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## Integrating Sufism and Environmental Ethics: A Comparative Study of al-Qushayrī and Holmes Rolston III

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**Abstract:** The global environmental crisis intensifying in our era highlights the need for new conceptual approaches to address this existential issue. This study examines the relationship between environmental ethics and Sufism, based on systemic values inherent in Holmes Roston III and the Sufistic concept of self-purification. This qualitative research employs document analysis, focusing on al-Qushayrī's *Subtle Allusions* and Holmes Rolston III's *Environmental Ethics*, analyzed through a comparative framework and supported by secondary data. The study investigates the Sufistic concepts of ascetism, fear of God, and contentment alongside the systemic values of environmental ethics. It proposes the integrative concepts of prevent-repair, care-guard, and conviction-kindness as key outcomes. These findings underscore the importance of environmental ethics, personal spirituality, and intrinsic awareness, providing both theoretical and practical insights.

**Contribution:** Theoretically, this study advances the integration of Sufism and environmental ethics through combining Sufistic values (internal) with systemic values (external). It provides a framework for cultivating a balanced attitude and a conscious relationship with God, humans, and nature, grounded in Qur'anic principles and ecological awareness.

**Keywords:** al-Qushayrī; Holmes Rolston III; environmental ethics; Sufism; self-purification; systemic values

## Introduction

The ecosystem landscape comprises both biotic components (i.e., living organisms, such as animals and plants) and abiotic components (i.e., water, soil, air, and climate). Both elements are interconnected. Ecological balance is the result of the harmonious interaction between the environment and the living organisms. In other words, a balanced ecosystem offers a comfortable home for all living organisms.<sup>1</sup> However, if the harmony of interactions within the ecosystem is disrupted, the environment cannot be sustained. This is evidenced in news reports published by Earth.org, which state that fifteen major environmental problems occurred globally in 2021. These problems range from global warming caused by fossil fuels, biodiversity loss, melting ice caps that lead to rising sea levels, and the impact of the textile industry on soil degradation.<sup>2</sup> Coral reefs, the ecosystems most sensitive to rising water temperatures, are currently on the brink of mass extinction due to global warming. In 2023, the worst coral bleaching event was recorded in the Northern Hemisphere, followed by similar events in the Southern Hemisphere in 2024.<sup>3</sup>

The issue of respecting and preserving the natural environment is not a modern phenomenon; however, it has become more pressing in the contemporary era. The Qur'an is a religious text revealed in the seventh century. It focuses on metaphysical and esoteric topics, such as life and death, heaven and hell. However, it also contains ethical guidelines concerning the natural environment, including exhortations to humans not to be wasteful, not to be excessive, and not to cause harm to the earth. In the eyes of God, humans who destroy the natural order for quick gain are ungrateful and rebellious sinners who have betrayed their trust. In short, humans are cautioned to maintain the perfect balance they can observe in nature, and not to destroy it.<sup>4</sup> In Islamic ecology, conservation and

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<sup>1</sup> Nobuhiro Suzuki et al., "Abiotic and Biotic Stress Combinations," *The New Phytologist* 203, no. 1 (2014): 32–43. The call is for "system change, not climate change," because solutions for ecological challenges inspired by capitalism are delayed and only expand business. New business concepts like green innovations, green technologies, and green commodities are commercial solutions focused on trade, markets, and money. See Anitra Nelson, *Beyond Money: A Postcapitalist Strategy* (London: Pluto Press, 2022), 59–69.

<sup>2</sup> Deena Robinson, "The Biggest Environmental Problems Of 2021," Earth.Org, September 16, 2023, <https://earth.org/the-biggest-environmental-problems-of-our-lifetime/>.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas J F Goreau and Raymond L Hayes, "2023 Record Marine Heat Waves: Coral Reef Bleaching HotSpot Maps Reveal Global Sea Surface Temperature Extremes, Coral Mortality, and Ocean Circulation Changes," *Oxford Open Climate Change* 4, no. 1 (2024): 1.

<sup>4</sup> Amin Abdullah, *Falsafah Kalam di Era Kontemporer* (IRCISOD, 2022), 225–226.

environmental preservation are closely tied to a person's faith, meaning that the environment is an essential element of respecting nature as part of God's creation. This perspective places recognition, understanding, and maintenance of the environment as fundamental aspects of a person's expression of faith. A person's behavior (*akhlāq*) and faith (*īmān*) are manifested in their interactions with the environment;<sup>5</sup> therefore, preserving the environment is both a moral action and a religious obligation.<sup>6</sup> From this perspective, actions that harm the environment are considered serious moral offenses comparable to major sins (*al-kabā'ir*), implying a person's rejection of God as the Lord and Sustainer (*rabb*) of the world and thus a criminal act of rebellion, defiance, and profound ingratitude (*kufī*).<sup>7</sup>

Although climate change and other environmental issues are heatedly debated and discussed in the public sphere, the global water and air pollution levels are worsening, and daily news includes alarming reports on water shortage, flooding, and wildfires across the globe. In response to this global crisis, activists and academicians have begun to consider the ethical dimensions of environmentalism.<sup>8</sup> However, this discussion cannot be confined to a monodisciplinary study and has to follow an interdisciplinary approach. A monodisciplinary approach to environmental ethics may offer essential tools and insights; however, it poses limitations to explaining and managing complex and interdependent socio-ecological systems. Therefore, multidisciplinary programs are built on the premise that a comprehensive understanding of environmental

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<sup>5</sup> Imran Hayat et al., "The Role of Islamic Environmental Ethics in the Alleviation of Climate Challenges and the Preservation of the Ecosystem," *Russian Law Journal* 11, no. 11S (2023): 398.

<sup>6</sup> Md Saidul Islam, "Old Philosophy, New Movement: The Rise of the Islamic Ecological Paradigm in the Discourse of Environmentalism," *Nature and Culture* 7, no. 1 (2012): 72–94; Abdulrahman Helli, "Does the Qur'ān Offer Foundational Principles for Environmental Ethics?," *Journal of Islamic Ethics* 1, (2024): 1–25.

<sup>7</sup> Carolyn P. Egri, 'Spiritual Connections with the Natural Environment: Pathways for Global Change', *Organization & Environment* 10/4 (1997), 407–431.

