamic tradition, this understanding can be traced through concepts such as *khalifah*, *amanah*, and *ayat kauniyyah*, which show that nature is a sign of divinity that has spiritual meaning and is not merely a material object (Mochammad Rizal, 2024).This perspective emphasizes that the human relationship to nature is fundamentally theological, because nature functions as a medium for knowing God.

However, in modern developments, understanding of nature tends to be reduced to a material object separated from its sacred dimension. This condition aligns with the critique put forward by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who stated that the modern environmental crisis is rooted in the desacralization of nature due to the dominance of a materialistic perspective (Akhwanudin, 2013).

Critique of Anthropocentrism

Anthropocentrism is the view that places humans at the center of the universe. According to this view, humans are the most important and valuable beings in the universe. Everything in the universe has value only to the extent that it supports human interests (Atikawati et al., 2019). By viewing humans as the center of the universe and the most important and valuable creatures, humans have the right to make nature an object to be exploited for their own benefit (Sulaeman et al., 2021).

Anthropocentrism has two important implications. First, nature is seen only as an object, tool, and means for fulfilling human needs and interests. Second, nature has no value in itself (Sulaeman et al., 2021).

Anthropocentrism, which views humans as the most important and valuable creatures in the universe, gives rise to exploitative attitudes and behavior towards nature, which is considered an object and tool for fulfilling human needs and interests (Maa'al Azza & Zainuri, 2024). This is evident in the tradition of mass dolphin killing in the Faroe Islands, Denmark, the gold exploitation of Freeport Papua, and deforestation in Jambi. This exploitative behavior certainly has a negative impact on the environment and is reprehensible (Sulaeman et al., 2021).

From a critical perspective, anthropocentrism is not only an ethical issue but also an ontological one. By placing humans at the center, natural reality is reduced to an entity separate from the divine dimension. This aligns with the critique in the comparative study of Said Nursi and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, which shows that the modern ecological crisis cannot be separated from a perspective that separates nature from its spiritual meaning (Umam, 2024).

Thus, a paradigm reconstruction is needed that is able to restore the relationship between humans and nature in a more integrative framework, where nature is no longer positioned as an object of domination, but as part of the cosmic order that has intrinsic value.

Theocentrism and the Ontological Basis of Ecotheology

As an alternative to anthropocentrism, theocentrism places God at the center of reality. In this paradigm, nature does not exist independently, but rather has an ontological connection to God as the source of existence. The principle of theocentrism views nature and humans as fellow creations of God. When humans acknowledge the goodness of God's creation of humanity, they must also acknowledge the goodness of God's creation of nature. The theocentric view affirms the moral aspect of preserving

nature (Sulaeman et al., 2021). In other words, the existence of nature is understood as a manifestation (*tajalli*) of divine reality, as is also emphasized in the cosmological thinking of Achmad Asrori Al-Ishaqi that nature is a manifestation of God's will in various forms of existence (Al Ishaqi, 2012).

Theocentrism comes from the Greek word "*theos*," meaning God, and the English word "*centre*," meaning center. From a theocentric perspective, nature is also understood as a system of signs (*ayat*) that directs humans toward divine awareness (Rizal, 2024). Therefore, human relations with nature cannot be separated from their relations with God, so that actions towards the environment have theological implications.

Furthermore, theocentrism refers to the view that a system of beliefs and values related to divinity is morally superior to other systems. Theocentrism, in this context, explains that God is the center of the universe. Theocentrism is the opposite of anthropocentrism. Humans have no power whatsoever to carry out their actions because everything is controlled by God (Fajriah, 2018).

This theocentric approach provides an ontological basis for ecotheology, as it allows for an understanding of nature's intrinsic value as part of divine reality. Furthermore, this approach also opens up space for the integration of the rational and spiritual dimensions in understanding nature, as seen in the differences between Said Nursi's more rational-theological approach and the Sufi approach, which emphasizes inner experience.

Thus, theocentrism is not only a conceptual alternative to anthropocentrism, but also a foundation for the development of a deeper and more transformative ecological awareness.

