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Theology as Centre: An Examination of Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī's Ecotheological Thought in *Riʿāyah al-Bīʾah fī Sharīʿah al-Islām*

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Abstract: This article examines the ecotheological thought of Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (d. 2022) as articulated in Riʿāyah al-Bīʾah fī Sharīʿah al-Islām, situating it as a response to the charge that the theological paradigm of Islam, particularly its anthropocentrism, has aggravated the modern ecological crisis. Reading the work in its entirety, the article addresses two fundamental questions: whether Islam must revise its anthropocentric paradigm to meet ecological demands, and how it might configure that paradigm so as to help resolve the tension between religion and ecological crisis. This research finds that al-Qaraḍāwī's ecotheology is theocentric in its grounding, where value rests with the standing of creatures before God, and weakly anthropocentric in its application, where obligation is specified through maqāṣid and taklīf indexed to human welfare. Within this framework the human status as khalīfah fī al-arḍ is a theological trust, examined through five Islamic disciplines, namely Uṣūl al-Dīn, ʿIlm al-Sulūk, Fiqh, Uṣūl al-Fiqh, and ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān wa al-Sunnah. Because that trust is conferred rather than constitutive, it can also be forfeited a feature distinguishing his theocentrism from Arne Naess' deep ecology, from Bryan Norton's weak anthropocentrism, and from Sarra Tlili's non-hierarchical theocentrism. The article concludes that Islamic theological cosmology may form part of the solution to the ecological crisis, provided it is comprehended, internalised, and actualised, though al-Qaraḍāwī entrusts actualisation to legislation and sanction, which secures the conduct his framework requires while leaving its theological warrant unprotected.

Keywords: Islamic Ecotheology; Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī; Theocentrism; Weak Anthropocentrism; Khalīfah fī al-Arḍ.

1. Introduction

In 1992, the United Nations-initiated Rio de Janeiro Conference elevated the ecological question to one of the most pressing global issues, giving rise to the vision of a transition toward an ecologically sustainable society. Since then, ecology has secured a place across numerous domains, including academic communities.[1] Within the study of religion, ecological awareness has emerged as a new consideration when discussing the relevance of religion in addressing the challenges of the contemporary world.[2] Several scholarly compilations have been published as

[1] Akrum Helfaya et al., 'Qur'ānic Ethics for Environmental Responsibility: Implications for Business Practice', Journal of Business Ethics 150, no. 4 (2018): 5, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3195-6.

[2] Roger S. Gottlieb, A Greener Faith: Religious Environmentalism and Our Planet's Future (Oxford University Press, 2006), https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195176483.001.0001.

responses to this discourse, including *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Ecology*[3]; *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*[4]; and *Handbook on Religion and Environment*[5]. The study of religion has been described as among the most responsive disciplines in receiving the ecological issue.[6] Contemporary scholars of religious studies have found a momentum to engage with discourses not explicitly addressed in classical literature. It is understandable that earlier scholars did not place ecology at the centre of their concerns when the Earth was still in equilibrium.[7] This discourse has come to be known as ecotheology.[8]

In his introduction to *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*, Lawrence E. Sullivan, then Director of the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard Divinity School, asserts that religious life and the earth's ecology are inextricably and originally related: "Religious life and earth's ecology are inextricably related, originally related." Sullivan's statement serves as an adequate theoretical foundation for demonstrating that behind human ecological attitudes and practice lies religion's constitutive role. Religion shapes the cosmological paradigm of humanity and ultimately guides patterns of behaviour and modes of engagement with nature.[9] The centrality of religion in forming paradigms regarding the place of humanity in the cosmos inspires religious communities as a guiding framework. As a guide, this ontological paradigm will profoundly shape human praxis in relating to nature.[10]

Paradigm, then, is a key term that must be carefully situated in this discourse. Thomas Kuhn's account of paradigms as the shared commitments governing what a community takes to be a legitimate problem and a legitimate solution has been carried into religious studies through the cognate notion of *worldviews*, which Ninian Smart describes as the beliefs, feelings, and mental dispositions that impel human beings toward actions carrying social and moral consequence.[11] Based on Kuhn's terminological elaboration, it can be inferred that the environmental crisis is inseparable from a paradigmatic crisis related to how humanity perceives and understands the nature of the cosmos, which subsequently manifests in a destructive attitude toward the environment.[12] As one of the core instruments shaping this paradigm, religion cannot evade accountability.[13]

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[3] John Hart, ed., The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Ecology, 1st edn (Wiley, 2017), https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118465523.

[4] Roger S. Gottlieb, ed., The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology (Oxford University Press, 2006).

[5] Susan P. Bratton and Stephanie Cli Boddie, eds, Handbook on Religion and the Environment, Elgar Handbooks in Energy, the Environment and Climate Change (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2026).

[6] John Grim and Mary Evelyn Tucker, Ecology and Religion (Island Press, 2014), 1.

[7] Grim and Tucker, Ecology and Religion, 1.

[8] Lawrence Troster, 'What Is Eco-Theology?', CrossCurrents 63, no. 4 (2013).

[9] Richard C. Foltz et al., Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust (Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School, 2003), 1.

[10] Grim and Tucker, Ecology and Religion, 7.

[11] Ninian Smart, Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs (Scribner's, 1983), 1–2.

[12] A. Sonny Keraf, Etika Lingkungan Hidup (Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2010), 50.

[13] Martin Palmer and Victoria Finlay, Faith in Conservation: New Approaches to Religions and the Environment (World Bank Publications, 2003).

Lynn White, one of the earliest scholars to write on the role of religion in environmental degradation, offered a critical observation concerning the discourse on ecology, religion, and paradigm construction in his essay *The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis*:[14]

> *"What people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them. Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny that is by religion."*

White's observation must be understood holistically as a critique directed at the Abrahamic religions and their theological doctrines supporting anthropocentrism a religious instruction that places humanity at the centre of the universe.[15] This worldview carries the consequence of positioning humanity at the highest caste of the cosmological hierarchy.[16]

This religious doctrine is considered not only potentially capable of producing a paradigmatic crisis within religious communities in relation to nature, but also of serving as a normative foundation for destructive human interaction with the environment. It must nonetheless be acknowledged that modernity, with its secular ideology, has marginalized the role of religion in the formation of modern human thought.[17] As elaborated by Fritjof Capra, modernism has made the Cartesian-Newtonian paradigm its guide for engaging with nature. Understood within ecological discourse, this paradigm concludes that the universe is a lifeless great machine, incommensurable with humanity, which possesses the capacity for thought and transformation. Nature is thereby regarded merely as an instrument or tool for humanity to satisfy its needs, to be treated without ethical consideration owing to its subordinate position. Capra subsequently proposed a *shifting paradigm* through revolutionary breaks that replace the Cartesian-Newtonian paradigm with a worldview more aligned with ecological interests.[18]

Given the marginal position of religion in the framework of modern human thought, efforts toward a *shifting paradigm* certainly warrant reconsideration.[19] The question is whether religion, which has been implicated in forming the anthropocentric paradigm, must be excluded from the new paradigmatic framework, or whether it should remain, subject to contextualization bearing in mind that Abrahamic religions such as Islam did not encounter ecological problems during their formative periods. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, for instance, argues in *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man* that the primary cause of the ecological crisis lies in modernity's failure to accommodate the spiritual ethical values of religion. For him, secularism is the root of ecological problems, and the paradigm of ecotheology represents a way out of this predicament.[20]

Drawing on these theses, within the context of Islamic studies approaching the ecological issue, several questions arise. *First*, does Islam possess the elasticity to revise its anthropocentric

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[14] Lynn White, 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis', Science 155, no. 3767 (1967): 1203–7, at 1205, https://doi.org/10.1126/science.155.3767.1203.