<sup>8</sup> Amin Abdullah, "Dimensi Etis-Teologis Dan Etis-Antropologis Dalam Pembangunan Berwawasan Lingkungan," in *Seminar Lingkungan Hidup* (Dies Natalis ke-35, Salatiga, 1991), 18. Amin distinguishes between the ethical-theological and the ethical-anthropological dimension. The Qur'an addresses ethical-theological issues but also ethical-anthropological ones. See Otto Soemarwoto, *Indonesia Dalam Kancah Isu Lingkungan Global* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1991), 1.

issues requires perspectives from various disciplines and effective integration of knowledge to produce holistic and sustainable solutions.<sup>9</sup>

As a central tradition in Islamic thought, Sufism has its own scope in terms of its material and methodology.<sup>10</sup> Regarding environmental issues, the concept of self-purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) is of central importance. It can be used in the discourse to shape people's attitudes and guide them towards positive interactions with the environment.<sup>11</sup> The Persian jurist, Qur'an commentator, and Sufi master 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī (986–1072) authored one of the earliest and most authoritative manuals defining the theology, practices, and ethical principles of Sufism for generations of practitioners. In his seminal work on Sufism, the *Risāla* (Epistle), he also discussed the Sufistic concept of self-purification.<sup>12</sup> In his view, humans only behave well if they have a good relationship with God and misbehave if they do not. Therefore, the Sufis believed that a good heart is close to God, and only a good heart can produce good behavior.<sup>13</sup>

Al-Qushayrī can be considered the leading authority on Sufism, whereas the modern authority on environmental ethics is the American philosopher Holmes Rolston III (1932–2025). He is best known for his contributions to environmental ethics and the relationship between science and religion. Rolston argued that the intrinsic value of nature should be recognized beyond its immediate usefulness to humans, emphasizing that ecosystem components (e.g., species, biological processes, geological formations) contain values that deserve protection for the sake of the ecosystem's sustainability. He proposed an ethical framework that connects biodiversity conservation (biodiversity), recognition of the rights of non-human entities (organisms), and acknowledgment of human

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<sup>9</sup> Kimberly K. Smith, *Exploring Environmental Ethics: An Introduction*, AESS Interdisciplinary Environmental Studies and Sciences Series (New York, NY: AESS, Springer, 2018), 3.

<sup>10</sup> Abdessamad Belhaj, "Legal Knowledge by Application: Sufism as Islamic Legal Hermeneutics in the 10th/12th Centuries," *Studia Islamica* 108, no. 1 (2013): 82–83.

<sup>11</sup> Al-Qushayrī, *Al-Risāla al-Qushayrīya* (Jedda: Dār al-Minhāj, 2017), 389–94.

<sup>12</sup> To better understand al-Qushayrī's Sufistic thought, a deep reading of his commentary is recommended. See Sara Abdel-Latif, "Sufi Master and Qur'an Scholar: Abū'l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī and the Laṭā'if al-Ishārā," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 24, no. 1 (2013): 146.

<sup>13</sup> Qushayrī, *Al-Risāla al-Qushayrīya* (Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj, 2017), 81. *Zāla al-wara' wa ṭuwiya basāṭuhu, wa ishtadda al-ṭama' wa quwiya ribāṭuhu, fa irtaḥ ala 'an al-qulūb ḥurma al-shaī'ah.*

interconnectedness and dependence on the broader ecological system (biosystemic).<sup>14</sup>

Existing studies on the connection between Islam and ecology have only been examined from the perspectives of jurisprudence, as in Ali Yafie; theology, as in Ibrahim Abdul-Matin; and philosophy, as in Ziauddin Sardar<sup>15</sup> and Fazlun Khalid.<sup>16</sup> However, Islamic ecology from the perspective of Sufism has been less explored, except for two studies written by Seyyed Ḥossein Naṣr<sup>17</sup> and Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī.<sup>18</sup> While Naṣr discussed the triangulation of Islam, *īmān*, and *ih̄sān* following an argumentative (*burhānī*) approach, al-Qaraḍāwī employed a deductive (*bayānī*) and intuitive (*ʿirfānī*) approach. However, none of these studies examined the Sufistic ethical thought of al-Qushayrī with an environmental ethics approach grounded in philosophical thought. Moreover, Naṣr and al-Qaraḍāwī did not elaborate on the concept of ecological Sufism (*taṣawwuf al-bīʿa*), which is based on self-purification and systemic values. Therefore, this study aims to complement the previous research by linking the concepts of ascetism (*zuhd*), fear (*khawf*), contentment (*qanāʿa*), and self-purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) as developed by al-Qushayrī with the biodiversity, organisms, biosystemic or systemic values developed by Holmes Rolston III to form an environmental Sufism framework. This proposed framework aims to

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<sup>14</sup> Holmes Rolston III, *Environmental Ethics: Duties to and Values in the Natural World, Ethics and Action* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1988), 153.

<sup>15</sup> Ziauddin Sardar, *Reading the Qur'an: The Contemporary Relevance of the Sacred Text of Islam* (London: Hurst & Company, 2011); Tauseef Ahmad Parray, "Recent Qur'ānic Scholarship: A Critical Evaluation Of Ziauddin Sardar's 'Reading The Qur'ān,'" *Hamdard Islamicus* 42, no. 4 (2019): 67–73.

<sup>16</sup> Fazlun M. Khalid, *Signs on the Earth: Islam, Modernity and the Climate Crisis* (Markfield, Leicestershire, England: Kube Publishing, 2019); Bambang Irawan, "Environmental Protection from the Perspectives of Indonesian, Sufi and UK Muslim Environmentalists," *Heritage of Nusantara: International Journal of Religious Literature and Heritage* 5, no. 2 (2016): 230–256.

<sup>17</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man* (London: Unwin Hyman Limited, 1990); Marjorie Hope and James Young, "Islam and Ecology," *CrossCurrents* 44, no. 2 (1994): 185–190.

