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Green Sufism Argument as Environmental Ethics (Philosophical Analysis)

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Abstract

*This study focuses on the Sufi thoughts in responding to the ecological crisis faced by humanity. Their responses are reflected on primary texts such as *Fusus al-Hikam* and *Futubat al-Makkiyyah* by Ibn Arabi, as well as *Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* by Hossein Nasr. Secondary texts include the thoughts of scholars discussing similar themes. This research employs qualitative analysis with a hermeneutic approach to interpret these texts in the context of the ecological crisis. The findings reveal that Sufi philosophy, through the theories of microcosm and macrocosm, emanation, and illumination, offers a new profound paradigm for understanding the relationship between humans and nature. This philosophy emphasizes the importance of spiritual and cosmic harmony in addressing the ecological crisis. This study contributes to scientific knowledge by integrating Sufi philosophy and ecological studies, providing a new framework to foster ecological awareness based on spirituality. These findings are relevant to the development of environmental studies grounded in spiritual and cultural values.*

Keywords: Green Sufism, Ethics, Behaviour, Tajalli, Emanation, Illumination

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INTRODUCTION

Sufism studies have recently expanded to overcome environmental issues, especially natural preservation and protection, becoming the most widespread and powerful revolutionary movement in decades (Irawan & Nasution, 2020). Several extraordinary studies have resulted from this spiritual ecology movement (Ahmad, 2019; Rozi, 2019). This movement encourages the effort to develop Sufism studies (Irawan et al., 2021). The

development of Sufism studies based on the environment should be supported and encouraged. Environmental issues, such as climate change, global warming, and ecological crises have become common enemies threatening humanity (Irawan, 2016; Foltz, 2020).

Although the development of the Sufism study based on environmental protection issues has been carried out, there are no implications for curriculum changes and expansions in Sufism studies in Indonesian Islamic educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools, UIN/IAIN/STAIN. The major themes of Sufism have not changed, and discussions about *ẓuhūd* (asceticism) still dominate them, *ahwāl*, *dzikir*, *tarekat*, and others that do not focus on an environmental care and protection (Abdurahman, 2018). Islamic Educational Institutions are committed to an interdisciplinary approach with the integration-interconnection jargon. It appreciates the efforts to expand the study of environmental-oriented Sufism.

In addition, Sufism studies based on environmentally conscious tend to emphasize two aspects, namely Sufi doctrines and moral aspects (Rozi, 2019). The philosophical aspect has not been given much attention in these two tendencies. At the same time, philosophical problems are an inseparable part of science development.

The research about Sufism and the environment only elaborated on the Sufistic doctrines that motivate students to care about the environment. However, it denied a philosophical foundation that deserves further attention and development.

This research is intended to complement the shortcomings of existing studies by mapping the philosophical aspects. It can also strengthen the concept of green Sufism by exploring ontological, epistemological, and axiological aspects and later be validated into environmental ethics.

This research starts with the argument that the expansion of Sufism studies on environmental issues must be strengthened with a philosophical foundation. The philosophical values used to strengthen every effort to develop science, including environmental-oriented Sufism. It will certainly protect science from disappearing gradually.

This research focused on library research that was descriptive, analytic, and based on text studies. This research uses a hermeneutic approach—the text used primary and

secondary text. The primary texts used in this research are the works of Ibn 'Arabs such as *Fusus al-Hikam* (Takeshita, 1983), *Futubat al-Makijyah*, and the work of Hossein Nasr entitled *Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*. The secondary used texts are the thoughts of scientists who propose the same themes as this research.

This article helps to develop Sufism studies and environmental conservation efforts. It offers a new direction of contemporary Sufism teaching and learning that all Islamic educational institutions adoptable.

The used relevant theme for literature reviews in this study is intended to avoid repeating ideas about the themes, obtaining reading methods and analytical tools, and the similarity of writing objects, especially the object related to environmental ethics development. It becomes an effort to find gaps that another researcher has not discussed. Some of them are briefly described as follows:

The research by Bambang Irawan is entitled "Environmental Protection from The Perspectives of Indonesian Muslim Environmentalists, United Kingdom, and Sufi" (Irawan, 2016). Bambang Irawan explores some environmental researchers' perspectives, such as Fachruddin Mangunjaya from Indonesia, Hossein Nasr as a Sufi representative, and Fazlun Khalid from England. This research explores their published works on preserving and protecting nature without adopting a philosophical foundation.