Both perspectives or mindsets (anthropocentrism and theocentrism) can influence human actions and behavior toward nature. Anthropocentrism can lead to exploitation of nature and environmental degradation, as it views nature as a resource to be exploited for human benefit. Theocentrism can encourage people to preserve nature, as it views nature as God's property and must be protected.

Both views certainly have their advantages and disadvantages. The advantage of anthropocentrism is that this understanding is oriented towards human interests and well-being in their lives (Fajriah, 2018), such as being a solution to the humanitarian aspects and problems of its adherents (Haq, 2020). Therefore, this understanding places humans at the center of the universe, in other words, humans are kings with supreme power in the universe. This also has negative impacts and is a weakness of this understanding. For example, it leads to overexploitation and environmental damage if human interests are prioritized without considering the impact on nature. It ignores the intrinsic value of nature and other living things, potentially leading to injustice and ecosystem damage.

The theocentric theology also has both negative and positive aspects. This theocentrism can be a counter to anthropocentrism, which overestimates the position of humans in the universe. The theocentric view views nature and humans as fellow creations of God. This means that nature and humans have the same intrinsic value. Nature and humans are both creations of God and must be protected and preserved. The theocentric view affirms the moral side of preserving nature. This is because humans have a moral responsibility to care for God's creation. Humans must recognize that nature is part of God's creation and must be valued and respected (Sulaeman et al., 2021). However, on the other hand, because this theocentric theological understanding is only doctrinal in its beliefs, it does not touch on the universal aspects of human life or even does not touch at all (Al Ishaqi, 2012), such as real problems such as social, economic and political.

Ecocentrism: A Synthesis of Anthropocentrism and Theocentrism

In addition to the anthropocentrism and theocentrism explained above, there is also the concept of ecocentrism. Ecocentrism places nature at the center, so human behavior must align with nature's needs (Sulaeman et al., 2021). Ecocentrism is the view that all components of the environment, both living and non-living, have intrinsic value. This view is based on the understanding that living things

and abiotic objects are interconnected. Therefore, moral obligations and responsibilities extend not only to living things but also to the non-living environment (Atikawati et al., 2019).

Ecocentrism can be seen as a synthesis of anthropocentrism and theocentrism. Ecocentrism recognizes that humans are important and valuable beings, but it also recognizes that the universe has intrinsic value. Humans have a responsibility to protect and preserve the universe, not only for human benefit, but also for the benefit of the universe itself.

Ecocentrism is popularly known as deep ecology, introduced by Arne Naess in 1973. Deep ecology demands a new ethic that focuses not only on humans but on all living things. This ethic has two main principles:

- Humans and their interests are no longer the measure for everything. Man is no longer the center of the moral world.
- Environmental ethics must be translated into real and concrete actions (Atikawati et al., 2019).

Deep ecology requires people to share common attitudes and beliefs, support a lifestyle in harmony with nature, and jointly champion environmental issues. This can be manifested in various forms, such as:

- Implementation of reclamation on post-mining land.
- Butterfly breeding in Bantimurung Bulusaraung National Park, South Sulawesi.
- Installation of rules prohibiting littering (Atikawati et al., 2019).

If depicted in the form of a diagram, this is what the differences in views between the three look like (Atikawati et al., 2019).

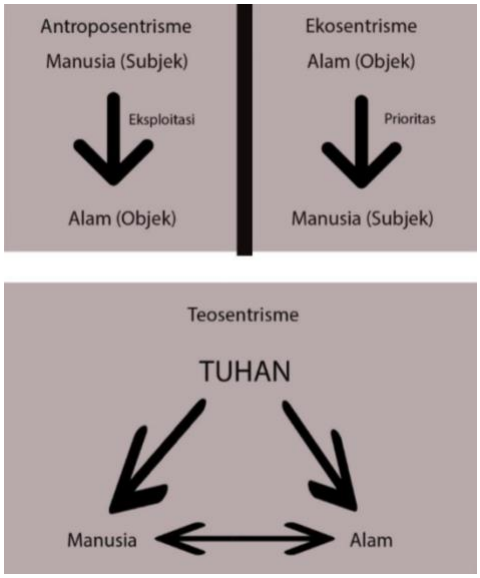


Figure 1. The Difference Between Anthropocentrism, Ecocentrism, and Theocentrism

The ecocentric view can encourage humans to live more environmentally friendly lives, because it views humans as part of nature who must live in harmony with nature.