<sup>18</sup> Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Riʾāya al-Bīʿa fī Shariʿa al-Islām* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2001); J. M. Muslimin et al., 'Maqasid Al-Shariah in Environmental Conservation of Yusuf al-Qaradawi's Perspective:', *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Recent Innovations* (International Conference Recent Innovation, Jakarta, Indonesia: ScitePress - Science and Technology Publications, 2018), 869–877; Maizer Said Nahdi and Aziz Ghufroon, "Etika Lingkungan Dalam Perspektif Yūsuf Al-Qaraḍāwī," *Al Jamiah* Vol.44, no. No.1 (2009): 205–215.

foster harmonious relationships among God, humans, and nature as a key to achieving holistic well-being.<sup>19</sup>

## Literature Review

Today, as the world is grappling with a global climate crisis, promoting ideas about environmental preservation and calling for immediate action are more essential than ever.<sup>20</sup> The widespread public concern and the proliferation of environmentalist groups worldwide evidence this. The American environmentalist Paul Hawken (1946–), co-founder of Project Drawdown, which aims to reverse climate change, describes environmentalism as "the largest movement in the world."<sup>21</sup> The global public agrees that environmental activism is necessary to curb the excesses of global corporations and international neo-capitalism, acknowledging that it has a profound moral dimension. Philosophers and theologians of the past and present have developed ethical theories to address the fundamental issues of society. For instance, there are likely to be conflicts between individual and societal interests, challenges in determining justice, a need for practical guidance on human behavior, and considerations on whether ethics should be visionary or pragmatic.<sup>22</sup> These examples indicate that no single ethical theory has been able to provide a perfect solution to all issues. Therefore, it is crucial to adopt various approaches to address a variety of questions and resolve ethical dilemmas effectively.<sup>23</sup> One approach that can be offered is the spiritual approach.

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<sup>19</sup> Dina M. Abdelzaher, Amr Kotb, and Akrum Helfaya, "Eco-Islam: Beyond the Principles of Why and What, and Into the Principles of How," *Journal of Business Ethics* 155, no. 3 (March 2019): 2.

<sup>20</sup> The discourse on energy conservation examines the lifestyle of modern society, which involves significant energy wastage, potentially leading to environmental damage. See Li Wang, Feng Wei, and Xin-an Zhang, "Why Does Energy-Saving Behavior Rise and Fall? A Study on Consumer Face Consciousness in the Chinese Context," *Journal of Business Ethics* 160, no. 2 (2019): 2.

<sup>21</sup> Paul Hawken, *Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Movement in the World Came into Being and Why No One Saw It Coming* (New York: Viking, 2007) in Holmes Rolston III, "The Future of Environmental Ethics," *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplements* 69 (October 2011): 1.

<sup>22</sup> Ethics, derived from the word *ethos*, meaning character, is the study of concepts involved in practical reasoning about rights, duties, virtues, freedom, and rationality. See Simon Blackburn, *Kamus Filsafat*, trans. Yudi Santoso, II (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2021), 294.

<sup>23</sup> David B. Resnik, *Environmental Health Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 55.

Modern global culture has become increasingly secular and consumeristic, and international industries have degraded the natural environment into an object that can be exploited freely and without repercussions.<sup>24</sup> However, religion and spirituality remain relevant, and a considerable number of people still regard nature as sacred and worthy of preservation. There is an increasing number of religious groups addressing the global environmental crisis, thereby restoring the spiritual dimension of nature.<sup>25</sup> According to Amin Abdullah, modern industrialization has transformed the altruistic, cooperative, and respectful attitudes of traditional villagers living off the land into the egoistic, lazy, alienated, and arrogant attitudes of modern city dwellers.

Modern Muslim society needs Sufism to respond to this change and generate new ideas rooted in Islamic thought, so that religious individuals and groups can support environmental conservation and actively support global efforts.<sup>26</sup> In this ecological context, Sufistic perspectives can be associated with the notion that God has not created this world in vain and that all living creatures depend on each other.<sup>27</sup> It is a modern fallacy to believe that human life is independent of the environment. This essential human–environment relationship is highlighted by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who states that spiritually inclined Muslims, such as the Sufis, may appear to be detached from the world. Still, they actively participate in and share the burdens of community life, indicating no inherent contradiction between the esoteric dimension of Sufism and active societal engagement.<sup>28</sup>

There is no contradiction between the esoteric dimension of Sufism and active life, marked by the presence of moral ideas within Sufism itself. This dimension includes the formation of a Sufistic mindset, which serves as a moral

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<sup>24</sup> Md Islam, “Old Philosophy, New Movement: The Rise of the Islamic Ecological Paradigm in the Discourse of Environmentalism,” *Nature and Culture* 7 (2012): 83.

<sup>25</sup> For example, QS. 7:56, QS. 17:70, QS. 7:31, QS. 17:29, QS. 30:41, QS. 67:3, QS. 88:17–20, QS. 21:30, QS. 25:48, QS. 78:16, QS. 16:66, QS. 14:24–25, QS. 56:72–73, QS. 10:24, QS. 57:20, QS. 6:38, QS. 88:17–19, QS. 6:141, QS. 16:5, QS. 30:41.

<sup>26</sup> Amin Abdullah, *Falsafah Kalam di Era Kontemporer*, 263–270.

<sup>27</sup> Saad Saood Safdar and Ghulam Shams-Ur-Rehman, “The Roots of the Ecological Crisis in the Theological and Philosophical Landscape of Modern Civilization: An Analysis of Seyyed Hossein Nasr’s Perspective,” *Islamic Studies* 60, no. 3 (2021): 288–92; Ahmad Munji, “*Ri’āya al-Bī’a fī al-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī*,” *Teosofia: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Mysticism* 5, no. 2 (2016): 142.

<sup>28</sup> Hossein Nasr, *Islam Dan Nestapa Manusia Modern* (Bandung: Pustaka, n.d.), 98.

compass.<sup>29</sup> According to Abū al-‘Alā al-‘Afīfī, this experience stems from a positive relationship between the seeker and God, one that is continuously engaged in spiritual effort (*muǧāhada*) to attain God's pleasure and experience His presence (*dhawq*). The seeker can then channel the Divine love for all His creatures, inspired by this profound spiritual experience (*al-tajriba al-ṣūfiya*).<sup>30</sup> Aligned with the attainment of Divine love, al-Qushayrī's description of the Sufistic path also includes the concept of self-purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), which progresses in three phases. First, there is the phase of emptiness (*takhallī*), where the seeker abstains from reprehensible behaviors. Second, there is the phase of filling (*taḥallī*), where the seeker adopts virtuous behaviors, supported by inner devotion and obedience to God. Third, there is the final phase of manifestation (*tajallī*), where the seeker internalizes the virtuous behaviors through deep love and longing for God.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, piety (*taqwā*) is the source of all goodness, which resides in the heart, and only through piety, knowledge, and good deeds emerge, while ignorance and bad deeds vanish.<sup>32</sup>

Worldly thoughts that are ultimately self-destructive relate to the axiological validity of humanism. The axiological validity of humanism is once again questioned due to anthropocentric technologies that lead to the exploitation of the earth. With knowledge of ecological equilibrium and the interdependency of all non-human life forms, humanistic ethics must be expanded into environmental ethics encompassing all living beings.<sup>33</sup> The environment is defined as the total of all conditions and influences that affect the development of organisms. This definition emphasizes the totality of the environment, implicitly suggesting that living organisms, including humans, require a specific environment in which to thrive. In contrast to the environment, ecology studies the relationships among organisms within the same or different taxonomic groups, as well as between these organisms and their physical environment. Thus, while ecology examines interactions between organisms and their environment, the environment involves the interaction of physical and

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<sup>29</sup> Said Aqil Siroj, *Allah Dan Alam Semesta: Perspektif Tasawuf Falsafi* (Jakarta: Yayasan Said Aqil Siroj, 2021).