The book was written by Vaughan-Lee, (Hanh et al., 2013) in his book *Spiritual Ecology: The Cry of the Earth, A Spiritual Response to our Present Ecological Crisis, A Collection of Essays*, USA, California; The Golden Sufi Center. This book triggers the emergence of the "Spiritual Ecological Movement," which recognizes the need for a spiritual response to our current ecological crisis. Vaughan tries to gather the ideas from Buddhism, Sufism, Christianity, and Native America, as well as the scientific field such as physics, deep psychology, and other environmental disciplines. He invites them to reassess our fundamental attitudes and beliefs about the earth and revive our spirituality and responsibility to this planet.

The research by Ahmed Abdel Meguid entitled "The Hermeneutics of Religious Imagination and Human Nature in Kant & Ibn al-'Arabī" (Abdel Meguid, n.d.). This research examines and compares the dimensions of divine thought between Immanuel

Kant and Ibn Arabi. This research uses a hermeneutic approach to analyze Immanuel Kant and Ibn Arab's thoughts. This research concludes that Immanuel Kant focuses more on the moral dimension in philosophy, while Ibn Arab places his idea of a mystical view of man in divinity.

The research by Mukhtar Hussain Ali entitled "Qaysaris Muqaddima to His Sharh Fusus al-hikam: A Translation of the First Five Chapters Together with a Commentary on Some of Their Themes." This research analyzes the *syarah fusus al hikam* written by Dawd Qaisyari. This study focuses on the *muqaddimah* related to the doctrine of *wahdah* al-Manifestation, the degree of God's presence, and the nature of Muhammad. This research concludes that Qasyari developed an ontology of Ibn Arabi's metaphysical principles by dictating each subject in the *muqaddimah fusus al-hikam* based on the teachings of his teachers, namely: Sayyid Jalaluddin Astiyani, Ayatullah Jawadi Amuli, and Syeih al-Akram al Majidi. That mystical knowledge is based not only on experience but also on acquiring ratio and transmission. There is a common thread between Mukhtar Hussain's research and the researcher's study related to the metaphysical doctrine of Ibn Arabi, even though this research does not discuss Sufi cosmology and environmental ethics.

The research is written by Al-Samani (2017) entitled "An Analytic Philosophical Approach Toward Ibn 'Arabi's Conception of Ultimate Reality." The research object is the Supreme Reality in the concept of Ibn 'Arabi. The researcher finds inconsistencies in the concept of Ibn 'Arabi, who then proposes three points, namely about the Supreme Reality, the second is about Reality of Nature, and the third is related to the relationship between God and Nature. The researcher interprets the Ultimate Reality on three basic concepts: the Doctrine of the Oneness of Being, the Ultimate Reality as Essence, and the Ultimate Reality as God using the Philosophical-Analysis approach. In this study, there was no description of the cosmological concept of Ibn 'Arabi related to cosmology and environmental ethics. The similarity of this research with the researcher's study is the description concept of the Ultimate Reality as the source of all existence.

The research was written by Kars (2009), "The world is imagination: a phenomenological approach to Ibn Al-Arabi's Ontology and Hermeneutics." This study uses the phenomenological hermeneutical method of Heidegger, Gadamer, and Merleau- ponty to explore Ibn 'Arabi's ontological review of barzakh to compare Ibn 'Arabi's

theology and hermeneutics with those three figures. This study explains that the world is an image related to the structure of the text and requires an interpretation. It is applied that the world can be read differently in each manifestation of temporal existence. This research is not related to matters related to cosmology.

Further research was conducted by Hany Talaat Ahmed Ibrahim "Ibn 'Arabi's Metaphysics of Love: A Textual Study of Chapter 178 of al-Futuh al-Makkiyyah." This research analyses Ibn 'Arabi's thoughts in Futuh al-Makkiyyah" in chapter 178. This research explores the doctrine of Ibn 'Arabi's ontology and focuses on the theme of love and its metaphysical articulation. It refers to the development of etymology and theology of the different themes of love from the texts of the Qur'an, Sunnah, and early Sufism (Rosa, 2022). This study also analyzes cosmology, ontology, and psychology by referring to the development of the theory of love in the Sufi tradition before Ibn 'Arabi. This research concluded that human love for God is due to a quality of soul caused by the existence of God.

The research was written by Rahmi Meldayati (Meldayati, 2016) "Psycho-Ecology Perspective of Ibn 'Arabi." This study examines the environment from the Ibn 'Arabi perspective. It also used a hermeneutic approach to the text of the *tajalli* conception. This study concludes that Ibn 'Arabi's thoughts can be used as a basis for environmental sustainability philosophy. The epistemological construction of Ibn 'Arabi's knowledge combines a rational basis and a transcendental spiritual base that can overcome the environmental crises problem. Then, it can trigger the awareness of spirituality in human behavior towards nature, which impacts natural sustainability. This study is written very simply, and it does not quote the concept of *tajalli* from the work of Ibn 'Arabi directly. The difference between this research and the researcher's study is that it does not explain the discussion of green Sufism and the development of environmental ethics.