[15] Willis Jenkins, 'After Lynn White: Religious Ethics and Environmental Problems', The Journal of Religious Ethics 37, no. 2 (2009): 285.

[16] Foltz et al., Islam and Ecology, 1.

[17] Almut Beringer, 'Reclaiming a Sacred Cosmology: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, the Perennial Philosophy, and Sustainability Education', Canadian Journal of Environmental Education 11 (January 2006): 38; Michael Northcott, A Political Theology of Climate Change (Wm B Eerdmans, 2013).

[18] Husein Heriyanto, Menggali Nalar Saintifik Peradaban Islam (Mizan, 2011), 25–52.

[19] Thomas Berry, The Great Work: Our Way into the Future (Crown, 2011).

[20] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man (George Allen and Unwin, 1986).

paradigm in order to produce a theologically grounded ecological consciousness, or ecotheology? *Second*, how might Islam configure its paradigm so as to contribute to resolving the tension between religion and the ecological problem? The first question leads to an ontological discussion of the respective positions of humanity and nature, to be examined through theological narratives derived from the primary sources of Islam. The second question potentially opens toward the possibility of a contextualization of Islamic teachings relevant to the demands of modernity that requires answers to the ecological crisis.[21]

Surveying recent scholarship on this issue, a variety of discussions have sought to address these two fundamental questions. In his research, Lohlker develops an approach to Islamic ecotheology grounded in the Sufi principle of *waḥdat al-wujūd* as a spiritual foundation for balancing the relationship between humanity and nature.[22] Sugiant and Shahruddin's study traces the application of Islamic values such as *tawḥīd*, *mīzān*, *khilāfah*, and *amānah* in environmental management practices within Indonesian Muslim communities.[23] Running against this current, Sarra Tlili contests the premise these studies share. She argues that the anthropocentric reading of Qur'ānic cosmology is a projection onto the text rather than a property of it, and that the modern application of *khalīfah* to humanity at large represents a late semantic widening of a term classical usage reserved for prophets and rulers.[24] Her position matters for the present inquiry precisely because she too reads the Qurʾān theocentrically while reaching conclusions incompatible with those defended below.

In the domain of Islamic law, Karimullah argues that environmental protection (*ḥifẓ al-bīʾah*) should be positioned as one of the principal objectives of the *sharīʿah* (*maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*). This perspective extends the scope of *maqāṣid* previously focused solely on the protection of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property by incorporating the environment as a crucial element in ensuring human survival.[25] Similarly, Ali and Agushi propose an Islamic environmental ethics framework integrated with local culture, aimed at achieving sustainable natural resource management. They underscore the importance of contextualizing Qur'ānic values within the social praxis of Muslim communities, particularly in confronting global challenges such as climate change and the energy crisis.[26]

Building on this prior scholarship and affirming the relevance and positioning of Islam within the ecological crisis discourse, this article answers the two fundamental questions through a reading of the thought of Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (d. 2022) as expressed in his work specifically devoted to Islam and ecology, *Riʿāyah al-Bīʾah fī Sharīʿah al-Islām*. The selection of al-Qaraḍāwī

[21] Whitney A. Bauman et al., Grounding Religion: A Field Guide to the Study of Religion and Ecology (Routledge, 2010), 19.

[22] Rüdiger Lohlker, 'Islamic Ecotheology: Transcending Anthropocentrism through Wahdat al-Wujūd', Ascarya: Journal of Islamic Science, Culture, and Social Studies 4, no. 2 (2024): 82–89, https://doi.org/10.53754/iscs.v4i2.705.

[23] Reza Nurdiana Sugiant and Mohd Solahuddin Shahruddin, 'Holy Earth: Harnessing Religious Ethics and Faith-Based Action to Combat Climate Change', Socio Politica: Jurnal Ilmiah Jurusan Sosiologi 15, no. 1 (2025): 115–24, https://doi.org/10.15575/socio-politica.v15i1.44852.

[24] Sarra Tlili, Animals in the Qur'an (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[25] Suud Sarim Karimullah, 'Humanitarian Ecology: Balancing Human Needs and Environmental Preservation in Islamic Law', Asy-Syari'ah 26, no. 2 (2025): 101–20, https://doi.org/10.15575/as.v26i2.38177.

[26] Dr. Muhamed Ali and Dr. Muaz Agushi, 'Eco-Islam: Integrating Islamic Ethics into Environmental Policy for Sustainable Living', International Journal of Religion 5, no. 9 (2024): 949–57, https://doi.org/10.61707/gq0we205.

and this work as the object of inquiry rests on two justifications: (1) al-Qaraḍāwī is one of the most prolific modern Islamic thinkers across multiple domains within Islamic studies, and his works are consistently responsive to the social problematics facing the Muslim community; (2) al-Qaraḍāwī and *Riʿāyah al-Bīʾah fī Sharīʿah al-Islām* represent how Islam adapts to modern issues ecology in this case and are therefore highly relevant to the questions raised in this research.

2. Methods

This study takes Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī's *Riʿāyah al-Bīʾah fī Sharīʿah al-Islām* as its primary object of examination and reads it against the conceptual vocabulary of environmental ethics. Mary Evelyn Tucker distinguishes three operations through which religious traditions engage the ecological question, namely the retrieval of theologically relevant elements not yet ecologically articulated, the reinterpretation of received texts so as to integrate ecological consciousness, and the reconstruction of the theological framework itself.[27] Al-Qaraḍāwī's book performs the first two, and the present article, being a critical reading of that performance rather than an extension of it, works at second order and stops short of reconstruction. Three instruments carry the analysis. An internal theological hermeneutics assesses al-Qaraḍāwī's claims against epistemological standards drawn from within the tradition, since a claim advanced in the name of Islam must be shown to derive from, or at minimum to be compatible with, the Qur'ān and the sunna.[28] A paradigmatic mapping then locates his position on a spectrum running from strong anthropocentrism through weak anthropocentrism to ecocentrism and theocentrism, attending in particular to what the framework yields where human economic interest collides with ecological integrity the point at which theocentrism and weak anthropocentrism would be expected to diverge.[29] A comparative analysis finally sets his thought beside Arne Naess' deep ecology, Bryan Norton's distinction, Tim Hayward's thesis, Seyyed Hossein Nasr's argument, and Sarra Tlili's non-hierarchical reading of Qur'ānic cosmology, with the aim of locating divergences rather than collecting resemblances.[30]

3. Results and Discussions

An Overview of *Riʿāyah al-Bīʾah fī Sharīʿah al-Islām*

Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī composed *Riʿāyah al-Bīʾah fī Sharīʿah al-Islām* specifically in response to mounting requests for a work that would address the discourse of Islam and ecology in a dedicated and systematic manner. His participation in various international conferences dealing with environmental issues became the originating context from which questions and requests were directed toward him. Although he does not explicitly state that the work arose from a

[27] İbrahim Özdemir, 'Islamic Ecotheology: Foundations and Challenges', in Handbook on Religion and the Environment, ed. Susan Power Bratton et al. (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2026), https://doi.org/10.4337/9781035321872.00011.