Figure 1 illustrates the differences between anthropocentrism, ecocentrism, and theocentrism. These differences are evident in the object, the subject, and the relationship between the two. In anthropocentrism, humans are the subjects who exploit nature as an object. Ecocentrism focuses human attention on prioritizing the preservation of nature. In theosentrisme, humans affirm the awareness that they and nature occupy an equal position in the hierarchy as God's creatures.

Badiuzzaman Said Nursi's Ecotheological Concept

Theological ecology or ecotheology, as a form of constructive theology, seeks to reinterpret religious understanding so that humans can have greater awareness and responsibility towards the environment (Quddus, 2017).

Theology here is defined as the concept of thinking and acting connected to God, the creator and ruler of humanity and nature. Therefore, there are three components in theological discussions: God, humanity, and nature, all three of which have interrelated functions and positions (Quddus, 2017).

In relation to the environment, theology is reduced to a more practical realm, namely examining the relationship between the environment and the Creator. This means that environmental theology discusses not only abstract theological concepts but also how these concepts can be applied in everyday life. The environment encompasses not only the biophysical, but also humans and other living creatures.

This effort to explore the spiritual values of Islamic ecology represents a treasure trove of Islamic prophetic ecology, offering an alternative ecological concept, or transformative ecology. The spiritual values of Islamic ecology are Islamic values related to the environment. These values can be found in the Quran, Sunnah, and the teachings of Islamic scholars. The effort to explore the spiritual values of Islamic ecology is undertaken to find an ecological concept that is more in line with Islamic values. The concept of alternative ecology, or transformative ecology, emphasizes the importance of balance between humans and the environment.

Environmental theology is definitively a theology whose material object of study is the environment and whose formulation is based on the values of Islamic teachings. Therefore, environmental theology is a science that discusses the basic teachings of Islam regarding the environment. This is a response to the increasing development of human civilization and the complex problems faced, one of which is environmental issues (Quddus, 2017).

A deeper examination reveals the relevance of Islamic theology to the environmental crisis or ecological crisis. The current ecological crisis is inextricably linked to the relationship between humans and nature. Humans have destroyed nature and caused environmental degradation. This is where theology can play a role, providing a foundation for building a more harmonious relationship between humans and nature.

One of the thinkers in Islamic ecotheology is Bediuzzaman Said Nursi. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi was an Iranian-born Muslim philosopher and scientist who wrote extensively on various topics, including ecotheology.

The Islamic ecotheological view according to Badiuzzaman Said Nursi, as studied by Parid Ridwanuddin in the article he wrote, is to replace the materialist perspective with spiritual awareness or an ecotheological perspective in understanding nature.

Nursi did not define ecological principles explicitly or in detail, but he described them generally within the concepts of natural science. He later called these principles the basic principles and the basic principles of the cultural system. In ecological studies, the basic principles and the basic principles of the cultural system are manifested as constant patterns of reciprocal relationships between organisms and other organisms, and the relationship between groups of organisms and their environment. These are the basic principles of how nature, especially life on Earth, operates, and how living things exist within living systems. The basic principles are often called ecological theory, ecological foundations, and more specifically, ecological principles (Nursi, 2016).

Following are some of the main points of Nursi's ecotheological thinking:

1. The most important thing in his ecotheological idea is the existence of a strong ontological relationship between God and his creatures, so that the existence of nature cannot be separated from the existence of God who is the center of existence.
2. The universe is the manifestations (*tajalliyat*) of Allah.

3. The universe is a big book, while the Qur'an is its interpretation or explanation.
4. The universe is full of meaning.
5. The universe has a sacred meaning and dimension in itself.
6. All creatures are bound to each other.
7. The relationship between the external world (*zahir*) and the hidden world (*batin*) is essentially very real (Ridwanuddin, 2017).