Moreover, the book of William C. Chittick's work is entitled "God's Self-Revelation" (Chittick, 2015). This book describes the principles of Ibn 'Arabi's cosmological teachings, which refer to the book of Futuh al-Makkiyyah by presenting the chapters about God and the cosmos, the order of nature, and the structure of the microcosm. This book is a secondary reference in the researcher's book. In addition, there is also a book by William C. Chittick entitled "Science of the Cosmos Science of the Soul." This book explains the

ontological relationship between God and the cosmos so that nature is no longer an object in an ontological, spiritual and moral vacuum.

Furthermore, the book "Deciphering the Signs of God a Phenomenological Approach to Islam" by Annemarie Schimmel (Eaton, 1996) became the researcher's reference. This book tries to reveal the signs of God in the universe. Schimmel used Friedrich Heiler's phenomenological approach. This book examines all the external phenomena of the cosmos and describes the sacred aspects through various phenomena.

Next, the book "Sufism and Taoism" by Toshihiko Izutsu (Izutsu, 2016) shows a comparative study between Ibn 'Arabi and Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu through a methodological approach to semantic analysis of key terms associated with the three figures. This work's specialty lies in the depth of its interpretation of key terms and their relation to one another.

Then there is Henry Corbin (Corbin, 2014), in his book "Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi," who revealed an in-depth study of the mystical parables and spiritual symbolism of Ibn 'Arabi and the interpretation of Kautsar Azhari Noer. Although it used a phenomenological approach, Corbin is too involved in Ibn 'Arabi's mystical thought. Therefore, the conclusion is that what emerges is subjectivity. He is no longer a neutral researcher.

It is almost in line with Shelley Trebesch (Trebesch, 2013) in her article entitled: Ecology of the learning environment: Creating the context for spiritual formation. This article discusses the contribution of neuroscience that drives the formation of spiritual and transformative learning for environmental protection that is applied to educators, leaders, and students. The research does not explain Green Sufism's problem from the perspective of Sufism and Philosophy.

Likewise, Anies Rohidayah's research (Rohidayah, 2018) entitled Eco-Sufism in Ahmad Tohari's Selected Literary Works. She explores ecological themes in Tohari's works such as; At the Foothills of Cibalak Hill, The Dancer (a trilogy consisting of Notes to Momma, Shooting Stars at Dawn, and Rainbow Arc), Project People, and Karyamin's Smile through an Eco-Sufism perspective. Through Sufism spirituality, the harmonious life

between humanity, God, and nature can be restored. This research does not mention the thoughts of Ibn Arabi and Hossein Nasr.

The research was written by Suwito (2011) that examines the Eco-Sufism Studies on Environmental Conservation Efforts in the Giri Science Mujahadah Jama'ah and Aoliya' Jogjakarta Jama'ah, Dissertation at Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta, 2010. The environmental ethics of the Sufi congregation of Ilmu Giri and the congregation of Aolia and their implementation are explored and used as entry points for this study. Suwito found a dynamic process for self-safety and the environment in eco-Sufism. This study also does not adopt the Sufi doctrines of Ibn Arabi and Hossein Nasr.

Throughout the literature review and concept maps of the literature review above, the author has not found a study that explicitly explains the development of environmental ethics from an ethical-philosophical point of view.

DISCUSSION

1. Green Sufism: Toward the development of an Environmental Ethic

Sufism is the teachings of how a person is close to his God. The environment as God's creation is considered sacred (Bruinessen, 2003). In other words, human behavior towards the natural environment manifests one's closeness to God (Nurani, 2017). Thus, protecting nature and preserving the environment is the same as preserving and maintaining life in nature. Then, it is obligatory for anyone, such as the obligation of Muslims, to establish prayers, pay zakat, fast and make the pilgrimage.

Green Sufism is a concept that the researcher used. It is inspired by previously existing terms such as green faith (Glaab & Fuchs, 2018), green religion (Douglas, 2008), spiritual ecology (Sponsel, 2012), eco-theology (Pihkala, 2016), eco-Sufism (Rozi, 2019), *ecosophy* (Naess, 1989) and others. This paradigm wants to restore the sacredness of the earth and consider it an organic part of God.

