

BRIDGING THE EXISTENTIAL GAP TOWARD AN ISLAMIC ECO-SPIRITUAL SYNTHESIS OF PHENOMENOLOGY AND DEEP ECOLOGY

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Abstract: *The ecological crisis is commonly described through technical vocabularies of emissions, land degradation, biodiversity loss, and conservation policy. This article argues that such a description is necessary but philosophically insufficient, because ecological breakdown also discloses an existential dislocation: the loss of dwelling, the erosion of ecological identity, and the desacralization of nature as a meaningful cosmos. Using a philosophical-hermeneutic method, the study analyzes selected texts in phenomenology, deep ecology, contemporary eco-anxiety research, and Islamic philosophical-spiritual thought. The article develops an integrated relational ontology that connects three levels of diagnosis: modern enframing turns nature into standing-reserve; anthropocentrism narrows moral community and ecological selfhood; and secular-immanent ethics often lacks a transcendent ground for restraint, responsibility, and reverence. Islamic eco-spirituality, especially the concepts of *āyāh*, *amānah*, *khilāfah*, *mizān*, *tazkiyah*, and the metaphysics of *tajallī* and *tashkīk al-wujūd*, is then proposed as a normative-metaphysical grammar for ecological recovery. The study also critically notes that Islamic concepts do not automatically produce ecological transformation without pedagogy, institutions, and social practice. By engaging in recent studies on climate emotion, ecological literacy, eco-pesantren, and religious environmental education, the article shows how metaphysical vision can be translated into communal formation. It concludes that ecological restoration requires more than policy correction. It requires existential conversion toward relational dwelling, moral humility, and spiritually grounded responsibility for the more-than-human community.*

Keywords: *Deep Ecology, Existential Dislocation, Islamic Eco-Spirituality, Phenomenology, Relational Ontology.*

Abstrak: Krisis ekologis sering dijelaskan melalui bahasa teknis tentang emisi, degradasi tanah, hilangnya keanekaragaman hayati, dan kebijakan konservasi. Artikel ini berargumen bahwa penjelasan tersebut penting tetapi belum memadai secara filosofis, sebab kerusakan ekologis

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juga menyingkap dislokasi eksistensial: hilangnya kemampuan manusia untuk menghuni dunia, melemahnya identitas ekologis, dan desakralisasi alam sebagai kosmos yang bermakna. Dengan metode filosofis-hermeneutik, kajian ini menganalisis teks-teks terpilih dalam fenomenologi, *deep ecology*, riset mutakhir tentang *eco-anxiety*, serta pemikiran filsafat-spiritual Islam. Artikel ini mengembangkan ontologi relasional terpadu yang menghubungkan tiga lapis diagnosis: *enframing* modern menjadikan alam sebagai *standing-reserve*; antroposentrisme menyempitkan komunitas moral dan diri ekologis; dan etika sekuler-imanen sering kekurangan dasar transenden bagi sikap menahan diri, tanggung jawab, dan penghormatan. Eco-spiritualitas Islam, khususnya konsep *āyāh*, *amānab*, *khilāfab*, *mizān*, *tazkiyah*, serta metafisika *tajallī* dan *tashkik al-wujūd*, diajukan sebagai tata bahasa normatif-metafisik bagi pemulihan ekologis. Kajian ini juga menegaskan secara kritis bahwa konsep Islam tidak otomatis melahirkan transformasi ekologis tanpa pendidikan, institusi, dan praktik sosial. Dengan melibatkan kajian mutakhir tentang emosi iklim, literasi ekologis, eco-pesantren, dan pendidikan lingkungan berbasis agama, artikel ini menunjukkan bagaimana visi metafisik dapat diterjemahkan menjadi pembentukan komunal. Artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa restorasi ekologis membutuhkan lebih dari koreksi kebijakan. Ia membutuhkan konversi eksistensial menuju cara menghuni dunia secara relasional, rendah hati secara moral, dan bertanggung jawab secara spiritual terhadap komunitas kehidupan nonmanusia.

Kata-kata Kunci: *Deep Ecology, Dislokasi Eksistensial, Eco-Spiritualitas Islam, Fenomenologi, Ontologi Relasional.*

Introduction

The ecological crisis is no longer adequately described as an external disturbance located only in forests, oceans, atmosphere, or policy institutions. It is also a crisis of human self-understanding. Climate anxiety, ecological grief, biodiversity loss, soil degradation, and the accelerating sense that ordinary futures have become fragile indicate that the crisis touches the symbolic and existential conditions through which human beings inhabit the world. Recent research on climate-related mental health shows that ecological disruption is increasingly experienced as fear, grief, uncertainty, anger, and moral disorientation, especially among younger generations and communities whose life-worlds are closely attached to local ecologies (Charlson et al. 2021, 2; Hickman et al. 2021, e863–e864; Lawrance et al. 2022, 444; Markkula et al. 2024, 1203–4). These findings do not merely add a psychological subtopic to environmental studies. They provide empirical signs of a deeper philosophical condition: modern humanity often experiences the damaged earth as the breakdown of its own horizon of meaning.