Nursi also outlined the misunderstanding of humanity's status as a vicegerent on earth, which seems to hold a higher position than the universe. Because of this position, humans seem to have theological legitimacy to exploit nature to meet their unlimited needs (Ridwanuddin, 2017).

Nursi then attempted to explain and correct this understanding. Nursi explained the essence of humans as manifestations (*tajalli*) of the names and attributes of God and His vicegerents on earth. He wrote, which was later quoted by Ridwanuddin:

Humans are an extraordinary creation for the Most Holy Creator and are also the highest miracle among the miracles of His power. Humans are the most delicate creation because the Creator created them as a place for the manifestation of all the glorious names of Allah and made them the axis for all His beautiful carvings and made them a miniature of the universe (Ridwanuddin, 2017).

Furthermore, the manifestation of the names of Allah in humans can be seen in the following three things:

1. Human weaknesses and shortcomings show the power and perfection of God.
2. Humans have potential such as strength, hearing, sight, knowledge and thinking which essentially originate from God, which is a manifestation of God's name and nature.
3. Humans have the potential to manifest God's attributes. This potential is not merely theoretical, but also exists at the practical, subjective, objective, normative, and empirical levels (Ridwanuddin, 2017).

According to Nursi, humans are essentially spiritual beings, ecological creatures, and vicegerents on earth. Humans as spiritual beings can be understood because they are manifestations of the names of God. Thus, like nature, humans also possess a sacred dimension within themselves (Ridwanuddin, 2017). Within this framework of Nursi's thought, in the author's view, there is a tendency toward a theocentric perspective, wherein both humans and nature possess their own sacred dimensions as God's creations. And humans bear the responsibility, as God's vicegerents on Earth, to preserve and manage nature properly.

Nursi argues that every movement in the universe is a form of creatures' obedience to God's command of creation. From the perspective of contemporary dogmatic theology, Scherle (Scherle, 2022) supports this theocentric view by emphasizing that nature is a "promise" that depends absolutely on God's continuous creative action—an antithesis to utopian claims of human mastery.

This dependence manifests in the concept of Mizan (balance). Bagus Rahmat (Bagus et al., 2025) notes that Mizan is not merely a law of nature, but a theological foundation that prohibits exploitation, as any destructive act against the environment means disrupting the harmony established by the Creator. Therefore, for Nursi, the environmental crisis is a moral crisis resulting from humanity's neglect of its role as a steward of the trust, or what Cheema (Cheema & Rahman, n.d.) refers to as a failure to bridge faith with global climate action.

Humans as ecological beings mean that they are essentially dependent on the diverse living creatures in the universe. In a more comprehensive explanation, Nursi wrote:

> *Indeed, humans constantly need the vast majority of living creatures and are in a relationship with them. Human needs are spread throughout every corner of nature, and their desires and dreams stretch endlessly. Just as they desire a flower, they also hope for a beautiful spring. Just as they desire a garden, they also ask*

for an eternal paradise. Just as they long to meet their beloved, they also long to gaze upon the Most Beautiful One who possesses majesty (Ridwanuddin, 2017).

The concept of eco-theology is evident here, reflecting humanity's dependence on the diverse array of living beings in the universe. Humans have a moral responsibility toward the environment that must be taken seriously.

Then, there is the essence of humankind as a caliph. Regarding this, Nursi wrote:

And because Allah has subjected the vast universe and adorned it and furnished it like a house for humans to live in, and has appointed humans as His vicegerents on earth, He has entrusted humans with the supreme authority to cultivate nature, climb mountains, and ascend the heavens. Allah has elevated humans to a position of commander over other living creatures and honored them with divine signs that enable them to connect with Him. Because Allah has given humans the highest position, He promises to grant eternal and everlasting happiness in the hereafter to those who are able to carry out the responsibilities of their vicegerency. And without a doubt, He provides nature and happiness for humans who are honored and respected. It is as easy for Him to revive trees and plants that die in autumn with the arrival of spring as He will raise the dead on the Day of Resurrection (Ridwanuddin, 2017).