[28] Gottlieb, The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology, 209.

[29] Mary Evelyn Tucker, Religion and Ecology (Oxford University Press, 2006), 405–7, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195178722.003.0019; Hart, The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Ecology.

[30] Tucker, Religion and Ecology, 406; Bratton and Boddie, Handbook on Religion and the Environment.

personal ecological consciousness born of his own contemplation, al-Qaraḍāwī expresses his desire for the work to contribute at both the epistemic and practical levels.[31]

It is worth underlining that al-Qaraḍāwī candidly acknowledges that his work came into being as a result of external rather than internal impetus. If al-Qaraḍāwī is regarded as an authoritative representative of Eastern Islamic scholarship, then ecological consciousness appears to have arrived belatedly within that scholarly tradition. In his *muqaddimah*, al-Qaraḍāwī also provides a rationale for his choice of the term *riʿāyah*. In his view, *riʿāyah* is more significant than the more commonly used term *ḥimāyah* for representing Islam's attitude toward the ecological issue. *Ḥimāyah*, terminologically, encompasses only a protective effort (*min jihah al-ʿadm*) to preserve something's existence.[32] In the context of the ecological issue, *ḥimāyah* is understood as an effort to protect nature from all that potentially damages and eliminates it (*al-muḥāfaẓah ʿalā al-bīʾah*). The term *riʿāyah*, by contrast, carries a nuance encompassing both protective and productive efforts simultaneously (*min jihah al-ʿadm wa al-wujūd jamīʿan*). One concrete form of this productive effort is the practice of *iṣlāḥ* (rejuvenation) of nature so that it returns to its ideal form of equilibrium.[33]

***Riʿāyah al-Bīʾah*: Al-Qaraḍāwī's Exposition of the Relational Status of Humanity and Nature**

In the first part of his work, Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī presents an exposition of the ontological status of the relationship between humanity and nature. In their respective origins, humanity and nature are two entities not inherently bound to one another. The first human beings, Adam and Eve, were not native inhabitants of the Earth but rather celestial creatures. When both were destined to dwell in this world and were entrusted with the mandate of *khalīfah*, their relationship with the natural world began. The relational bond between the first human beings and nature is inseparable from the human need to secure the continuity of life.[34]

As the subject who ordained humanity's destiny as inhabitants of the Earth, God has prepared all that is required to sustain human life. The technical terms *dhalūlan*, *iḥyāʾ al-arḍ baʿd mawtihā*, and *taskhīr* are deployed by al-Qaraḍāwī when examining various Qurʾānic verses and ḥadīths that serve as the primary foundation of his argument, emphasizing that nature holds the ontological status of "servant" to humanity. Nature even cooperates collectively in providing the best service to humanity (*al-takāmul wa al-taʿāwun bayn al-samāʾ wa al-arḍ fī khidmah al-insān*).[35]

It must be underlined that the vocabulary deployed in this section deserves far more scrutiny than it has customarily received, precisely because it is the vocabulary that an unsympathetic reader would seize upon first. To describe the cosmos as rendered serviceable to humanity (*taskhīr*), and to speak of the heavens and the earth cooperating in humanity's service (*al-takāmul wa al-taʿāwun bayn al-samāʾ wa al-arḍ fī khidmah al-insān*), is to deploy precisely the idiom that Lynn White identified as the theological licence for domination an idiom that, read in isolation, converts nature into an instrument whose value is exhausted by its usefulness, and against which no amount of subsequent ethical exhortation can fully redeem an ontology already

[31] Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, Riʿāyah al-Bīʾah fī Sharīʿah al-Islām (Dar al-Syuruq, 2001), 7–9.

[32] Al-Qaradawi, Riʿāyah al-Bīʾah fī Sharīʿah al-Islām, 8.

[33] Al-Qaradawi, Riʿāyah al-Bīʾah fī Sharīʿah al-Islām, 8.

[34] Al-Qaradawi, Riʿāyah al-Bīʾah fī Sharīʿah al-Islām, 12–18.

[35] Al-Qaradawi, Riʿāyah al-Bīʾah fī Sharīʿah al-Islām, 12–18.

settled in those terms. It must nonetheless be acknowledged that al-Qaraḍāwī's handling of this material is considerably more careful than a hostile reading would predict, even though he nowhere poses the objection in these terms. The provisioning verses assembled in his *tamhīd* are qualified almost as soon as they are cited: having invoked the earth spread out with its provisions for humanity and its livestock (*matāʿan lakum wa li-anʿāmikum*), he moves directly to the declaration that God caused to grow in the earth everything according to measure (*min kulli shayʾin mawzūn*), singling out that phrase as an indication of the utmost importance.[36] Provision and measure thus arrive together, so that the very passage licensing human use simultaneously fixes the limit of that use. The *taskhīr* material is further embedded within the claim, examined below, that every creature stands before God as a worshipper in its own right a claim that withholds from humanity the proprietary relation instrumentalization would require. Whether this qualification proves strong enough to hold under pressure is a question to which the discussion returns once the five disciplinary lenses have been set out.

In the second part, al-Qaraḍāwī elaborates the theological principles pertaining to *riʿāyah al-bīʾah*, which are foundationally divided into five branches of Islamic scholarship: (1) *Uṣūl al-Dīn* (*ʿaqīdah*); (2) *Taṣawwuf*; (3) *Fiqh*; (4) *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*; (5) *ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān wa al-Sunnah*. Al-Qaraḍāwī considers this section pivotal to elaborate, as he emphasizes that the ecological issue, or *riʿāyah al-bīʾah*, is not a discourse imported from outside Islam nor a product of "Western" innovation, but rather originates from within the Islamic intellectual heritage. Under the first principle, examined through *Uṣūl al-Dīn*, al-Qaraḍāwī presents the exposition that in their original state the ontological status of humanity and nature is not hierarchical but equal, both being God's creatures obliged to worship and glorify Him. This status subsequently shifted when God conferred upon humanity the additional mandate of *khalīfah fī al-arḍ*. This ontological shift is also closely linked to the characteristics of human creation, formed from two constituent elements: earth (*ṭīn*), which qualifies humanity to carry out *ʿimārah al-arḍ*, and the divine spirit (*rūḥ Allāh*), which places humanity in an elevated and adequate position to discharge the trust of *khalīfah*. Additionally, humanity is endowed with knowledge that places it even above the angels. This apex position in the hierarchy then grants humanity the role of preserving nature's existence as a duty and as an expression of safeguarding the purpose of its own creation which encompasses three things: worship (*ʿibādah*), *khilāfah fī al-arḍ*, and *ʿimārah al-arḍ*.[37]