This article calls that condition existential dislocation. The term refers to a threefold rupture: first, the rupture of dwelling, in which the earth is no longer encountered as a shared home but as a technical field to be ordered; second, the rupture of identity, in which the self is imagined as separate from the ecological relations that sustain it; and third, the rupture of sacral perception, in which nature is no longer read as a meaningful order but reduced to neutral matter. This definition sharpens terms that often appear loosely in environmental humanities. Existential dislocation is not identical with psychological distress, although distress may manifest it. It is also not identical with environmental damage, although damage intensifies it. It names the loss of orientation that occurs when modern

ways of knowing, producing, and consuming detach human beings from the web of relations that make existence possible.

The point of attack in this article is therefore the inadequacy of technocratic paradigms in addressing eco-anxiety and ecological degradation. By the technocratic paradigm, this article means an approach that treats ecological problems primarily as matters of management, calculation, efficiency, and technological substitution. Such a paradigm is necessary for measuring emissions, regulating energy systems, and designing conservation strategies, but it is insufficient when it leaves intact the underlying mode of being that turns the world into a reservoir of use. Heidegger's critique of modern technology is relevant here because modern enframing reveals beings as *Bestand*, or standing-reserve, available for ordering and extraction (Heidegger 1977, 12–17). When this logic dominates, ecological restoration is reduced to optimizing the same instrumental reason that contributed to the crisis. The result is a paradox: society may seek technical repair while leaving untouched the existential and spiritual grammar of domination.

Several operational concepts guide the argument. Instrumental reason refers to rationality that evaluates beings mainly by their utility for a predetermined end. Normative anthropocentrism refers to the assumption that human interests alone possess intrinsic moral standing, while nonhuman beings count morally only by reference to human benefit. Calculative disclosure refers to a mode of revealing in which the world appears through measurement, prediction, and control rather than through dwelling, gratitude, or participation. The more-than-human world refers to the wider community of animals, plants, soil, water, atmosphere, and living systems with which human life is materially and meaningfully entangled. These definitions are needed because the article addresses readers across philosophy, religious studies, and environmental studies; its vocabulary must therefore be philosophically precise without becoming inaccessible.

The literature has already moved toward this broader diagnosis. Deep ecology rejects the reduction of nature to human utility and calls for an expanded ecological self (Naess 1973, 95–97; Naess 1989, 164–67). Phenomenology shows that human beings do not first stand over against the world as detached subjects; they are already situated within a lifeworld that gives experience its pre-theoretical orientation (Husserl 1970, 108; Heidegger 1962, 78–84). Contemporary studies on nature connectedness and relational values further indicate that ecological concern is not produced by information alone but by embodied, affective, and place-based relations (Artmann 2023, 3; Rios-Rodriguez et al. 2024, 1–3; Lengieza and Aviste 2025, 1–2; Christens, McCormick, and Wolf 2025, 2). At the same time, Islamic environmental thought provides a metaphysical vocabulary through which nature can be understood as *āyah*, *amānah*, and *mīzān*, not merely as a resource. Nasr argues that the ecological crisis is inseparable from the desacralization of nature, because once the cosmos is stripped of sacred meaning, ethical restraint becomes fragile (Nasr 1996, 3–5).

The gap addressed here lies in the insufficient integration of these conversations. Phenomenology can diagnose the loss of dwelling, deep ecology can criticize

anthropocentrism, and contemporary eco-anxiety research can show that ecological breakdown is lived as existential distress. Yet these approaches often remain within an immanent horizon; they can show relationality but do not always provide a normative-metaphysical ground for why relation should be treated as trust before the Transcendent. Islamic eco-spirituality, conversely, offers a powerful grammar of *amānah* and *khilāfab*, but it is sometimes presented normatively without adequate dialogue with modern ecological psychology, phenomenology, or secular environmental ethics. The novelty of this article is to construct an integrated relational ontology: a framework that connects ontological diagnosis, ethical reconstruction, and spiritual elaboration without collapsing their differences into an easy syncretism.