According to Nursi, the concept of the caliphate, as quoted by Abdul Aziz Barghuth in Ridwanuddin's article, consists of four principles. First, the principle of the oneness of God. Second, the cosmic principle, which demands that humans, as caliphs, constantly reflect on their place in the universe and act accordingly. Third, the principle of civilization, which demands that humans continually maintain a balance between personal, social, and cultural power, material, and spiritual power, scientific and cultural power, and physical and spiritual health. And the fourth principle is the eschatological principle, which explains that human actions as caliphs during their lifetime will be rewarded in the afterlife. This principle provides moral and psychological encouragement for humans to always do good in this world, because all their actions will be accounted for in the afterlife (Ridwanuddin, 2017).

From the above description, we can understand the correlation between humans, the universe, and God from Nursi's perspective. Here, Nursi emphasizes the need to recognize that the universe has its own sacred meaning and dimension, and therefore must be protected and not damaged.

Humanity's position and position as caliph is indeed true, but this does not justify the theological legitimacy of exploiting nature for its own benefit. On the contrary, because humans are manifestations of God's names and attributes, they should protect, care for, and love other creatures (the universe) who are fellow creatures of God.

Reconstruction of Ecotheology in the Thought of Achmad Asrori Al-Ishaqi

Ontological Basis: Cosmos as Divine Manifestation

In the Sufi thought of Achmad Asrori Al-Ishaqi, the reality of existence is mapped through the ontological dichotomy between Wujud Hakiki and Wujud Majazy, wherein Wujud Hakiki belongs exclusively to Allah as the source of existence, while everything other than Him—including humans and the universe—is classified as Wujud Majazy. This classification affirms that nature and humanity lack existential autonomy; rather, they are manifestations or tajalli of the Divine Will radiating into various forms of existence (Al Ishaqi, 2012). Within this framework, the creation of the universe is understood as a process of emanation rooted in divine reality, in which the entire cosmos possesses an existential connection with God (Rizal, 2024).

In addition, nature is also understood as a system of signs (verses) that carry spiritual meaning and serve as a medium for knowing God (Mochammad Rizal, 2024). Thus, nature cannot be reduced

to a mere material object, but possesses intrinsic value as part of divine reality. This perspective suggests that humanity's relationship with nature is fundamentally theological in nature and not merely utilitarian. This approach aligns with what Lohlker (Lohlker, 2024) refers to as an effort to transcend anthropocentrism through the concept of Wahdat al-Wujud. Here, nature is not viewed as an autonomous entity, but rather as a locus of the manifestation (tajalli) of God's names, which possesses intrinsic value. The implication of this ontological awareness is the emergence of the ethics of ihsan. Hanafi (Hanafi et al., 2026) argue that the integration of tawhid spirituality and ethics must form the foundation for sustainable social practices. In the context of Al-Ishaqi's thought, the process of tazkiyatun nafs (purification of the soul) becomes a prerequisite; only a purified soul is capable of perceiving God's glory in His creation, so that the protection of nature is no longer a regulatory burden but an organic spiritual necessity.

On the other hand, humans within the structure of the cosmos, as explained by Al-Ishaqi in his book *Al-Muntakhabat*, possess a unique capacity in the *qalb* (heart), which was created in accordance with the fundamental nature of creation, or *fithrah*, enabling them to grasp the essence of knowledge and uphold the trust as *khalifah*. This unique position places humanity (and is also one of its distinctions)—in the term Ainul Yaqin as used in the scholarly article he authored and published in the journal Living Islam: The Journal of Islamic Discourses (Yaqin, 2021)—as a duplicate or copy of the entirety of *al-wujud* (which the author interprets as the universe), possessing two relational phases. When in the first phase, where their spiritual nature does not overpower (dominate) their human nature, their soul does not overpower their emotions, and their light does not overpower their darkness, then humans are merely a copy of the existence of the universe. Whereas when a human is in the second phase, where the spiritual aspect overpowers the human aspect, their existence becomes greater, and the universe itself becomes a copy of them.