<sup>30</sup> Abū ‘Alā al-‘Afīfī, *Al-Taṣawwuf al-Thawra al-Rūḥiyya fī al-Islām* (London: Hindawi, 2020), 19–20.

<sup>31</sup> Muhamad Basyrul Muvid and Nur Kholis, “Contribution of Sufism Trilogy in the Formation of Religious Behavior: A Proposed Model,” March 1, 2024, 38.

<sup>32</sup> Qushayrī, *Al-Risāla al-Qushayrīya* (Jedda: Dār al-Minhāj, 2017), 213.

<sup>33</sup> Armahedi Mahzar, *Islam Masa Depan* (Bandung: Pustaka, 1993), 125.



biological elements that cannot be separated.<sup>34</sup> Regarding the interconnectedness of organisms, Rolston viewed life as containing information encoded in genes that provide instructions on how to build and maintain life. This information is encoded in the genes of humans and millions of other species. Currently, humans are unable to determine the exact number of creatures that have existed in the past, the total number of insects that exist today, or the total number of microbes. Still, it is estimated that there have been approximately ten billion different life forms on this planet.<sup>35</sup> Rolston argued that intrinsic value independent of thought is a property of some entities separate from beliefs, desires, or attitudes. This forms the basis for Rolston's advocacy of the importance of environmental ethics.<sup>36</sup>

Therefore, there is a need for an in-depth study that integrates the Sufi concept of self-purification with environmental ethics. The discourse linking Sufism and environmental ethics remains underexplored, despite extensive discussions on the environment within Islam.<sup>37</sup> Environmental Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), for instance, discusses how Muslims should behave towards their environment, thus offering a legal basis for creating a positive relationship between humans and nature. However, the paradigm construction of environmental *fiqh* is still limited to legal procedure, not yet reaching the formation of mental attitudes towards the environment.<sup>38</sup> Therefore,

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<sup>34</sup> Majid Husain, *Environment and Ecology: Biodiversity, Climate Change, and Disaster Management*, III (Delhi: Access Publishing, 2015), 1–11. The physical elements include: space, landforms, waterbodies, climate, drainage, rocks, soils, and mineral wealth. The biological elements, include; man, fauna and flora, including micro-organisms.

<sup>35</sup> Holmes Rolston et al., "An Interview with Holmes Rolston III," *The Harvard Review of Philosophy* 29 (2022): 134; James Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), ix–xi.

<sup>36</sup> Toby Svoboda, "Why There Is No Evidence for the Intrinsic Value of Non-Humans," *Ethics and the Environment* 16, no. 2 (2011): 29–30; Bryan G. Norton, "Conserving Natural Value," *Environmental Ethics* 18, no. 2 (1996): 214.

<sup>37</sup> Aulia Nugraha and Naupal Asnawi, "Dialogue Between Islam and Environmental Ethics Through the Seyyed Hossein Nasr Thought," *International Review of Humanities Studies* 4, no. 3 (2019).

<sup>38</sup> Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī, *Al-Umm*, vol. II (Dār al-Wafā, 2001); Mālik ibn Anas, *Al-Muwattā'* (Mu'assasa Zayd ibn Sulṭān, 2004). Imām Mālik's work begins with the chapter on the times of prayer (*wuqūt al-ṣalā*) followed by the chapter on purification (*ṭahāra*), while Imām al-Shāfi'ī's work begins with the chapter on purification (*ṭahāra*) followed by the chapter on prayer. Ali Yafie, *Merintis Fiqh Lingkungan Hidup* (Jakarta: Ufuk Press, 2006), 200; Willis Jenkins, "Islamic Law and Environmental Ethics: How

environmental Sufism is proposed as a framework for shaping the mental attitudes of Muslims towards coexisting with nature. Environmental Sufism can be integrated with the ideas of environmental *fiqh* in terms of its procedural aspects. Thus, environmental Sufism can be implemented because its principles not only apply to living in the environment but can also shape mental attitudes about right and wrong behavior towards the environment, thereby sustaining all life forms.<sup>39</sup> Environmental Sufism can be implemented through technology, policies, on-the-ground practices, and social constellations (active dichotomy). Following this trajectory, research on environmental issues and risk mitigation can achieve objective levels.<sup>40</sup>

## Method

This qualitative study employs a document or text review.<sup>41</sup> The two primary data sources are al-Qushayrī's Qur'an commentary, *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt* (Subtle Allusions), and Holmes Rolston III's *Environmental Ethics*. Some of al-Qushayrī's ideas are also taken from his *Risāla* (Epistle on Sufism), while Rolston's ideas are complemented by his *Science and Religion*. The primary data are supplemented with secondary data sources from the relevant literature on self-purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) and environmental ethics (systemic values). The collected data are analyzed through comparative methods to identify similarities and differences in ideas. Subsequently, the data are categorized thematically and organized based on the information gathered to address the research questions. The data in this study are analyzed interpretatively using an ethical philosophy approach, presented as conceptual themes and new findings.

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Jurisprudence ('Usul al-Fiqh') Mobilizes Practical Reform," *Worldviews* 9, no. 3 (2005): 355–58.

<sup>39</sup> Ali Mohamed Al-Damkhi, "Environmental Ethics in Islam: Principles, Violations, and Future Perspectives," *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 65, no. 1 (February 1, 2008): 164. On the effectiveness of spirituality on environmental well-being, see Izza Himawanti, Imam Faisal Hamzah, and Muhammad Faiq, "Finding God's Way: Spiritual Well-Being on the People Who Do Tirakat Mlaku," *Teosofia: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Mysticism* 11, no. 1 (2022): 55.

<sup>40</sup> Ethics (subjective) should not be confused with scientific research (scientific/objective). This critique is not a reduction of Guessoum's view of Sardar's efforts; rather, it aims to provide a benchmark for the objective development of science. Nidhal Guessoum, *Islam's Quantum Question: Reconciling Muslim Tradition and Modern Science* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 136–139.

<sup>41</sup> Sarah J. Tracy, *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact*, Second edition (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020), 76–98.