The study is guided by three questions. First, how can the ecological crisis be interpreted as existential dislocation through phenomenology and environmental philosophy? Second, how do anthropocentrism, ecological illiteracy, and technocratic reasons reproduce ecological damage and crises of identity? Third, how can Islamic eco-spirituality deepen ecological recovery by providing a normative-metaphysical foundation for relational dwelling? The article proceeds in five stages. It first clarifies the philosophical-hermeneutic method. It then defines the conceptual architecture of existential dislocation, ecological identity, and re-sacralization. Third, it analyzes eco-anxiety and lifeworld loss as signs of technocratic insufficiency. Fourth, it reconstructs the movement from deep ecology to integrated relational ontology. Finally, it elaborates Islamic eco-spirituality through *āyāh*, *amānah*, *khilāfab*, *mīzān*, *tazkiyah*, *tajallī*, and *tashkīk al-wujūd* while also testing the limits of this normative claim through critical engagement with social reality.

This study uses a philosophical-hermeneutic method combined with conceptual analysis and ideological critique. The object of analysis is not a population, field site, or statistical dataset, but a constellation of concepts, texts, and intellectual traditions. The primary conceptual objects are existential dislocation, ecological identity, re-sacralization, ecological selfhood, technocratic reason, and Islamic eco-spirituality. The textual corpus consists of classical and contemporary works in phenomenology, deep ecology, environmental ethics, climate-emotion research, ecological literacy, and Islamic philosophy. The method is hermeneutic because it interprets these texts in relation to a contemporary ecological problem; it is philosophical because it tests conceptual coherence, ontological assumptions, and normative implications.

The analysis proceeds through four traceable stages. The first stage is conceptual delimitation. Key terms are defined operationally and philosophically to avoid a purely rhetorical use of broad expressions such as existential crisis or sacred nature. The second stage is diagnostic comparison. Phenomenology, deep ecology, and eco-anxiety studies are compared not because they share the same epistemology, but because they converge functionally around the question of human separation from the world. This is a functional convergence rather than doctrinal fusion. Heidegger's account of enframing, Naess's critique of anthropocentrism, and

contemporary climate-emotion research begin from different intellectual premises, yet each identifies a rupture in the human relation to the world (Heidegger 1977, 12–17; Naess 1973, 95; Hickman et al. 2021, e863–e864).

The third stage is normative reconstruction. Here, the article asks what kind of ethical and spiritual grammar can move beyond diagnosis. Islamic eco-spirituality is not inserted as an ornamental supplement but examined as a normative-metaphysical horizon. The concepts of *āyāh*, *amānah*, *khilāfah*, *mīzān*, and *tazkiyah* are interpreted in relation to ecological responsibility, while Ibn ‘Arabī’s language of *tajallī* and Mullā Ṣadrā’s *tashkīk al-wujūd* are used to deepen the ontological claim that multiplicity is not disconnected fragmentation but graded participation in being (Chittick 1989, 16; Kamal 2013, 66). The fourth stage is a critical limitation. The article explicitly tests its own claim by asking whether religious concepts can remain merely ideal, whether Muslim societies have always embodied them, and what institutional forms are necessary if eco-spirituality is to become ecological practice.

Conceptual Architecture: Existential Dislocation, Ecological Identity, and Re-sacralization

The first result of the analysis is conceptual: ecological crisis becomes philosophically intelligible when interpreted as a dislocation of dwelling, identity, and sacral perception. Existential dislocation differs from ordinary environmental concerns because it concerns the horizon within which concern becomes meaningful. In Husserlian language, the lifeworld is the pre-scientific world of lived meanings that underlies theoretical abstraction (Husserl 1970, 108–10). When this lifeworld is overlaid by purely calculative systems, the human being increasingly encounters forests, rivers, atmosphere, and animals through abstraction: as carbon sinks, resource stocks, ecosystem services, or risk variables. These categories are useful, but they become reductive when they replace direct, moral, and contemplative relations.

Ecological identity names the self’s perceived membership in the wider community of life. Deep ecology argues that ethical action becomes more durable when the self expands beyond the isolated ego to include ecosystems, species, and places (Naess 1989, 164–68). Contemporary research on nature connectedness supports this point by showing that environmental behavior is shaped by the quality of felt relationship with nature, not by information alone (Brambilla et al. 2024, 1–3; Lengieza and Aviste 2025, 1–2; Vainio et al. 2025, 850–52). Ecological identity is therefore not a sentimental addition to environmental policy. It is the existential condition through which ecological responsibility becomes part of who one is rather than a rule imposed from outside.