Indeed, this first lens performs the heaviest theological labour in the entire book, and it performs labour of a very particular kind, since al-Qaraḍāwī's opening move consists in denying that the hierarchy between humanity and nature is original at all. Humanity and the remainder of creation begin as equals in the only respect that ultimately counts their common standing as creatures obliged to worship and to glorify their Creator and the hierarchy arrives only afterwards, as a conferral upon humanity of the mandate of *khalīfah*. Conferral, however, implies both a conferrer and a set of conditions attending the conferral, from which it can be inferred that the ontological elevation of humanity constitutes a mandate held rather than a property possessed, its holding remaining contingent upon the discharge of *ʿibādah*, *khilāfah fī al-arḍ*, and *ʿimārah al-arḍ*. Much of what follows in this article turns upon that structural feature, for a

[36] Al-Qaradawi, Riʿāyah al-Bīʾah fī Sharīʿah al-Islām, 15–16, citing Q. al-Nāziʿāt [79]: 30–32 and Q. al-Ḥijr [15]: 19–21.

[37] Al-Qaradawi, Riʿāyah al-Bīʾah fī Sharīʿah al-Islām, 19–24.

hierarchy capable of being forfeited behaves quite differently, under pressure, from a hierarchy that is constitutive of the beings who occupy its apex.

Under the second lens, which al-Qaraḍāwī heads *ʿilm al-sulūk wa al-tazkiyah* and glosses as what is otherwise called *taṣawwuf*, he foregrounds the ethical dimension in interacting with nature. For him, *taṣawwuf* centres on two pivotal concepts: *taqwā* and *iḥsān*. Piety (*taqwā*) gives birth to excellence (*iḥsān*), and *iḥsān* is the fruit of piety. These two concepts thus become the foundation for developing a narrative of ideal human interaction with nature: through the illumination that Islam attends not only to vertical ritualism but also to horizontal conduct referred to as *al-dīn al-muʿāmalah* grounded in love and compassion. These two manifestations of piety and excellence lead to a different way of seeing nature, namely: (1) as signs of God's power (*āyah min āyātillāh*); (2) as God's innumerable blessings; (3) as beauty created by God to adorn human life.

It is important to underscore that what al-Qaraḍāwī declines to do with this lens is quite as revealing as what he does with it, since he defines the entire domain through *khuluq*, endorsing al-Kattānī's identification of *taṣawwuf* with character and Ibn al-Qayyim's extension of that same identification to religion in its entirety, and anchoring the whole discussion in the Qur'ānic pairing of *taqwā* and *iḥsān*.[38] The metaphysical resources of the Sufi tradition resources upon which an ecotheology of a rather different shape might have been erected are thereby left wholly untouched. Rüdiger Lohlker, whose Islamic ecotheology was noted above, builds precisely upon those resources, grounding the human relation to nature in *waḥdat al-wujūd* and dissolving thereby the ontological distance separating humanity from the natural order. Al-Qaraḍāwī has the identical tradition available to him and takes from it an ethics alone, so that his hierarchy survives the Sufi lens for the simple reason that he has constructed that lens in such a way as to leave the hierarchy intact which suggests, in turn, that the hierarchy represents a considered commitment rather than an unexamined inheritance.

Under the lens of *Fiqh*, *riʿāyah al-bīʾah* is intimately related to the relational status of humanity as a moral agent (*mukallaf*) and nature, viewed through the parameters of *taklīfī* law: obligatory (*wājib*), recommended (*sunnah*), forbidden (*ḥarām*), discouraged (*makrūh*), and permissible (*mubāḥ*). This relational dimension can also be seen in the chapters of *fiqh al-ʿibādah*, including *ṭahārah* (concerning water), *ṣalāh* (places of worship), *zakāh–ṣadaqah–waqf* (resource management), *ḥajj–ḥaram–iḥrām* (prohibitions on hunting and damaging plants), as well as *fiqh al-muʿāmalah* such as *iḥyāʾ al-mawāt* and *fiqh al-jihād* (what may and may not be destroyed in times of war). These relational nuances establish limits that humanity may not transgress, in order to safeguard public interest (*maṣlaḥah*) and avert harm (*maḍarrah*) to humanity in accordance with the philosophical dimension of law itself. This is further illustrated in one of the universal legal maxims (*qāʿidah kullīyah*) in *fiqh*: *lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār* (no harm shall be inflicted upon oneself or upon others). The *fiqh* perspective within the context of *riʿāyah al-bīʾah* is therefore important in that it provides a framework of rules delimiting human interaction with the environment, particularly addressing issues of large corporations that exploit and extract

[38] Al-Qaradawi, Riʿāyah al-Bīʾah fī Sharīʿah al-Islām, 25, citing Q. al-Naḥl [16]: 128, with reference to Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, Madārij al-Sālikīn, ed. Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiqī (Maṭbaʿat al-Sunnah al-Muḥammadiyyah), 2:307.

natural resources, so as to maintain order and safeguard the rights of human beings and prevent any single party from benefiting while others bear the cost.[39]

Viewed through *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *riʿāyah al-bīʾah* finds an even firmer foundation in the philosophy of Islamic law, which is constructed upon considerations of public benefit (*maṣlaḥah*) and harm (*maḍarrah*) as the philosophical rationale underpinning the *sharīʿah*. The dual imperatives of realizing public interest (*taḥqīq al-maṣāliḥ*) and preventing and repelling corruption (*darʾu al-mafāsid*) find their expression in the five primary objectives of the *sharīʿah* (*maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*): protection of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), intellect (*ḥifẓ al-ʿaql*), wealth (*ḥifẓ al-māl*), and progeny (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*). To preserve the continuity of the *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, *riʿāyah al-bīʾah* becomes a vital element within each of these components.