Although Al-Ishaqi's thought does not explicitly address ecological issues, this ontological framework opens up the possibility of reconstructing an eco-theological perspective. That is, regardless of the spiritual stage at which a person finds themselves, the exploitation of the universe is an ontologically impossible act. When viewing themselves as a microcosm, humans have an existential drive to preserve the universe for the sake of their own survival, as they recognize their absolute dependence on the ecosystem. Meanwhile, in the position of the macrocosm, human consciousness transforms into an ethical responsibility to protect nature as a form of stewardship over the trust bestowed by God.

Epistemological Basis: Integration of Reason and Heart in Understanding Reality

In addition to the ontological dimension, Achmad Asrori Al-Ishaqi's thinking also emphasizes the importance of spiritual epistemology in understanding reality. Knowledge is not only acquired through reason, but also through the heart as an instrument for grasping the inner dimensions of reality (Somad, 2024). In this framework, reality is understood to have two dimensions, namely *zahir* (*lahiriyyah*) and *batin* (spiritual), both of which complement each other (Somad, 2024).

This concept has important implications for the relationship between humans and nature. If nature is understood not only through a rational approach but also through spiritual experience, then the perspective on the environment undergoes a fundamental shift. Nature is no longer understood simply as an empirical object, but as a reality with a deeper dimension of meaning.

Furthermore, in this perspective the heart functions as a "mirror" that is able to capture spiritual reality, thus enabling humans to "witness" the connection between nature and God (Somad, 2024). Thus, Al-Ishaqi's Sufi epistemology opens up space for ecological reading that is not only rational, but also spiritual and existential.

Integration of Ontology and Epistemology: Towards Transformative Ecological Relations

Based on these two dimensions, Achmad Asrori Al-Ishaqi's thinking demonstrates a connection between the way we understand reality (epistemology) and the essence of reality itself (ontology). If nature is a divine manifestation, and humans understand reality through the integration of reason and heart, then our relationship to nature cannot be exploitative but must be contemplative and ethical.

Within this framework, environmental action is understood not only as a practical activity but also as a reflection of human spiritual awareness. Environmental degradation can be understood as a result of human failure to grasp the ontological and spiritual dimensions of reality. Conversely, ecological awareness arises from the human ability to see nature as part of an interconnected divine system.

Thus, the integration of ontology and epistemology in Al-Ishaqi's thinking produces a transformative ecological relationship framework, where changes to the environment depend not only on external regulation, but also on the transformation of human internal consciousness.

Ecotheological Implications: Spirituality-Based Environmental Ethics

From this reconstruction, several ecotheological implications can be formulated in Achmad Asrori Al-Ishaqi's thinking. First, nature has intrinsic value due to its connection to divine reality, and therefore cannot be treated merely as an object of exploitation. Second, ecological awareness is not only developed through a rational approach but also through spiritual transformation that involves the inner dimension of humankind. Third, environmental ethics from this perspective is rooted in theological awareness, where preserving nature is part of humanity's relationship with God.

Thus, although he did not explicitly formulate the concept of ecotheology, Al-Ishaqi's thought holds significant potential for development within an Islamic ecotheological framework. This reconstruction demonstrates that the Sufi tradition is not only relevant in the context of individual spirituality but also contributes to responding to the modern ecological crisis through an integrative and transformative approach.

Comparative Analysis of Ecotheology: Said Nursi and Achmad Asrori Al-Ishaqi

Natural Ontology: Between Explicit and Implicit

From an ontological perspective, Said Nursi explicitly positions nature as a manifestation (*tajalli*) of God, where the entire reality of the cosmos functions as a sign (*ayat*) pointing to divine existence. Nature in Nursi's thought is not autonomous, but rather has an ontological dependence on God, so that its existence is loaded with theological meaning. This view is also strengthened in a comparative study with Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who emphasized that the desacralization of nature in modernity occurs due to the loss of understanding of the divine dimension in the cosmos.