The green Sufism study is based on understanding the sanctity of nature and the meaning of the presence and purpose of creating the universe for humans. A heart filled with spiritual vibrations will strengthen the divine qualities in the soul to always be wise to God, humans, and nature. Further, the recent disasters are worsening, signs of the

extinction of wisdom towards God, humans, and the universe. Then, all three of which are the epicenter of the ecosystem.

The connection between Sufism with the universe is not something new. The Sufis have doctrines about the sanctity of nature. Nature is a macrocosm, and man is a microcosm. The study of Sufism and the environment was pioneered by many Islamic scientists such as Ibn Arabi (Irawan et al., 2021), Ikhwanussyofa, Rumi (Hokmabadi, 2011), Hazrat Inayat Khan (Khan, 2010), Hossein Nasr, (Nasr, 1990) Llewellyn Vaughan Lee (Vaughan-Lee & Hart, 2017). Their works about the nature of the universe and how to respect and harmonize with nature are well-known.

Besides practicing and teaching about the purity of heart, the Sufis also have concepts related to nature or the environment. Nature as a mirror of its Creator (Allah) is an idea that emerged from the Sufis. The life of the Sufis is very close to the environment. It is shown from Sufi stories that they do not want to hurt (uproot) even a single blade of grass.

In the Sufi tradition, the relationship between God and nature is very close. Ibn 'Arab, for example, mentions that nature is the *tajalli* (manifestation) of God. As His manifestation, the cosmos is the actualized appearance of God. It means that the glorification of nature is not an attitude of kufr or shirk but a manifestation of the tawhid attitude. This view seems pantheistic, but apart from the controversy regarding its error among Islamic intellectuals, this pantheistic understanding contributes to environmental wisdom. Pantheism is used as an ethical foothold to emphasize the imperatives to protect nature as a manifestation of God.

The study of green Sufism is an effort to develop environmental Sufism and formulate it into more systematic-philosophical frameworks. The development of environmental Sufism can become an important choice in the midst of systematic ecological crises by human greed and careless use of technology. A change in human behavior and perspective on nature is needed to overcome the ecological problem. In other words, a new understanding of the relationship between humans and their natural environment and the knowledge that can underlie human behavior towards nature.

Green Sufism is universal in the Sufism field because it contains the principles of harmony and the common interest of humanity in protecting and caring for the earth. Suppose it is compared to conventional Sufism doctrines, which express truth claims and are prone to exclusivity or conflicts between religious adherents. In that case, green Sufism is indiscriminate and draws all of humanity into a large family that lives in the same boat.

Green Sufism is expected to become a religious spirit responding to the environmental crisis. Green Sufism includes spiritual dimensions, beliefs, worldviews, ethics, and morality. Combining them can determine a more comprehensive basic human understanding of how he should place himself in this universe.

2. The Philosophical Foundation of The Green Sufism Concept

Several ethical-philosophical arguments form the basis of Islamic environmental ethics as follows;

2.1. Microcosmos and Macrocosmos Theory

Ibn Arabi considers nature as something that lives, hears, and sees, which is created by His love (Corbin, 2014), will impact how humans treat and are responsible for something that lives. In the end, nature will return to being a comfortable place to realize my love for God. Ibn Arabi's view can explain how humans should behave towards nature and their world (Takeshita, 1983). This theory says that every creature in this world, even inanimate objects, has "awareness" of its origins, its creator, even they actively make dhikr to God (although in a language that humans cannot understand). This view is different from the mechanistic-deterministic secular perspective, which states that the universe is like a giant machine. Jalaluddin Rumi also emphasized that nature has a mind, soul, and intelligence. If nature did not have a soul and mind, however, nature might be able to work hand in hand, lovingly filling each other, giving and protecting each other. When rain falls from the sky, the earth accommodates it can be described as a couple (Rumi, 1994).

Tajalli's theory. This theory says that this nature is nothing but the manifestations (*tajalliyat*) of Allah, or rather the manifestations of Allah's attributes, names, and *af'āl*. God manifestation. It can be said that destroying nature is the same as destroying life and destroying the means of *ma'rifah*. In other words, the concept of *tajalli* says that the existence of the surrounding nature is a "brother" that must be nurtured and preserved. It

is because of the source of life and knowledge. It is the theory that humans treat nature as sacred. The process gave birth to the understanding that seeing nature sees God because nature is God's creation. According to Ibn 'Arabi, the universe and its contents are God's perfect theophany and manifestation (*tajalli*). The concept of *tajalli* is the main foundation of the whole cosmological thought of Ibn 'Arabi. According to him, humans are nothing but a microcosm, and nature is a macrocosm. The universe is His theophany, so our whole understanding refers to the one "origin" of all things, namely, He is the creator. This explanation comes from the hadith Qudsi: "I created the universe to reveal myself sometimes through my Lutf nature, and other times with my Qahr nature." Indeed, al-Haqq is a mirror of the cosmos. They do not see the mirror of their form in a tiered form because He (Man) is the mirror of *tajalli* al-Haqq with the cosmos with the appearance of His names and attributes. God's purpose in creating the cosmos was to see Himself and imagine Himself. He is a hidden treasure (Kanz makhfi) that humans can only know through the cosmos (Ali, 2016).