Re-sacralization of nature, the third key concept, does not mean inventing sacredness where none existed. In Islamic terms, it means remembering that created beings are already signs, trusts, and participants in a divinely ordered *mīzān*. Nasr’s formulation is decisive: the modern environmental crisis is rooted in the loss of a

religious understanding of the cosmos, a loss that makes nature appear available for unlimited manipulation (Nasr 1996, 3–5). Re-sacralization, therefore, names an epistemic and ethical recovery: to see nature not as inert matter but as *āyāb*, as signs that call for knowledge, gratitude, restraint, and responsibility. The following table summarizes the framework developed in this article:

Table. Integrated Relational Ontology for Ecological Recovery.

Analytical Level	Modern Problem	Philosophical Resource	Islamic Spiritual Elaboration	Practical Direction
Ontological	Nature is disclosed as a standing reserve and separated from human selfhood.	Phenomenology of dwelling and deep ecology's ecological self.	<i>Āyāb</i> and <i>tajallī</i> : nature as meaningful disclosure, not inert object.	Recover relational perception through contemplative, embodied, and place-based ecological education.
Ethical	Anthropocentrism narrows moral community to human utility.	Ecocentric ethics and relational environmental values.	<i>Am ānāb</i> , <i>kbil āfāb</i> , and <i>mizān</i> : responsibility, stewardship, and balance.	Institutionalize restraint, intergenerational justice, and community-based ecological practice.
Spiritual-existential	Eco-anxiety and ecological grief reveal meaning-loss and alienation.	Existential analysis of anxiety, meaning, and self-transcendence.	<i>Tazkiyah</i> : purification of desire and restoration of harmony with divine signs.	Transform distress into hope, action, and disciplined ecological habits.

This architecture concerns fragmented frameworks. Phenomenology, deep ecology, systems-oriented ecological studies, and Islamic eco-spirituality are not treated as interchangeable. They perform different tasks. Phenomenology clarifies how the world is disclosed; deep ecology challenges the moral poverty of anthropocentrism; eco-anxiety research shows that ecological breakdown is experienced as a disturbance of meaning; Islamic philosophy and spirituality supply a transcendent grammar of trust and restraint. Their convergence is therefore functional and dialogical, not syncretic.

Eco-Anxiety, Lifeworld Loss, and the Failure of Technocratic Modernity

The second result is diagnostic: eco-anxiety should not be interpreted only as an individual psychological disorder. It is also a symptom of lifeworld loss. Studies of climate anxiety and eco-distress indicate that ecological threats generate fear, helplessness, anger, and grief because they unsettle assumptions about continuity,

safety, and intergenerational justice (Boehme et al. 2024, 670; Cosh et al. 2024, 833; Crandon et al. 2024, 94; Watson et al. 2025, 45–47). This does not mean that all anxiety is philosophically productive. Some anxiety can be paralyzed and may require clinical support. Yet the growth of eco-anxiety reveals that the ecological crisis is not external to human subjectivity; it enters the structure of hope, imagination, and moral agency.

This is where Heidegger's analysis becomes contemporary. Modern technology is not merely a collection of tools; it is a mode of revealing that orders the world as available stock (Heidegger 1977, 12–17). In the twentieth century, this logic operated through industrial extraction, dams, fossil fuels, and agricultural intensification. In the twenty-first century, it is intensified by the algorithmic economy, which treats both nature and attention as extractable data. Forests become carbon metrics, rivers become hydrological units, consumers become behavioral profiles, and landscapes become investment opportunities. The problem is not measurement itself; ecological science needs measurement. The problem is the absolutization of measurement, when calculability replaces reverence and efficiency displaces wisdom.

Eco-anxiety, therefore, exposes the inadequacy of technocratic repair. A person who fears ecological collapse is not simply asking for more data. Often, that person asks whether a livable world remains possible, whether institutions can be trusted, whether future generations have been betrayed, and whether modern societies know how to desire within limits. Lawrance and colleagues argue that climate change affects mental health and emotional well-being through multiple pathways, including direct exposure, anticipated loss, and social disruption (Lawrance et al. 2022, 443–48). Hickman and colleagues show that young people's climate anxiety is closely tied to feelings about governmental inaction and moral betrayal (Hickman et al. 2021, e867–e869). These findings function as empirical bridges to phenomenology: ecological distress becomes tangible evidence of dislocation in the lifeworld.