Meanwhile, in the thinking of Achmad Asrori Al-Ishaqi, the concept of nature as a divine manifestation takes a more Sufi form and is not systematically formulated in the language of ecotheology. Nature is understood as an emanation of divine reality manifested in the interconnected structure of the cosmos (Rizal, 2024), as well as a sign system that contains spiritual meaning (Rizal, 2024). Thus, the ontology of nature in Al-Ishaqi's thought is implicit and requires conceptual reconstruction to be read within an ecotheological framework.

This difference shows that Nursi offers an explicit and argumentative ontological formulation, while Al-Ishaqi provides an ontological structure that is Sufi and latent in nature, but still has significant ecotheological potential.

The Position of Humans: Caliph and Relational Entity in the Cosmos

Within Said Nursi's framework, humans are positioned as caliphs with a moral responsibility towards nature. This position is not interpreted as legitimizing domination, but as a mandate to

maintain the balance of the cosmos. Humans act as readers of God's signs in nature, thus ensuring a reflective and ethical relationship with the environment.

In contrast, in the thinking of Achmad Asrori Al-Ishaqi, humans are not placed as a dominant center, but rather as part of the entire interconnected cosmic system. The relationship between humans and nature is correspondence, where both are manifestations of the same divine reality (Rizal, 2024). In this framework, humans do not stand above nature, but are within the same existential network.

Thus, the fundamental difference lies in their relational orientation: Nursi emphasized human responsibility as a moral agent, while Al-Ishaqi emphasized the existential connectedness of humans to nature.

The God–Nature Relationship: Rational Theocentrism and Sufi Spirituality

The relationship between God and nature in Said Nursi's thought is constructed through a rational-theological approach, in which nature is understood as evidence of God's existence and a means to attain divine consciousness. This approach allows for an argumentative and communicative articulation of theocentrism, making it accessible through intellectual reflection.

In contrast, in the thinking of Achmad Asrori Al-Ishaqi, the relationship between God and nature is more focused on the dimension of inner experience. Understanding nature is not only achieved through reason, but also through the heart, as a spiritual instrument for capturing inner reality (Somad, 2024). Thus, this relationship is existential and contemplative, where nature is not only "understood," but also "witnessed" in spiritual experience.

This comparison shows the existence of two models of theocentrism: the rational-discursive model in Nursi's thought and the Sufi-experiential model in Al-Ishaqi's thought.

Implications of Ecotheology: Rational Ethics and Spiritual Ethics

From Nursi's perspective, environmental ethics is a logical consequence of humanity's understanding of nature as Ayat-i Takwiniya (signs of creation). The practical implication is the emergence of Ecological Literacy grounded in tawhid. Humans do not protect nature out of a pragmatic fear of disasters, but because of their rational responsibility as God's vicegerents. Practically, this model promotes the creation of a nature management system that is measurable, systematic, and scientific yet remains rooted in theocentrism. This ethics demands environmental regulations viewed as a divine mandate, where the destruction of nature is considered a denial of the rational truth of God's existence.

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Thus, it can be said that Nursi offers a rational-normative model of ecological ethics, whereas Al-Ishaqi offers a spiritual-transformative model of ecological ethics.

In practical terms, this integrative model holds strong potential for implementation in education (ecopedagogy) and the transformation of pesantren curricula that integrate the study of Sufi texts (such as al-Muntakhabat) with modern environmental science. It also holds potential for environmental advocacy as a strong theological foundation for traditional-religious communities to actively engage in global issues such as climate change—not as an external political agenda, but as a profound theological calling.

Comparative Synthesis: Integration of Rationality and Spirituality in Ecotheology

Based on this analysis, it is clear that the thoughts of Said Nursi and Achmad Asrori Al-Ishaqi are not in conflict, but rather complementary. Nursi provides a systematic and rational theological framework for understanding nature, while Al-Ishaqi offers ontological and epistemological depth through a Sufi approach.

The integration of the two allows for the formulation of a more comprehensive model of Islamic ecotheology, in which ecological awareness is developed through a combination of rational understanding and spiritual experience. This approach is relevant in responding to the modern ecological crisis, which is not only material in nature but also reflects a crisis in how humans understand reality.