## Results and Discussion

### Al-Qushayrī and Holmes Rolston III: Life, Thought, and Works

Abū al-Qāsim ‘Abd al-Karīm ibn Hawāzan ibn ‘Abd al-Mulk ibn Ṭalḥa ibn Muḥammad al-Qushayrī al-Nīshāpūrī al-Shāfi‘ī was born in Ustū, a small village near the city of Nishapur in Khorasan province in Persia, in the month of Rabī‘ al-Awwal 376/986. He was given the honorific title of Ornament of Islam (*Zayn al-Islām*) to mark his status as a Sufi master.<sup>42</sup> In his youth, al-Qushayrī was exposed to various branches of Islamic knowledge. For example, he studied jurisprudence (*fiqh*) under Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr al-Ṭūsī, the principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) under Abū Bakr ibn Fawrak, and speculative theology (*‘ilm al-kalām*) under Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyaynī.<sup>43</sup> Upon moving to Nishapur, he studied Sufism under the renowned Sufi master Abū ‘Alī al-Daqqāq, eventually becoming his successor.<sup>44</sup>

Al-Qushayrī was trained in the Shāfi‘ite legal school, subscribing to Ash‘arī theology, and was a close friend of al-Juwaynī (1028–1085). While al-Qushayrī studied Islamic theology from a Sufistic perspective, al-Ghazālī systematically formulated the intersection of Islamic theology and Sufism.<sup>45</sup> Al-Qushayrī is best known as a Qur'an commentator, influencing other scholars such as al-Hujwīrī (1009–1077), al-Ghazālī (1058–1111), Ibn al-‘Arabī (1165–1240), Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī (1207–1273), and Mullā Ṣadrā (1572–1641).<sup>46</sup> Al-Qushayrī authored many works on various subjects, including the *Laṭāif al-Ishārāt* (Subtle Allusions), a Qur'an commentary rich in Sufistic interpretations. His *Risāla* (Epistle on Sufism) presents the spiritual heritage of the early Sufi masters from

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<sup>42</sup> Qushayrī, *Al-Risāla al-Qushayrīya*, 2017, 16–17.

<sup>43</sup> Ibrāhīm Basyūnī, *Al-Imām al-Qushayrī Ḥayātuhu wa Taṣawwufuhu wa Ṣaqqāfatuhu* (Egypt: Maktaba al-Ādāb, 1992), 7–11.

<sup>44</sup> ‘Abdullāh Ḥusayn, *Al-Taṣawwuf wa al-Mutaṣawwifā* (London: Hindawi, 2017), 44–45.

<sup>45</sup> Simuh, *Pergolakan Pemikiran Dalam Islam*, (Yogyakarta: IRCiSOD, 2019), 131–133.

<sup>46</sup> F. Dominic Longo, *Spiritual Grammar: Genre and the Saintly Subject in Islam and Christianity* (USA: Fordham University Press, 2017), 151–152; H. Lazarus Yafeh, *Studies in Al-Gazālī* (Jerusalem, 1975), 531. Francesco Chiabotti, “The Spiritual and Physical Progeny of ‘Abd Al-Karīm al-Qushayrī: A Preliminary Study in Abū Naṣr al-Qushayrī’s (d. 514/1120) Kitāb al-Shawāhid Wa-l-Amthāl,” January 1, 2013. S. Svirī, “Review of Al-Qushayrī, Principles of Sufism, Trans. B.R. Von Schlegell, Introduction: H. Algar, Berkeley 1990,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 19 (1995): 272.

the eighth to the eleventh century.<sup>47</sup> He also authored a work on Arabic grammar, *Naḥw al-Qulūb* (Grammar of the Hearts), which uses grammatical terminology and rules to explain Sufistic concepts.<sup>48</sup>

Meanwhile, the modern American philosopher Holmes Rolston III was born in Staunton, Virginia, on 19 November 1932. He was a University Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at Colorado State University and was actively engaged in the dialogue between religion and science. In 1990, Rolston became the first president of the International Society for Environmental Ethics.<sup>49</sup> Rolston's thought has had a profound influence on the development of environmental ethics, contributing significantly to the ethic of duties based on intrinsic value and holism. Rolston's ethical concepts are now a key component in every contemporary theory of environmental ethics.<sup>50</sup> Rolston's works provided valuable insights into environmental issues, formulating the nature, scope, and problems of ecological ethics.<sup>51</sup> His works exploring environmental themes through philosophical analysis include *Conserving Natural Value*, *Environmental Ethics*, *Science and Religion*, *Philosophy Gone Wild*, and *A New Environmental Ethics*, which received critical acclaim in professional journals and the international press.<sup>52</sup> In summary, al-Qushayrī's thought presents a doctrinal, theological, and philosophical perspective, whereas Rolston's thought adopts an experimental, ethical, and intellectual approach.

### **Towards Environmental Sufism: An Alternative Solution**

Regarding the study of the dynamics between religious beliefs and scientific progress, it has been emphasized that both must maintain a balanced

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<sup>47</sup> Institut Agama Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah, ed., *Ensiklopedi Islam Indonesia* (Jakarta: Djambatan, 1992), 796–798.

<sup>48</sup> Qushayrī, *Naḥw al-Qulūb al-Ṣaghīr wa al-Kabīr* (Egypt: al-Hai'a al-Miṣrīya al-ʿĀmma li al-Kitāb, 2008), 97–109; Longo, *Spiritual Grammar: Genre and the Saintly Subject in Islam and Christianity*, 27–30.

<sup>49</sup> “Dr. Holmes Rolston III - 2005 Villanova University,” accessed June 2, 2024; “Holmes Rolston III Environmental Ethics, Natural Theology & Conservation Britannica,” May 2, 2024.

<sup>50</sup> Joy A. Palmer, David E. Cooper, and Peter Blaze Corcoran, *Fifty Key Thinkers on the Environment*, 62.

<sup>51</sup> Joy A. Palmer, David E. Cooper, and Peter Blaze Corcoran, eds., *Fifty Key Thinkers on the Environment* (London: Routledge, 2003), 260.