Concerning *ḥifẓ al-dīn* (religion), criminal acts against nature constitute a denial of the essence of religion, as they destroy core concepts of religious teaching. From the perspective of *ḥifẓ al-nafs* (life), the destruction of nature amounts to a form of killing humanity itself, and is intertwined with *ḥifẓ al-nasl* (progeny), which encompasses the continuity of human civilization through processes of regeneration. Regarding *ḥifẓ al-ʿaql* (intellect), the activation of reason must be optimised in risk management by weighing benefit and harm, so that interaction with nature is conducted on the basis of careful deliberation like a person of reason rather than one under the influence of intoxicants. Finally, from the perspective of *ḥifẓ al-māl* (wealth), the conception of *al-māl* here encompasses everything that sustains human livelihood, not limited to gold, silver, or currency. Preserving its availability is a concrete actualization of *ḥifẓ al-māl*, meaning also the guarantee of the continuity of humankind.[40]

It must be acknowledged, however, that the *uṣūl al-fiqh* lens pulls in a direction opposite to that of the first, and the tension obtaining between the two constitutes the most consequential feature of al-Qaraḍāwī's entire construction. Each of the five *maqāṣid* is specified in terms of a human good: religion is the religion humanity practises, intellect the intellect humanity exercises, wealth the livelihood humanity requires, and progeny the continuity of human generations across time. When ecological restraint is derived from this architecture, that restraint stands warranted by its contribution to human flourishing, which reproduces the structure of weak anthropocentrism as Norton describes it rather than the structure of theocentrism, and a reader might fairly conclude on this basis that the theological framing supplied by the first lens is merely decorative while the operative ethics belongs wholly to the fourth. The *fiqh* lens compounds the difficulty, inasmuch as the vocabulary of *maṣlaḥah* and *maḍarrah* measures harm by its incidence upon human beings with the consequence that a harm inflicted upon nature yet leaving human interests untouched would register, upon that metric, as no harm at all.

Finally, from the perspective of *ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān wa al-Sunnah*, al-Qaraḍāwī affirms that all previous scholarly perspectives derive from a reading of the Qurʾān and the sunnah. In his epistemological principle, al-Qaraḍāwī does not accept sources of knowledge that do not rest upon *istinbāṭ* anchored in these primary Islamic sources. He states: *lā yuqbal mā taqarrarahu min aḥkām wa qawāʿid wa istinbāṭāt, mā lam takun masnūdah min kitābillāh wa sunnat Rasulillāh ṣ.a.w.* (No legal ruling, principle, or derivation is acceptable unless it is grounded in the Qurʾān

[39] Al-Qaradawi, Riʿāyah al-Bīʾah fī Sharīʿah al-Islām, 38–43.

[40] Al-Qaradawi, Riʿāyah al-Bīʾah fī Sharīʿah al-Islām, 44–52.

and the sunnah). It is thus no surprise that Qurʾānic verses and ḥadīths dominate every exposition in the preceding sections. Al-Qaraḍāwī further notes that the characteristic of the Qurʾān in naming its chapters after animals (al-Baqarah, al-Anʿām, al-Fīl), insects (al-Naml, al-ʿAnkabūt), plants (al-Tīn), minerals (al-Ḥadīd), and natural phenomena (al-Raʿd, al-Dhāriyāt, al-Fajr) constitutes a sign (*dalālah*) of the Qurʾān's profound attention to nature.[41]

Al-Qaraḍāwī's exposition, drawn from across the disciplines of the Islamic intellectual heritage, is subsequently manifested in several forms of praxis reflecting ecological commitment within the framework of *riʿāyah al-bīʾah*. Eight points are elaborated in this context: (1) reforestation and greening (*tashjīr wa takhḍīr*); (2) productive stewardship (*ʿimārah wa tithmīr*); (3) maintaining cleanliness and order (*naẓāfah wa taṭhīr*); (4) preserving resource sustainability (*muḥāfaẓah ʿalā al-mawārid*); (5) protecting human health (*ḥifāẓ ʿalā ṣiḥḥat al-insān*); (6) acting ethically toward nature (*iḥsān bi al-bīʾah*); (7) protecting nature from destructive behaviour (*muḥāfaẓah ʿalā al-bīʾah min al-itlāf*); (8) preserving natural balance (*ḥifẓ al-tawāzun al-bīʾī*). All of these points are grounded in readings of the Qurʾān and ḥadīths that carry thematic signals toward this discourse.[42]

It is worth underlining that the scholarship on al-Qaraḍāwī's ecotheology has tended to halt at precisely this point, and that halting here distorts the book considerably. The theological foundation together with the eight pillars occupies rather less than a quarter of a work extending to some two hundred and fifty pages, the remainder being given over to matters that a purely doctrinal reading never reaches at all. Al-Qaraḍāwī devotes a long central part to the dangers threatening the environment, treating pollution, the depletion of resources, and the disruption of ecological equilibrium in turn, and follows it with an extended analysis of the causes underlying the appearance of corruption on land and sea.[43] Two of the later parts bear directly upon the objections most frequently raised against work of this kind, and they deserve to be brought into the discussion.

The first of these sets out five contemporary Islamic instruments for *riʿāyah al-bīʾah*, namely the religious formation of the young, the cultivation of adults in the values of Islam, the oversight of public opinion through a revived practice of *al-amr bi al-maʿrūf wa al-nahy ʿan al-munkar*, the authority of legislation and penal sanction (*sulṭat al-tashrīʿ wa al-ʿiqāb*), and cooperation with local and international institutions.[44] The fourth of these deserves particular emphasis, since it is the one instrument that cannot be assimilated to exhortation of any kind: al-Qaraḍāwī proves unwilling to leave ecological restraint to the conscience of the individual believer, assigning instead to public authority the power to legislate environmental limits and to punish their transgression and a framework that authorises coercive limits has plainly moved beyond the moral suasion with which Islamic environmental ethics is so frequently charged. The second part addresses the historical record directly, arguing that environmental care operated throughout Islamic history by way of three channels, namely the civilisational institutions of the

[41] Al-Qaradawi, Riʿāyah al-Bīʾah fī Sharīʿah al-Islām, 53–56.

[42] Al-Qaradawi, Riʿāyah al-Bīʾah fī Sharīʿah al-Islām, 57–156; cf. Alif Jabal Kurdi, 'Tafsir Ekologi: Telaah Atas Penafsiran Yusuf al-Qaraḍāwi Dalam Kitab Riʿāyah al-Bīʾah fī Sharīʿah al-Islām' (Skripsi, UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2019), 54, https://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/38417/.

[43] Al-Qaradawi, Riʿāyah al-Bīʾah fī Sharīʿah al-Islām, 157–232.

[44] Al-Qaradawi, Riʿāyah al-Bīʾah fī Sharīʿah al-Islām, 233–40.

tradition, legislation, and the *ḥisbah* system.[45] This claim is apologetic in form and its evidential adequacy remains open to challenge; what matters for the present argument is that the charge of ignoring history cannot be sustained against the book itself, and that the terms of any critique must accordingly engage the institutional record al-Qaraḍāwī assembles rather than assert its absence.

One limitation of this institutional turn should nonetheless be registered. Legislation and sanction operate upon conduct, whereas the theological grounding examined below concerns the warrant for restraint rather than its enforcement. A state imposing environmental limits on frankly utilitarian grounds would produce the same conduct while abandoning that grounding altogether. As such, al-Qaraḍāwī's remedy protects what his framework requires people to do and leaves unprotected the reason it gives them for doing it.