2.2. Emanation theory

The implication of God's obedience to the universe is to respect nature and treat it not only as a material object but as a living entity that hears, knows, will have power, and speaks. The concept of God's emanation provides an explanation that God is present, as well as transcendent over the universe. The universe is present as a mirror where God sees Himself and the manifestation of His love. Therefore, all life aspects of this universe must be directed to realize the whole universe's harmony and happiness. Equality among all creatures in this universe encourages humans to love and take care of other creatures in this universe.

2.3. Illumination Theory

In the concept of a Sufi Suhrawardi Al-Maqtul, the universe is alive. His philosophy of illumination explains that all creatures, including the universe, are manifestations of God as the supreme light. Suhrawardi has built a solid foundation that the universe is alive and sacred (Obaidullah, 2015).

The ethical-philosophical arguments above explain the concept of green Sufism that has obtained the basis for its ontological, epistemological, and axiological arguments.

There is an existential unity between God, man, and nature, with God as pure existence. In contrast, man and nature as His manifestations are plural and hierarchical depending on their level of closeness to God. Thus nature has sacred rights that humans must respect and glorify even though humans have primacy over nature. All entities (not only humans) will return to Him (God as the goal of all things) as each entity originates from Him. Therefore, the Sufis deserve the title of true guardians of the natural environment because they place great emphasis on the issue of respecting and preserving nature.

The works of the Sufis on nature can be theological support for environmental preservation, especially in terms of big ideas that place the God-cosmos-human relationship within the framework of its sacredness. It also becomes a kind of metanarrative grand theory in the realm of green Sufism. Besides, as grand theory or grand narrative, these works also underlie the concepts of tawhid, whose meaning is extended to environmental conservation issues.

Indeed, teaching strategies in all Islamic educational institutions about the urgency of studying environmental issues and the spirit of nature conservation can be done by socializing spiritual-Sufistic values. It also adverted a concern and love for the environment by planting trees for every educational institution and Indonesian.

The Educational Model needs to present a strategy to instill a love for the environment based on Sufism as a source of inculcating the soul of students. Learning based on love for the environment introduces biodiversity in each subject and inculcates spiritual values to raise awareness of the harmonious relationship between humans, God, and nature.

The role of educational institutions in overcoming the broader ecological crisis needs to be realized through well-planned programs and curricula from the lowest and higher education levels. Green-Sufism is something that is promised and becomes a kind of religious spirit in the future. Green-Sufism includes spiritual dimensions, belief, love, worldview, ethics, and morality. Combining them can determine the basis of human understanding about how he should place himself in the universe. Therefore, the green Sufism doctrine, whose values are conducive to environmental preservation, is a positive move with points of convergence with the Islamic worldview.

CONCLUSION

From the explanation related to green Sufism above, this study found that Sufi environmental ethics have a strong philosophical foundation, particularly through the theories of *al-insan al-Kabir*, emanation, *tajalli*, and natural illumination. These theories provide an ethical-philosophical framework that can support environmental conservation. Although some foundational ideas are not entirely original due to the influence of classical Greek philosophers, green Sufism offers a new approach to understanding the relationship between God, humans, and nature by emphasizing spiritual and cosmic harmony.

The contribution of this study lies in integrating Islamic Sufism into the existing environmental ethics paradigms, and strengthening an interdisciplinary perspective that connects philosophy, theology, and cosmology to environmental issues. This research also provides a conceptual foundation for the development of environmentally focused studies based on spirituality.

However, this study has limitations, particularly in the scope of texts analyzed and the lack of an empirical approach to test the relevance of green Sufism in modern contexts. Therefore, further studies are needed to explore the application of green Sufism concepts in environmental policies and ecological education, especially in Islamic educational institutions. Islamic educational institutions are encouraged to support similar research to enrich the discourse on Sufism in the context of contemporary environmental issues. The concept of green Sufism is expected to serve as a foundation for the civilization of knowledge encompassing aspects of ontology, epistemology, theology, and cosmology, while contributing significantly to addressing the global environmental crisis.

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