<sup>52</sup> Anne Becher and Joseph Richey, *American Environmental Leaders: From Colonial Times to the Present*, vol. I (New York: Grey House Publishing, 2008), 696–697.

relational equilibrium to sustain their existence.<sup>53</sup> Science has undergone significant conceptual evolution, manifesting in dynamic theories and practices. Religion, with its diverse dogmas and ritualistic practices, demonstrates a considerable degree of adaptability. Organized religion adapts to a changing environment while remaining relevant without compromising its core teachings.<sup>54</sup> Similar to the adaptation process in biological species, organized religion possesses sufficient adaptive capabilities to endure in a given intellectual environment. However, failure to adapt effectively risks losing its relevance. Therefore, only religious formats that can fit into the intellectual environment can survive.<sup>55</sup> In this section, al-Qushayrī's conceptual understanding of self-purification will be linked to Rolston's systemic values. If al-Qushayrī is placed in the realm of consciousness formation (intrinsic), then Rolston is positioned in the domain of practical implications (extrinsic). Through the interweaving of Rolston's and al-Qushayrī's frameworks, a unified approach to self-control and environmental stewardship can be synergized.

In al-Qushayrī's view, the relationship between humans and God is one of mutual positivity and reciprocity. Proximity between a person and God begins with faith, followed by righteous deeds. However, the closeness to God is only achieved when the believers distance themselves from other creatures and their worldly orientations. He emphasizes that this is an inner orientation of the heart (*qalb*), not the outer self.<sup>56</sup> In the context of environmental conservation, this means that humans should establish a harmonious relationship with God, which will lead to a healthy relationship with the environment. This is evident in his interpretation of the relevant Qur'anic verses. For instance, Qushayrī gives Q.S. al-Rūm (30): 41 an esoteric meaning (*ta'wīl bāṭin*),<sup>57</sup> likening 'land' (*barr*) to the human self and 'sea' (*bahr*) to the human heart. Self-degradation is the result of people satisfying their needs through forbidden sources. At the same time, the

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<sup>53</sup> Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam Doktrin Dan Peradaban: Sebuah Telaah Kritis Tentang Masalah Keimanan, Kemanusiaan, Dan Kemodernan* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1992), 503–504.

<sup>54</sup> Ken Wilber, *The Marriage of Sense and Soul: Integrating Science and Religion* (Boston: Shambala Publications, 1998), 20–30.

<sup>55</sup> Holmes Rolston, *Science and Religion: A Critical Survey* (New York: Random House, 1987), vii.

<sup>56</sup> Qushayrī, *Al-Risāla al-Qushayrīya*, 2017, 312.

<sup>57</sup> The search for esoteric meaning is important in the tradition of Sufistic exegesis, especially because mystical meaning in the Sufistic tradition is considered a mercy (Divine essence) that is unveiled. Annabel Keeler, "Sūfī Tafsīr as a Mirror: Al-Qushayrī the Murshid in His Latā'if al-Ishārāt," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 8, no. 1 (2006): 2.

corruption of the heart results from neglect (*ghafla*) and the adoption of destructive behaviors, such as ill intentions, envy, and lust, ultimately leading to self-destruction. From these insights, the verse's apparent meaning regarding the degradation of the land and sea (i.e., the ecosystem) is attributed to human actions. Conversely, the intention to do good already embodies the highest form of goodness (*al-‘azm’ alā al-khairāt qabla fī‘lihā min a‘zam al-khayrāt*).<sup>58</sup>

Similarly, al-Qushayrī explains in Q.S. al-Baqarah (2): 29 that God created the universe to suit the needs of all His creatures. In particular, the humans endowed with intellect should utilize their resources without causing harm or depletion (*yastamti‘ūn yasīrā wa lākin fī ākhirihim ya‘ūdu ilā al-faqr*). Ultimately, the magnificence of the universe reflects the power and grandeur of God, which must be valued and respected.<sup>59</sup> This view aligns with Seyyed Hossein Nasr's view that everything is interconnected and in perfect balance. Therefore, any disruption or damage to this ideal balance is due to the exploitative behavior of modern humans. In modern times, the natural sciences have been largely separated from the religious sciences, thereby ignoring humanity's dependence on nature.<sup>60</sup>

Furthermore, environmental degradation is caused by human selfishness and greed. This reprehensible, exploitative behavior is due to humans prioritizing their own material interests over the interests of the environment. In Q.S. al-A‘rāf (7):10, al-Qushayrī explains that God has created everything on earth as a means for humans to fulfill their needs and ensure their survival. Everything in this world leads back to the Creator; however, humans tend to be forgetful and dismissive of this truth and do not appreciate the blessings given to them.<sup>61</sup> Thus, he believes that self-improvement (*iṣlāḥ al-nafs*) is mandatory before resorting to action. In this regard, it is synonymous with repentance (regretting evil deeds and not repeating them). Quoting the early Egyptian mystic Dhūl-Nūn al-Miṣrī, he emphasizes that there are two types of repentance (*tawbah*): the repentance of the ordinary people (*al-‘awwām*) when they have committed a sinful act and the repentance of the elite (*al-khawwāṣ*) when they have neglected God.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Qushayrī, *Laṭā‘if al-Ishārāt*, vol. III (Lebanon: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiya, 2007), 12.

<sup>59</sup> Qushayrī, *Laṭā‘if al-Ishārāt*, vol. I (Lebanon: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiya, 2007), 33.

<sup>60</sup> Hossein Nasr, *Tasawuf Dulu dan Sekarang*, trans. Abdul Hadi W. M., I (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2020), 315–316.

<sup>61</sup> Qushayrī, *Laṭā‘if al-Ishārāt*, 2007, I:325.

<sup>62</sup> Qushayrī, *Al-Risāla al-Qushayrīya*, 2017, 106.

Unlike al-Qushayrī, Rolston examines environmental ethics not from the perspective of moral values such as compassion, charity, justice, honesty, or pleasure. Instead, he argues that humans value ecology in nature, the system of life and pro-life systems that enable individuals to thrive, which can be sacrificed without regard to either suffering or pleasure. In this respect, al-Qushayrī's first glance is inward, focusing on the self and the heart, while Rolston's glance is outward. He connects 'value-in-itself' and 'value-in-togetherness' with systemic circulation. Furthermore, Rolston sees individual welfare as a noble but temporary value dependent on the circumstances. From the individual's point of view, there is violence, struggle, and death; however, from a systemic perspective, there is also harmony, interdependence, and the unfolding of life. Rolston writes:

In an environmental ethic, what humans want to value is not compassion, charity, rights, personality, justice, fairness, or even pleasure and the pursuit of happiness. Those values belong to interhuman ethics—in culture, not nature—and to look for them here is to make a category mistake. What humans value in nature is an ecology, a pregnant Earth, a projective and prolife system in which (considering biology alone, not culture) individuals can prosper but are also sacrificed indifferently to their pains and pleasures, individual well-being a lofty but passing role in a storied natural history. From the perspective of individuals, there is violence, struggle, and death; but from a systems perspective, there is also harmony, interdependence, and an ever-continuing life.<sup>63</sup>

Al-Qushayrī<sup>64</sup> states that ascetism (*zuhd*) is essential in preventing humans from behaving reprehensibly. An ascetic attitude means that the individual turns away from worldly orientations and is not ensnared by its temptations, thus less inclined towards exploitative behavior.<sup>65</sup> The path of asceticism (*zuhd*) is fundamentally predicated upon the cultivation of two cardinal virtues: strong piety (*wara'*)<sup>66</sup> and profound contentment (*qanā'ah*). It is *wara'* that safeguards the aspirant from the doubtful, and *qanā'ah* that liberates the heart from covetousness, thereby forming the essential foundation for any genuine renunciation of the world. True believers are not upset when they lose their

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<sup>63</sup> Rolston, *Environmental Ethics*, 225.