From al-Qaraḍāwī's multidisciplinary exposition across the Islamic intellectual heritage, along with illustrations of the praxis of *riʿāyah al-bīʾah*, several observations can be drawn. *First*, al-Qaraḍāwī positions humanity at a stratum higher than nature. Humanity is a creature that ontologically receives greater endowment from nature, bearing the consequential trust of *istikhlāf*. *Second*, the relational dimension between humanity and nature is foregrounded in its ethical aspects, and a great deal of that ethical material is specified through categories that take human welfare as their measure. This is the feature that generates the article's central problem, since a framework whose operative ethics is indexed to human interest invites the suspicion that its theological vocabulary is ornamental. *Third*, the framework carries an institutional tail. Restraint is entrusted to formation, to public oversight, to legislation backed by sanction, and to historical institutions whose record al-Qaraḍāwī takes to vindicate the tradition. *Fourth*, al-Qaraḍāwī constructs his argumentation entirely from the Qurʾān and the sunnah, a dependence inseparable from his conviction that any perspective attributed to Islam must be grounded in a worldview constructed from a reading of the Qurʾān and the ḥadīths of the Prophet Muḥammad.

Theology as Centre: Responding to the Charge of Islamic Anthropocentrism

The ecological issue within Islamic studies has undergone significant development since the emergence of global awareness about the environmental crisis triggered by modern human activity. This awareness has also driven the involvement of religions in shaping new discourses and paradigms in response to the ecological crisis.[46] Among the paradigms most frequently criticized is anthropocentrism the view that places humanity at the centre of the cosmos and regards nature merely as an object of exploitation.[47] Within the Islamic context, a number of scholars have responded critically to the accusation that Islam legitimises exploitative anthropocentrism. Foltz, Denny, and Baharuddin, for instance, argue that Islam possesses doctrinal sources supporting cosmological equality and the ecological responsibility of humanity.[48] Indeed, the position of humanity as *khalīfah fī al-arḍ* does not signify absolute dominion but rather an ethical and spiritual trust to maintain the balance of nature.[49]

[45] Al-Qaradawi, Riʿāyah al-Bīʾah fī Sharīʿah al-Islām, 241–55.

[46] Grim and Tucker, Ecology and Religion.

[47] White, 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis'.

[48] Foltz et al., Islam and Ecology.

[49] Mawil Y. Izzi Dien, The Environmental Dimensions of Islam (James Clarke & Co., 2000).

The proliferation of accusations directed at religion as a responsible subject for the ecological crisis experienced by modern humanity as noted in the introduction stems from the anthropocentric paradigm accommodated by religion. In the ecological discourse, anthropocentrism is not simply defined as the view that places humanity at the centre. Anthropocentrism is regarded as a paradigm that grants humanity the licence to harm nature on account of its position at the apex of the cosmological hierarchy. Human centrality is considered to potentially grant freedom to act arbitrarily toward nature, which occupies a subordinate position akin to the relationship between a sovereign and subjects. Although this terminology is widely used in ecological studies, its validity remains contested, with some scholars proposing the alternative term "anthropocentric" as more appropriate for characterizing the cosmological hierarchy of the modern era.[50]

The term "anthropocentrism" itself warrants careful interrogation, as it is the site of considerable confusion. Tim Hayward demonstrates that equating anthropocentrism with destructive attitudes generates conceptual disorder: the faults typically labelled anthropocentrism are more accurately termed speciesism and human chauvinism, and anti-anthropocentric rhetoric is frequently counterproductive precisely because some form of anthropocentrism is unavoidable in any ethics.[51] Similarly, Bryan Norton distinguishes *strong anthropocentrism* which treats human consumptive interests as the sole standard from *weak anthropocentrism*, which in fact enables critique of those consumptive interests and is adequate as the basis for environmental ethics without needing to presuppose the intrinsic value of nature.[52] This distinction has not gone unchallenged; some scholars maintain that this defence obscures an already-settled meaning of anthropocentrism.[53] Nevertheless, the Norton–Hayward framework provides a more precise instrument for reading Islam's position than the crude anthropocentric–ecocentric dichotomy defended by Kopnina and scholars of similar persuasion.

Returning to the questions posed in the introduction: is it truly the *strong* anthropocentric model that religion Islam in particular advances? And must anthropocentrism be abandoned, requiring Islam to contextualize its teachings in alignment with a paradigm that places the ontological status of nature on a par with humanity, such that humanity must rethink its mode of interaction with nature as a consequence of nature as centre?

In answering the first question, a re-examination of Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī's exposition reveals that when Islam is used as a lens for viewing the cosmological hierarchy, an anthropocentric paradigm is unavoidable. Yet that paradigm cannot be separated from the theological doctrines that constitute its foundation. His argumentation, constructed through an examination of the Qur'ān and the sunnah, seems to confirm that positioning humanity as a special creature is a textual imperative, and as a religion inseparable from what Nasr Hamid Abu

[50] David W. Kidner, 'Why "anthropocentrism" Is Not Anthropocentric', Dialectical Anthropology, Unsettling Anthropocentrism, vol. 38, no. 4 (2014): 469.

[51] Tim Hayward, 'Anthropocentrism: A Misunderstood Problem', Environmental Values 6, no. 1 (1997): 49–63, https://doi.org/10.3197/096327197776679185.

[52] Bryan G. Norton, 'Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism', in The Ethics of the Environment (Routledge, 2008).

[53] Helen Kopnina et al., 'Anthropocentrism: More than Just a Misunderstood Problem', Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics 31, no. 1 (2018): 109–27, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10806-018-9711-1.

Zayd calls *ḥaḍārat al-naṣṣ*[54] the civilization of the text the Islamic position as represented by al-Qaraḍāwī's reading appears incontrovertible because the text says precisely this. This simultaneously answers the second question: Islamic ecotheology, as read through al-Qaraḍāwī's thought, reveals that what genuinely exists within Islam is a model of ecotheology that places theological doctrine as the core of the articulation of the cosmological hierarchy of nature and the relations among its beings. In other words, theocentrism is the more accurate term for the ecotheological picture offered by Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī even though within his account humanity occupies a position higher than nature by virtue of its accompanying status as *khalīfah*. To deny that Islam introduces and accommodates a view placing humanity at a higher stratum than nature on the basis of theological guidance is equivalent to deconstructing the primary texts themselves. The same phenomenon can be observed in the Gender and Islam discourse, where several feminist Muslim scholars have sought to offer alternative interpretations with a deconstructive character, aimed at eliminating the view accused of being "patriarchal" in Islam as explicitly displayed in certain Qur'ānic verses such as Q. al-Nisā' [4]:34, which speaks of *qiwāmah* and *nushūz*.[55]

The paradigm placing humanity at a higher level in the relational dynamic between humanity and nature is indeed inherent within Islam. However, it must be noted that this Islamic paradigmatic model so often labelled anthropocentrism is not a strong anthropocentrism that produces human beings who act arbitrarily toward nature.[56] Al-Qaraḍāwī's exposition clarifies this with remarkable comprehensiveness: Islam does not carry merely a narrative concerning ontological status, but also the consequences and ethical dimensions that humanity must fulfil when "destined" to occupy the central position. The ontological status of humanity as *khalīfah* endowed with two constituent elements of creation, *ṭīn* and *rūḥ* is not conferred for the purpose of honouring humanity *an sich* above other creatures, but is rather oriented as one of the trusts of its creation, encompassing *ʿibādah*, *khilāfah fī al-arḍ*, and *ʿimārah al-arḍ*.