Frankl's notion of the existential vacuum helps explain why consumer society often responds poorly to this dislocation. When meaning weakens, desire seeks compensation through consumption, stimulation, and control (Frankl 1963, 105–8). Ecologically, this compensation deepens the crisis because consumerism transforms anxiety into acquisition rather than responsibility. Pihkala's narrative review similarly shows that eco-anxiety involves processes of threat perception, loss, guilt, and moral struggle rather than a simple pathological reaction (Pihkala 2022, 1–4). The Islamic concept of *tazkiyah* deepens this diagnosis. Ecological anxiety may be read not only as fear of environmental loss but also as spiritual yearning for restored harmony between desire, responsibility, and the *āyāh* of creation. In this sense, healing requires more than clinical coping; it requires purification of desire and reconstruction of relation.

This claim does not dismiss policy, technology, or environmental science. Renewable energy, biodiversity protection, and land restoration remain indispensable. The critique is directed at reductionism: the belief that technical

instruments can solve ecological crisis while the culture of unlimited extraction remains unchanged. If the crisis is partly produced by a modern subject who no longer knows how to dwell, then the answer must include an existential transformation of attention, desire, and moral imagination. Reviews of climate-emotion interventions, climate cafes, ecotherapy, and nature-based regulation suggest that social connection, emotional validation, and renewed contact with nature can help transform distress into agency (Pitt et al. 2024, 209; Jong et al. 2025, 1–3; Rios-Rodriguez et al. 2024, 3; Mulya et al. 2024, 1–4). These practices do not replace structural changes, but they show that ecological repair must also be existential and communal.

From Anthropocentrism to Integrated Relational Ontology

The third result is ethical and ontological: ecological crisis is reproduced by a narrowed moral imagination that treats humans as ontologically exceptional and morally detached from the more-than-human community. White's classic thesis located part of the crisis in religious and cultural narratives of human mastery over nature (White 1967, 1203–5). Whether or not one accepts all aspects of White's historical argument, the point remains that cultural imaginaries shape ecological behavior. Naess's deep ecology responded by challenging the shallow environmentalism that seeks resource management without transforming the human self-understanding that produces domination (Naess 1973, 95–97). For deep ecology, ecological wisdom involves self-realization, not in the egoistic sense, but as identification with wider life (Naess 1989, 164–68).

Recent studies on relational environmental values strengthen this position. Environmental action is more sustainable when people understand themselves as embedded in relations of care, reciprocity, and dependence (Artmann 2023, 1–3; Woods et al. 2024, 1–2; Lengieza and Aviste 2025, 1–2). This does not mean that humans and nonhumans are identical in all respects. Rather, it means that human distinctiveness should be interpreted as responsibility rather than entitlement. Ethical repair, therefore, requires ontological repair: the human being must be relocated from the center of domination to a node of accountability within the web of life.

The integrated relational ontology proposed here has three claims. First, being is relationally disclosed: human beings encounter themselves only through a world already populated by soil, water, air, plants, animals, ancestors, and future generations. Second, moral community is expandable: nonhuman beings are not merely instruments for human preferences, because their existence participates in the conditions of life and meaning. Third, ecological responsibility requires both immanent and transcendent grounding. Secular relational ethics can explain interdependence, but Islamic eco-spirituality frames interdependence as *amānah* before God, thereby strengthening the obligation of restraint beyond preference, utility, or social contract.

This framework also clarifies the role of ecological literacy. Ecological literacy is not simply knowledge about ecosystems; it is the capacity to perceive

interdependence, limits, feedback loops, and consequences. Recent studies show that environmental literacy is connected to climate-change awareness, green consumption, nursing education, mining communities, sustainable tourism, and curricular transformation (Incesu and Yas 2024, 67–70; Liu and Tobias 2024, 1–2; Amin et al. 2024, 1–4; Pouresmaeli et al. 2024, 1–3; Khuadthong et al. 2025, 1–3; Kazazoglu 2025, 1–3; Cevheroglu and Kilic 2025, 1–3). These studies support a pedagogical implication: ecological transformation requires the formation of perception and habit, not only the transmission of facts.

Ecological literacy, therefore, functions as the pedagogical expression of lifeworld recovery. If dislocation occurs when people no longer experience themselves as dwellers within ecological rhythms, then literacy must include direct contact, local ecological knowledge, ethical reflection, and spiritual discipline. The modern classroom can reproduce dislocation when it trains technical intelligence without cultivating ecological wisdom. Conversely, education can become a site of reconnection when it teaches students to read the world as relation, responsibility, and sign. This is why the article refuses to choose between environmental science and spiritual ecology. Science clarifies ecological processes; spirituality clarifies the reverence and restraint needed to inhabit those processes responsibly.