<sup>64</sup> See Jawid A. Mojaddedi, "Legitimizing Sufism in Al-Qushayrī's 'Risala,'" *Studia Islamica*, no. 90 (2000): 50.

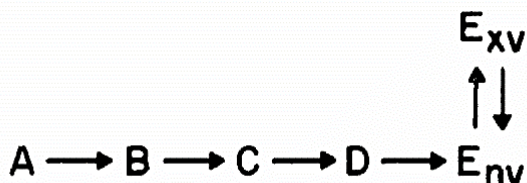
<sup>65</sup> Qushayrī, *Al-Risāla al-Qushayrīya* (Jedda: Dār al-Minhāj, 2017), 335.

<sup>66</sup> Qushayrī, 138.

possessions because they know they do not truly own them.<sup>67</sup> Al-Qushayrī's commentary on Q.S. al-Ḥadīd (57):20 posits that the world's nature as 'play and amusement' (*la'ib wa lahw*) cultivates heedlessness, which in turn obscures humanity's role as mere trustees of the earth. This forgetfulness fosters the illusion of ownership, which then justifies, in the human psyche, acts of corruption and environmental damage in the vain pursuit of status and wealth.<sup>68</sup>

Therefore, ascetism, piety, and contentment form a set of systemic values in al-Qushayrī's thought. However, this triadic relationship is situated within the internal realm, which differs from Rolston's systemic circulation discussed in the external sphere:

Consider a causal sequence (A, B, C, D) leading to the production of an event associated with natural value (Env) that produces an event of experienced value (Exv), perhaps of the beauty in a waterfall or the wealth of life in a tidal zone. A human consciousness responds to the waterfall or estuary, so we need a reverse arrow (↓) to make the encounter a relational one. One is first tempted to say that value does not lie in either polar part but is generated in their relations. Like science or recreation, valuing nature is an interactive event.<sup>69</sup>



**Figure 1:** Nature's Causal Relationship (Rolston's illustration)

Figure 1 is an example provided by Rolston when explaining the sequence of causation leading to the natural value (Env). When events related to the natural value occur, the subsequent event containing the experienced value (Exv) is created. When we observe a receding tide in an area, we cannot fail to reconsider the natural value. This is the function of awareness towards the encounter relation symbolized with a downward arrow (↓). This value is generated from the relationship between the two. Therefore, assessment of nature is an interactive event akin to science or recreation. Like responsive actions or the ability to respond, it is based ecologically. Thus, the subjective self is not opposed to the objective nature but interconnected through complex relationships. Similarly,

<sup>67</sup> Qushayrī, 404.

<sup>68</sup> Qushayrī, *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt*, 2007, III:290.

<sup>69</sup> Rolston, *Environmental Ethics*, 202.



individuals are influenced by their environment and appreciate the exchange of environments.

Rolston uses the terms 'interactive event' and 'experienced value' while al-Qushayrī employs the term 'fear' (*khawf*) to depict the connection with the future. Someone who behaves in this manner will obsess over what might happen in the future and, out of fear, do everything possible to safeguard their possessions.<sup>70</sup> He also asserts that hope (*rajā'*) is an essential aspect of faith and obedient behavior.<sup>71</sup> For this discourse to be effectively implemented in environmental protection, it must be linked to the concept of personal excellence (*ihsān*). Commenting on Q.S. al-A'rāf (7):56, al-Qushayrī likens the human self to an improved piece of land. However, the quality of the self-degrades and deteriorates if it becomes complacent and forgetful of God. Similarly, a well-preserved environment is a blessing. Still, when it is exploited and damaged, its fertility turns into decay, ruin, and desolation (*al-rujū' min al-a'lā ilā al-adnā, ifsād al-arḍ ba'da iṣlāḥihā*).<sup>72</sup>

According to Rolston, interconnected entities imply that no entity possesses separate, independent characteristics; instead, they always face outward and merge with broader attributes. Therefore, value-in-itself melts into value-in-togetherness. This view aligns with al-Qushayrī's value system of *wara'*, *zuhd*, and *khawf*; however, Rolston argues that the accumulation of values permeates the system, while our ability to identify individuals as the sole centers of value diminishes.<sup>73</sup> Thus, such matters demonstrate diverse and complex relationships within their main zones. Models and paradigms within holistic networks, intrinsic values, and the value of individuals as they are become issues that need attention. The evolution of individuality and freedom within the system projects these values, allowing them to develop further. However, separating individualistic values from biotic and communal systems conceals their interconnectedness and externality. For instance, the dual role of soil and water flow holds value because both supply vital nutrients and water to sustain lakes that serve as habitats for birds.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Qushayrī, *Al-Risāla al-Qushayrīya*, 2017, 348.

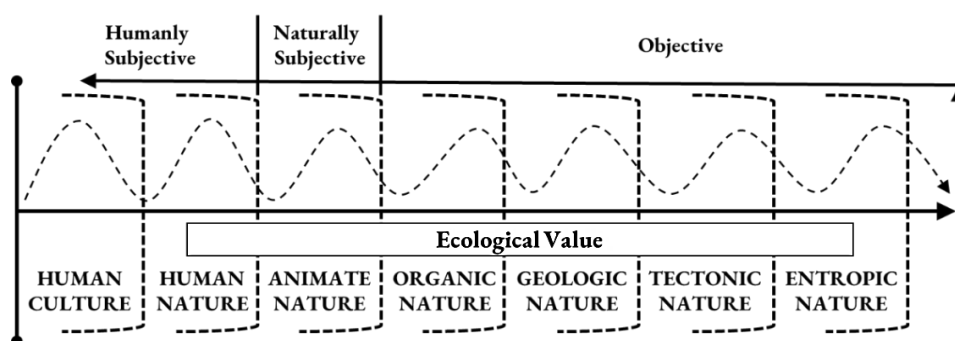
<sup>71</sup> Qushayrī, 359.