Indeed, when elaborating this segment, al-Qaraḍāwī affirms that *ʿimārah al-arḍ* is the concrete expression of succession as *khalīfah fī al-arḍ* and simultaneously constitutes part of the assessment of its success in discharging the core of the trust of creation, namely *ʿibādah*. For al-Qaraḍāwī, none of these three elements can be attained if humanity disregards the rules, values, and ethics governing its interaction with nature. The absence of ethical awareness is an implication of the immaturity of a Muslim in internalizing the paradigmatic construction built by Islam through its five primary disciplines: *Uṣūl al-Dīn*; *Taṣawwuf*; *Fiqh*; *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*; *ʿUlūm al-Qur'ān wa al-Sunnah*. If one were to argue more provocatively, a reading of al-Qaraḍāwī's thought might even yield the conclusion that a human being who lacks the capacity and earnestness to carry out *ʿimārah al-arḍ* as part of the primordial consequence of its creation namely *ʿibādah* is not worthy of bearing the status of *khalīfah fī al-arḍ*.

[54] Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, Mafhūm al-Naṣṣ: Dirāsah fī 'Ulum al-Qur'ān (al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-'Arabī, 2014), 29–30.

[55] Hadia Mubarak, 'Women's Contemporary Readings of the Qur'ān', in The Routledge Companion to the Qur'ān, 1st edn, by George Archer et al. (Routledge, 2021), 321–29, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315885360-32; Aysha A. Hidayatullah, Feminist Edges of the Qur'ān (Oxford University Press, 2014), 16–17.

[56] Izzi Dien, The Environmental Dimensions of Islam; Hart, The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Ecology.

Based on the preceding elaborations, it is therefore not relevant to accuse Islam and its purportedly anthropocentric ecotheological paradigm of being the root cause of the ecological crisis facing modern humanity. Islam is not required to alter or even discard its ecological paradigm, which has been parochially deemed incapable of contributing positively to addressing the ecological crisis afflicting modern humanity. The absence of ethical sensitivity among Muslim communities in interacting with nature is not caused by Islamic teachings themselves, but rather results from an incomplete understanding and internalization of the construction of those teachings in a comprehensive manner. In this context, Seyyed Hossein Nasr's argument that the ecological crisis is an implication of the marginalization of religion by modernity becomes more relevant than the argument that blames religion for accommodating anthropocentrism as an inherent part of its doctrine.[57] A similar resonance, with a different emphasis, appears in the work of Anna M. Gade, who demonstrates how religious commitment can serve as a social basis for the environmental praxis of Muslim communities.[58]

When anthropocentrism is regarded as the root cause of the ecological crisis, the very worldview that identifies humanity as the problem is itself profoundly anthropocentric. The causal consideration of what humanity does and what consequences follow remains entirely within a framework that encompasses humanity. If the ontological imperative were to place humanity and nature on the same hierarchical plane, then equality of strata ought to be the primary reason behind humanity's ecological solidarity with nature. Yet the opposite tends to occur. Human beings with ecological sensitivity who appear to wish to dismantle anthropocentrism turn out to be increasingly anthropocentric themselves, as they almost invariably recognize human interests behind their concern. The evidence is straightforward: the nature they seek to defend is often defined in narrow terms nature understood within the spatiotemporal frame bounded by human existence.[59] As such, efforts to dismantle anthropocentrism frequently remain anchored in an anthropocentric framework the very paradox such critiques expose.[60]

Through his holistic reading of the Qur'ān and the ḥadīths, Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī regards the ontological hierarchy of humanity above nature not as a disease to be cured. What requires remedy is the crisis of modern humanity, which has lost its bearings in understanding its own nature and function as a human being as a consequence of an incomplete engagement with religion. His reflection reveals that it must indeed be acknowledged that positioning humanity at a higher level than nature is a paradigmatic idea borne by the Abrahamic religions, including Islam. Yet this cosmological model differs from what scholarship has charged namely that religion serves as a source of legitimation for human domination over nature. Religion in fact imposes strict prerequisites and consequences upon human beings who wish to bear an ontological status hierarchically superior to nature.

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[57] Nasr, Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man; Tarik M. Quadir, Traditional Islamic Environmentalism: The Vision of Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 1st edn (University Press of America, 2013).

[58] Anna M. Gade, Muslim Environmentalisms: Religious and Social Foundations (Columbia University Press, 2019), https://doi.org/10.7312/gade19104.

[59] William Grey, 'Anthropocentrism and Deep Ecology', Australasian Journal of Philosophy 71, no. 4 (1993): 464–66, https://doi.org/10.1080/00048409312345442.

[60] Hayward, 'Anthropocentrism: A Misunderstood Problem', 55–8.

The Islamic ecotheological paradigm, as elaborated by Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, carries an ethical-reflective vision that flows toward the practical realm in which human beings are capable of acting ethically toward nature. Since nature is a gift of God central to sustaining human life and simultaneously a sign of His power, the preservation of nature's existence becomes an inseparable part of preserving human existence. The distinctiveness of this position becomes visible only under pressure. In ordinary circumstances a theocentric ethic and an anthropocentric one recommend much the same conduct, since both counsel restraint, both reject wanton destruction, and both accommodate conservation and the regulation of extractive industry. The difference emerges where a genuine human economic interest collides with the integrity of a natural system, for it is there that a paradigm is obliged to declare what it ultimately values.

It is important to underscore that, at its foundations, al-Qaraḍāwī's position differs from Arne Naess' *deep ecology*.[61] Deep ecology grounds ecological solidarity in the intrinsic value of nature independent of human interests, whereas Islam grounds it in a theocentric framework in which the value of nature is intertwined with the trust of human creation. The point of convergence lies in their practical outcome self-restraint and an ethical attitude toward nature rather than in their ontological foundations. Norton's vocabulary would file the same position under *weak anthropocentrism*, and it must be acknowledged that a good deal of al-Qaraḍāwī's material invites that filing.[62] The *maqāṣid* architecture specifies every protected value as a human value, and the *fiqh* vocabulary of *maṣlaḥah* and *maḍarrah* measures harm by its effect upon human beings. An interpreter reading only these two lenses would arrive at Norton's conclusion in an Islamic idiom, and the theological language would then add nothing that the ethical calculus had not already supplied.

Two elements of the theological lens resist that filing. Before any hierarchy is conferred, every creature stands before God as a worshipper, so that the worth of nature rests upon its relation to God rather than upon its usefulness to humanity, and no recalculation of human need can revise it. Human standing within the hierarchy, moreover, is conferred upon the discharge of *ʿibādah*, *khilāfah*, and *ʿimārah*, so that whoever abandons *ʿimārah al-arḍ* forfeits the warrant for that standing. Weak anthropocentrism has nothing comparable, since its human evaluative standpoint is the fixed point from which all valuation begins rather than a trust that admits of revocation.