Islamic Eco-Spirituality as Normative-Metaphysical Ground

The fourth result concerns the distinctive contribution of Islamic eco-spirituality. In Islamic thought, the natural world is not a silent object but an ordered field of signs. The Qur'anic language of *āyāh* suggests that creation is readable: it discloses meaning, dependence, proportion, and divine creativity. The concepts of *amānah* and *khilāfah* then locate human beings within responsibility rather than mastery. *Khilāfah* is often misunderstood as authorization to dominate. In an eco-spiritual reading, it is a mandate to preserve *mīzān*, protect the conditions of life, and recognize that human agency is accountable before God. This is the normative-metaphysical supplement that secular environmental ethics often lacks: responsibility is not only horizontal, toward society and future generations, but also vertical, before the Transcendent.

Nasr's critique remains central because it identifies desacralization as an epistemic disorder. When the cosmos is treated as merely material and human beings as autonomous masters, nature loses its symbolic and metaphysical depth (Nasr 1996, 3–5). This does not imply hostility toward modern science. Nasr's point is that science becomes spiritually dangerous when severed from wisdom, hierarchy of value, and metaphysical humility. The ecological crisis then appears not merely as pollution but as a crisis of vision. Human beings no longer know how to see. Re-sacralization is therefore a recovery of perception: the world is to be read not only as a mechanism but as a manifestation, not only as a resource but as trust.

The tradition of *irfān* deepens this recovery. In Ibn 'Arabī's metaphysics, *tajallī* refers to divine self-disclosure: the cosmos is not divine, but it is the arena in which divine Names become manifest in differentiated forms. Chittick explains that the

universe manifests divine Names and can be understood through the language of unveiling (Chittick 1989, 16). Ecologically, this means that creatures are not mere objects before human projects. They are loci of meaning whose destruction diminishes the human capacity to know, contemplate, and respond. The point is not pantheism, but the refusal to treat creation as spiritually empty.

Mullā Ṣadrā's metaphysics gives another ontological resource. His doctrine of *aṣālat al-wujūd*, the primacy of being, and *tashkīk al-wujūd*, the gradation of being, reorient thought from fixed isolated essences to a dynamic hierarchy of existence. Kamal explains that beings share one reality while differing by intensity, perfection, and degree (Kamal 2013, 66–67). The analogy of light clarifies this for ecological ethics. Light may appear with different intensities, yet its gradations do not imply total separation. Similarly, human beings, animals, plants, and elements occupy different degrees of existence, but they are not unrelated islands. The destruction of nature is therefore not merely external damage; ontologically, it is a form of self-injury within the wider field of being (Kamal 2013, 108).

This metaphysical claim can be brought into dialogue with existentialism. Heidegger's *Geworfenheit*, or thrownness, describes the human being as already situated in a world not of its own making (Heidegger 1962, 174–79). In secular existentialism, thrownness can produce anxiety because existence lacks guaranteed meaning. Islam interprets situatedness differently. Human beings are not simply thrown into an indifferent universe; they are entrusted with *amānah* and called to act as *khalīfah*. This comparison strengthens the article's novelty. It shows that Islamic eco-spirituality does not merely repeat phenomenology in religious language; it transforms the experience of being-in-the-world into entrusted responsibility. Anxiety is not eliminated, but it is redirected toward accountability, *tazkiyah*, and moral action.

Here, *tazkiyah* becomes ecologically significant. If ecological destruction is intensified by unrestrained consumption, then environmental ethics must address desire. *Tazkiyah* purifies the self not by rejecting the world, but by disciplining the ego's claim to unlimited appropriation. The Qur'anic critique of excess, the principle of *mīzān*, and the ethic of *amānah* together form a spiritual anthropology of limits. Such an anthropology is urgently needed in consumer societies where identity is often formed through acquisition. Eco-anxiety, in this light, may be a spiritual sign: a grief over broken harmony and a call to reorient desire toward gratitude, sufficiency, and care.

Islamic concepts do not automatically produce ecological behavior. Muslim societies, like all societies, participate in consumerism, extractive development, waste, and policy contradiction. The presence of the concepts of *khalīfah* and *amānah* in discourse does not guarantee ecological transformation. Without education, institutional design, public ethics, and economic restraint, these concepts may remain ceremonial. Therefore, Islamic eco-spirituality should be understood as a normative-metaphysical ground that requires pedagogical and institutional mediation. Its strength lies not in claiming that Muslim societies have solved the ecological crisis, but in providing conceptual resources through which

Muslim communities can criticize their own failures and reconstruct practice.