In conclusion, the synthesis of Nursi's theological rationality and Al-Ishaqi's spirituality offers a structural and educational solution. Structurally, the principles of hima and harim in the prophetic tradition need to be revived as instruments for the conservation of green spaces, supported by the moral authority of the community, as suggested by Marbun (Kholidah Marbun et al., n.d.)

Educationally, the challenges of the climate crisis in Indonesia demand a more inclusive and transformative religious narrative (Hasan et al., 2022). This study recommends that Islamic educational institutions, particularly Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), begin adopting eco-theological literacy that integrates intellectual competence and inner resilience (Windsor & Franck, 2025). Thus, ecosystem restoration becomes not merely a technical endeavor but a manifestation of humanity's return to its ontological awareness as an inseparable part of the universe.

Synthesis: Towards an Ontologically-Integrative Islamic Ecotheology

A comparative analysis of the thoughts of Said Nursi and Achmad Asrori Al-Ishaqi shows that both start from the same theological assumption, namely that nature cannot be separated from divine reality. From this perspective, nature is understood as both a manifestation (*tajalli*) and a system of signs (*ayat*) that directs humanity toward divine awareness. However, both developed different approaches to understanding this relationship.

Said Nursi's thought displays a rational and argumentative theocentric and ecocentric approach, in which nature serves as an epistemological medium for knowing God. This approach aligns with the critique of the desacralization of nature in modernity, as emphasized in the study of Seyyed Hossein Nasr, which shows that the ecological crisis is rooted in the loss of the sacred dimension in humanity's view of the cosmos.

Meanwhile, Achmad Asrori Al-Ishaqi's thinking, while not explicitly addressing ecological issues, demonstrates an ontological and epistemological framework that allows for an ecological reading. Nature is understood as an emanation of divine reality, and understanding of this reality is not only through reason but also through the heart as a spiritual instrument. Thus, the relationship between humans and nature, from this perspective, is existential and contemplative.

Based on these differences, this study proposes an ontologically integrative synthesis of Islamic ecotheology that combines these two approaches. At the ontological level, this synthesis affirms that nature is a divine manifestation with intrinsic value. At the epistemological level, understanding nature is not sufficient through a rational approach but also requires the involvement of the spiritual dimension. Meanwhile, at the ethical level, this synthesis produces an ecological ethical framework that is not only normative but also transformative, rooted in theological awareness and inner experience.

Thus, this synthesis demonstrates that the development of Islamic ecotheology need not rely on a single approach, but can be built through the integration of theological rationality and Sufi spirituality. This integrative approach is relevant in responding to the modern ecological crisis, which is not only material in nature but also reflects a crisis in how humans understand reality.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that the thoughts of Said Nursi and Achmad Asrori Al-Ishaqi offer two distinct yet complementary approaches to constructing an Islamic ecotheological framework. Nursi provides a systematic and rational theological basis for understanding nature as a divine manifestation, while emphasizing human responsibility for maintaining the balance of the cosmos. Meanwhile, Al-Ishaqi presents a Sufi framework that allows for an ecological reading through the concept of ontological unity between humans, nature, and God, as well as through an epistemological approach that integrates reason and the heart.

The primary contribution of this research lies in reconstructing and synthesizing these two approaches into an ontologically integrative model of Islamic ecotheology. This model asserts that ecological awareness can be developed not only through rational argumentation but also through spiritual transformation that touches the inner dimension of humankind. Thus, this research expands the discourse on Islamic ecotheology by presenting an approach that is not only normative but also existential and transformative.

The implications of these findings suggest that the ecological crisis can be understood not only as an environmental issue but also as an ontological and spiritual one. Therefore, efforts to resolve it require a fundamental shift in humanity's perspective on nature, one that integrates theological, philosophical, and spiritual dimensions.

However, this study has limitations, particularly in its reconstructive nature in reading Al-Ishaqi's thought, which does not explicitly address ecological issues. Therefore, further research is needed to more deeply examine the contribution of the Sufi tradition to the development of Islamic ecotheology, both through studies of figures and broader thematic approaches.

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