Al-Qaraḍāwī's ecotheology is therefore theocentric in its grounding and weakly anthropocentric in its application. The layering is not an inconsistency but a division of labour internal to Islamic scholarship, in which *ʿaqīdah* establishes what things are while *fiqh* determines what may be done with them. It follows that the ecological yield of the framework varies with the depth at which it is held. Held at the level of *fiqh* alone, it behaves as weak anthropocentrism; held together with its theological grounding, it generates limits that no recalculation of human interest can dissolve.

[61] Arne Naess, 'The Shallow and the Deep, Long-range Ecology Movement. A Summary', Inquiry 16, nos 1–4 (1973): 95–100, https://doi.org/10.1080/00201747308601682; George Sessions and Bill Devall, Deep Ecology: Living as If Nature Mattered (Gibbs Smith, 2001).

[62] Bryan G. Norton, 'Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism', in The Ethics of the Environment (Routledge, 2008).

This result requires positioning against a reading advanced from within Qur'ānic studies itself. Sarra Tlili likewise reads Qur'ānic cosmology theocentrically, yet denies that the hierarchy is scriptural at all, treating the modern use of *khalīfah* for all human beings as a late widening of a term that classical usage reserved for prophets and rulers.[63] The textual evidence does not decide between them, since the *taskhīr* and *istikhlāf* material admits both readings.[64] What the comparison does establish is that Islamic ecotheology contains at least two theocentrisms, divided not over the centrality of God but over the status of hierarchy which al-Qaraḍāwī retains while relocating its warrant from human excellence to divine conferral.

Drawing this discussion toward the Indonesian academic milieu, two thematic works centred on ecology have sought to portray the Islamic narrative through its primary sources. The *Tafsir Tematik: Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Ekologi* commissioned by the Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf al-Qur'ān (LPMQ) under the mandate of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia[65] and the work of Indonesia's foremost Qur'ānic exegete, Quraish Shihab, entitled *Islam & Lingkungan: Perspektif Al-Qur'ān Menyangkut Pemeliharaan Lingkungan*[66], can serve as representatives of the Indonesian Islamic intellectual dynamic that is increasingly confident in repudiating the charge that Islam and its anthropocentric-tinged teachings have become a source of the ecological crisis. Both present readings with the same nuance and spirit though with different articulations as the thought systematically elaborated by Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī in *Riʿāyah al-Bīʾah fī Sharīʿah al-Islām*.

4. Conclusion

The ecological crisis confronting the modern world is a manifestation of a paradigmatic crisis rooted in humanity's worldview toward nature. The Abrahamic religions are considered to have played a role in forming anthropocentrism a paradigm that places humanity one level above nature. Within the context of Islamic theology, the ecological paradigm that positions humanity at a hierarchically superior level to nature is indeed accommodated; however, that positioning is not intended as a legitimation for exploitative or destructive actions toward nature, which occupies a lower stratum. Through the thought of Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī in *Riʿāyah al-Bīʾah fī Sharīʿah al-Islām*, it becomes apparent that Islam frames this paradigm as a theological and ethical trust that positions humanity as *khalīfah* not for the purpose of domination, but to cultivate the earth (*ʿimārah al-arḍ*) while continuously preserving its sustainability (*riʿāyah al-bīʾah*) as an inseparable part of the continuity of human existence itself.

Al-Qaraḍāwī affirms that humanity is granted ontological distinction not to justify arbitrary conduct toward nature, but as the consequence of spiritual, social, and ecological responsibilities of transcendent dimension. This view is reinforced by the integration of five principal Islamic disciplines *Uṣūl al-Dīn*, *ʿIlm al-Sulūk*, *Fiqh*, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, and *ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān wa al-Sunnah* which demonstrate that the concept of *riʿāyah al-bīʾah* is not foreign to the Islamic tradition but is in fact inherent within its primary sources. The charge that Islamic theological

[63] Sarra Tlili, Animals in the Qur'an (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[64] Tlili, Animals in the Qur'an.

[65] Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf al-Qur'ān (LPMQ), Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Ekologi (Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama, 2025).

[66] M. Quraish Shihab, Islam & Lingkungan: Perspektif Al-Qur'ān Menyangkut Pemeliharaan Lingkungan (Lentera Hati, 2023).

cosmology constitutes the source of the ecological problem therefore fails, and Islam stands under no obligation to discard the paradigm it holds a conclusion the existing literature has already asserted often enough. What this article contributes is an account of why that defence works and of the precise point at which it ceases to work. Al-Qaraḍāwī's framework is theocentric in its grounding and weakly anthropocentric in its application, the two layers being held together by a hierarchy that is conferred rather than constitutive. Conferral is what separates this position from the paradigms with which it is most readily confused. Deep ecology grounds restraint in the intrinsic value of nature and dispenses with hierarchy altogether, whereas weak anthropocentrism retains a human evaluative standpoint that no misconduct toward nature can forfeit. Al-Qaraḍāwī retains the hierarchy and renders it revocable, and that combination has no equivalent in either paradigm. It distinguishes him equally from Sarra Tlili, whose theocentrism dissolves the hierarchy by historicising the very term which carries it, so that Islamic ecotheology proves to contain rival theocentrisms divided over the scriptural standing of hierarchy rather than over the centrality of God.

Three consequences follow for the field at large. The first is that the recurrent debate over whether Islam is or is not anthropocentric has been poorly posed from the beginning, since the answer differs according to analytical layer, and a framework may be theocentric in its ontology while operating anthropocentrically in its jurisprudence. The second is that the *maqāṣid* route into environmental ethics, now widely travelled within Islamic legal scholarship, purchases its practical traction at the cost of theological distinctiveness, inasmuch as an environmental *maqṣad* specified as a human good reproduces the structure of weak anthropocentrism whatever vocabulary may be draped over it; scholars taking that route would do better to acknowledge as much than to describe the result as theocentric. The third concerns the distance separating doctrine from reception, for al-Qaraḍāwī's framework delivers non-negotiable ecological limits only where its theological layer is held together with its legal one, and where that layer is absent the framework collapses into the very position it was constructed to refuse. Islamic theological anthropocentrism is therefore neither the root of the ecological problem nor, taken on its own, its solution; it is rather a structure whose ecological yield depends upon the depth at which it is held a more modest claim than the literature customarily advances, and a considerably more testable one.

Three limitations must finally be acknowledged. This article reads a single work by a single thinker, and al-Qaraḍāwī's stature within modern Sunni scholarship does not render him representative of it, so that the findings bear upon his particular construction rather than upon Islamic ecotheology as such. His account of the historical record, which credits *waqf*, *ḥimā*, legislation, and *ḥisbah* with having secured environmental care throughout Islamic history, has been reported here rather than tested, and testing it would demand the institutional history that a conceptual study cannot supply. Tlili's challenge to the scriptural standing of *istikhlāf* likewise deserves the sustained exegetical treatment it could not receive within these pages. Each of these gaps marks out the work that a reconstructive Islamic ecotheology, should the tradition prove to require one, would need to undertake.

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