Critical Limits and Practical Pathways: From Re-Sacralization to Communal Practice

A strong philosophical argument must test its own assumptions. The first limitation of re-sacralization discourse is the danger of romanticism. One may speak eloquently about sacred nature while leaving untouched political economy, class inequality, weak environmental governance, and patterns of consumption. A second limitation is moral abstraction. Terms such as *amānah* and *khilāfah* can become general slogans unless translated into institutions, curricula, rituals, and accountable practices. A third limitation is plural context. Ecological ethics must be communicable beyond Muslim communities, especially in societies where environmental problems require cooperation across religious and secular actors.

These limitations do not invalidate Islamic eco-spirituality. They clarify the conditions of effectiveness. Recent scholarship on religion, education, and ecological practice shows that spiritual values become transformative when they are embodied in pedagogy, community life, and institutional culture. Studies of Islamic schools, eco-pesantren, religious education, eco-ethics in higher education, and Islamic principles in green development suggest that ecological responsibility is mediated through hope, ritual, curriculum, local practice, and communal habits (BR 2024, 1–4; Aldrin 2024, 191–94; Mulya and Salvi 2024, 1437–40; Shahida 2024, 233–37; Agusalm and Karim 2024, 150; Zakari and Orole 2025, 5). Karagiannis’s study of Shia environmentalism likewise indicates that religious traditions can support environmental activism when theological resources are connected to social movements and public discourse (Karagiannis 2025, 50–54).

Eco-pesantren provides an important illustration. Its significance does not lie in proving that Islamic institutions are automatically ecological. Rather, it shows that re-sacralization can become practical when religious learning is connected to land, food, waste, water, and everyday discipline. Mulya and Salvi’s case study of an Islamic eco-pesantren shows how environmental learning can be woven into material practices and religious formation rather than added as an external theme (Mulya and Salvi 2024, 1437–45). This is precisely what the present article means by existential transformation: ecological ethics becomes a habit of dwelling, not only a concept in discourse.

The same point can be extended to contemporary Muslim climate and environmental initiatives. Their promise lies in translating personal moral renewal into ecological commitments such as reduced waste, ethical consumption, urban gardening, care for animals, and public environmental campaigns. Their risk lies in individualism and lifestyle branding if structural critique disappears. Thus, such initiatives become philosophically serious only when hijrah is understood not as aesthetic identity but as *tazkiyah* of desire and reconstruction of social responsibility. It must move from personal piety to ecological citizenship.

A second practical pathway is ecological literacy with spiritual depth. Firinci Orman’s study of youth eco-literacy emphasizes that lived experience can

reveal the hidden social and ecological burdens behind consumption (Orman 2024, 363–66). Khuadthong and colleagues show that ecological literacy, green mindfulness, and social contingency thinking shape sustainable behavior among Gen Z hospitality students (Khuadthong et al. 2025, 1–3). These studies reinforce the need for education that connects knowledge, affect, and responsibility. Within Islamic education, ecological literacy can be framed as learning to read *āyāh*: understanding carbon, water, soil, and biodiversity not only as scientific objects but as signs of interdependence and trust.

A third pathway concerns emotional and communal repair. Climate emotions are often treated as obstacles to rational action, but emerging studies suggest that emotions can become catalysts for engagement when processed collectively (Qiu and Qiu 2024, 3; Jong et al. 2025, 1–3). For Islamic communities, this means that khutbah, pesantren, study circles, and campus programs can become spaces for naming ecological grief, cultivating hope, and linking worship to care for creation. Such practices should avoid replacing policy with piety. Rather, they can motivate citizens to support policy, change institutions, and hold power accountable.

The integrated relational ontology developed in this article, therefore, produces a layered pathway of recovery. Ontologically, humans must relearn dwelling and reject the illusion of separation. Ethically, they must expand moral responsibility to the more-than-human community. Spiritually, they must recover the world as *āyāh* and *amānah*. Pedagogically, they must build ecological literacy through experience, not abstraction alone. Institutionally, they must translate values into governance, curriculum, economic restraint, and public accountability. In this layered approach, re-sacralization becomes neither a nostalgic slogan nor a purely private spirituality; it becomes a disciplined transformation of perception, desire, and communal practice.

Dialogical Tension and Scope of the Framework

The framework proposed here must also be placed in dialogue with alternative environmental perspectives. A purely policy-oriented view may object that existential and spiritual language distracts from urgent regulatory action. This objection is important because ecological degradation is indeed shaped by laws, infrastructure, corporate behavior, subsidies, and enforcement. The present article does not deny that material and institutional mechanisms are decisive. Its claim is more specific: policy instruments operate within moral imaginaries. A society that still defines prosperity through unlimited consumption will continually pressure policy to accommodate extraction. Conversely, a society that cultivates restraint, gratitude, and responsibility can create stronger political support for ecological limits. Philosophical and spiritual analysis, therefore, does not compete with policy; it clarifies the cultural and existential conditions under which policy can become durable.

A second alternative perspective comes from secular environmental ethics. One might argue that ecological responsibility can be grounded in relational values, rights of nature, intergenerational justice, or care ethics without appeal to

transcendence. This article accepts that secular ethics offers indispensable resources. Relational values research, for example, shows that people protect nature not only because it is useful but because it is bound to identity, care, place, and collective flourishing (Artmann 2023, 1–3; Lengieza and Aviste 2025, 1–2). The Islamic contribution advanced here is not a replacement of secular ethics but a deepening of normative motivation for Muslim contexts. By framing nature as *āyāh* and *amānah*, Islamic eco-spirituality binds ecological responsibility to worship, self-purification, and accountability before God. This adds a vertical dimension to horizontal responsibility.

A third tension concerns the relation between metaphysics and plural public life. Re-sacralization can be misunderstood as the imposition of a particular religious vocabulary on all citizens. The framework should not be used in that way. Its public significance lies in showing how Muslim intellectual and educational traditions can contribute to shared ecological goods while remaining open to dialogue with other religious and secular perspectives. Terms such as *amānah*, *mizān*, and *tazkiyah* can motivate Muslim communities internally, while their ethical content, namely responsibility, balance, restraint, and care, can enter broader civic discourse. In plural societies, ecological cooperation does not require identical metaphysical foundations. It requires overlapping commitments capable of resisting domination and sustaining the conditions of life.

The framework also has implications for Islamic higher education and pesantren-based ecological formation. If ecological crisis is existential dislocation, then universities and pesantren cannot treat environmental education as an elective topic added to an otherwise unchanged curriculum. Philosophy, *tafsīr*, *kalām*, *tasawwuf*, ethics, and social sciences need to be placed in conversation with climate science, biodiversity studies, political economy, and community-based environmental practice. Such integration would make ecological literacy both cognitive and spiritual: students would learn how ecosystems function, how modern extraction is justified, how desire is disciplined, and how worship is related to care for creation. This is the concrete pedagogical translation of integrated relational ontology.

Finally, this article's scope remains theoretical. It does not claim to measure the ecological impact of eco-pesantren, Muslim climate initiatives, or Islamic environmental education. Rather, it uses these examples to show that the transition from metaphysical claim to social practice is possible and worthy of further empirical investigation. Future studies should examine how Islamic ecological concepts are taught, which practices actually change behavior, how communities negotiate economic pressures, and how spiritual formation interacts with public policy. Such research would test the practical durability of the philosophical framework developed here and prevent Islamic eco-spirituality from remaining only a discourse of aspiration.

Conclusion

This article argued that the ecological crisis should be read as existential dislocation. The crisis is not only a material deterioration of ecosystems but also a rupture in dwelling, identity, and sacral perception. Modern technocratic reasons can measure damage and design important interventions, but they cannot by themselves answer the deeper question of how human beings should inhabit a world that is not merely an object of use. Eco-anxiety and ecological grief demonstrate that ecological breakdown is already lived as a disturbance of meaning, belonging, and moral trust. These experiences confirm the philosophical claim that the damaged earth also damages the human horizon of existence.

The analysis has also shown that ecological repair requires an integrated relational ontology. Phenomenology clarifies the loss of the lifeworld and the need to recover dwelling. Deep ecology challenges anthropocentric selfhood and expands ecological identity. Contemporary research on ecological literacy and nature connectedness demonstrates that durable transformation depends on perception, affect, habit, and embodied relationship. Islamic eco-spirituality then provides a normative-metaphysical foundation through *āyāh*, *amānah*, *kbilāfah*, *mīzān*, *tazkiyah*, *tajallī*, and *tashkīk al-wujūd*. These concepts ground ecological responsibility not only in interdependence but also in accountability before the Transcendent.

The article's contribution lies in refusing both reductionism and romanticism. It rejects reductionism by showing that technical repair without existential transformation remains insufficient. It rejects romanticism by acknowledging that Islamic concepts do not automatically transform society unless mediated through education, institutions, policy, and communal practice. Eco-pesantren, religious ecological education, and practice-based forms of environmental engagement illustrate how re-sacralization can move from metaphysical vision to concrete habit. Future research should examine how Islamic eco-spiritual concepts are institutionalized in pesantren, universities, mosques, and public policy, and how they can enter dialogue with secular environmental ethics and interreligious ecological movements. Ecological restoration, in the strongest sense, is therefore not merely the recovery of damaged land; it is the recovery of human beings as responsible dwellers within a sacred and interdependent community of life.

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