<sup>72</sup> Qushayrī, *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt*, 2007, I:338.

<sup>73</sup> Rolston, 216–217.

<sup>74</sup> Rolston, 217.

Concern for populations, species, and habitats requires a corporate understanding that values collectivity. Each intrinsic value has a leading and trailing aspect that indicates its origin and direction of movement. Natural suitability and positioning are crucial in determining individualistic values that are independent of the system. Therefore, intrinsic values should not be seen separately but as an integral part of the whole.<sup>75</sup> Citing the Australian philosopher Peter Singer (1946–), Rolston proposes a shift from an anthropocentric to a sentiocentric perspective, or from an anthropogenic to a sentiogenic perspective.<sup>76</sup> Concern for populations, species, and habitats requires a corporate understanding that values collectivity.<sup>77</sup> Figure 2 below is a conceptual diagram illustrating this relationship:



**Figure 2:** Ecological Value (Authors' formulation)

Figure 2 illustrates the complexity of the relationship between humans and nature through seven different dimensions.<sup>78</sup> Rolston highlights the importance of understanding and respecting various aspects of the natural world. Human culture evolved from interactions with nature and encompasses intellectual and artistic expressions that influence and are influenced by the natural environment. Human existence and behavior—shaped by complex and evolutionary human nature—are also integral parts of the natural world, requiring ethical

<sup>75</sup> Rolston, 218.

<sup>76</sup> Holmes Rolston III, *Naturalizing Values: Organisms and Species* (North American Association on Social Philosophy, 1998), 6–7. See Louis P. Pojman, *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application*, 7th edition (Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 2015), 135–136.

<sup>77</sup> Rolston, *Environmental Ethics*, 218.

<sup>78</sup> Only the dimension of human culture does not fall within the realm of ecological value. The seven dimensions are classified into human–subjective, natural–subjective, and objective.

consideration regarding human relationships with other living beings. Living nature, encompassing all life forms, demonstrates an intrinsic value that must be protected for the sustainability of ecosystems. Additionally, the organic nature, with its metabolic and reproductive processes, reveals a profound complexity and interconnection within the living system. Similarly, the geological and tectonic nature forms the Earth's physical foundation, creating conditions conducive to the evolution of life, which humans need to understand and respect in their interactions. Lastly, the entropic nature, which portrays nature's tendency toward disorder, challenges humans to act in a way that mitigates environmental damage while still contributing to natural sustainability. Here, Rolston integrates all these dimensions within an environmental ethics framework that requires humans to consider the impact of their actions on nature (in its broadest sense), while promoting harmony between humans and the natural world.<sup>79</sup> The table below presents a summary of both frameworks.

**Table 1:** Comparison of the Frameworks Developed by al-Qushayrī and Rolston (Authors' formulation)

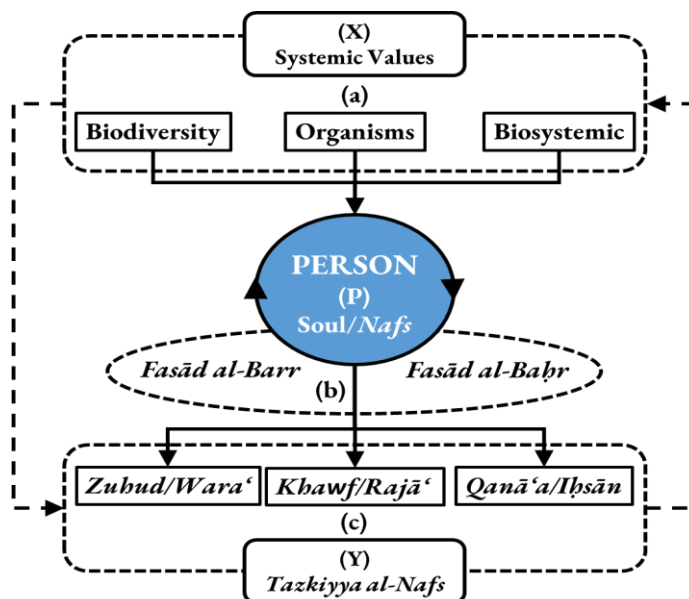
| Al-Qushayrī                      |                          |                     | Rolston                 |             |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| Religion                         |                          |                     | Science                 |             |
| Inspiration                      | Subjective<br>(Internal) | Output              | Objective<br>(External) | Inspiration |
| QS. al-Rūm (30): 41              | <i>Zuhd/Warāʿ</i>        | Prevent–Repair      | Biodiversity            | Ecological  |
| QS. al-Baqara (2): 29            | <i>Khawf/Rajāʿ</i> ’     | Caring–Guarding     | Organisms               | Values      |
| QS. al-Aʿrāf (7): 10 & 56        | <i>Qanāʿa/Ḥsān</i>       | Conviction–Kindness | Biosystemic             |             |
| Self-purification                |                          |                     | Systemic Values         |             |
| Sufism                           |                          |                     | Environmental Ethics    |             |
| Sufistic Ethics on Environmental |                          |                     |                         |             |

The principle of *ḥsān* must be firmly upheld, so that people can assume the role of benefactors (*muḥsinūn*) on earth. They strive to continually improve themselves and do good, especially towards their environment. There are two categories of benefactors: aspirational (*āmalī*) and practical (*ʿamalī*). *Muḥsīn āmalī* is a person who acknowledges the principle of *ḥsān* but has not yet started to practice it outwardly. On the other hand, *muḥsīn ʿamalī* is a person who is implementing the principle of *ḥsān*.<sup>80</sup> Rolston employs a systemic circulation model regarding cause-and-effect relationships, while al-Qushayrī uses the

<sup>79</sup> Rolston, *Environmental Ethics*, 202–220.

<sup>80</sup> Qushayrī, *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt*, 2007, I:338–39.

analogy of land and sea as the self and the heart. Here, environmental degradation means damage to the self through faulty reasoning. Humans need to correct and improve themselves continuously, or in Rolston's terms, move from value-in-itself towards value-in-togetherness, from the interactive event towards the relational encounter. The figure below summarizes the construct of the Sufistic environmental ethics framework.



**Figure 3:** Construction of Sufistic Environmental Ethics  
(Authors' formulation)

Figure 3 depicts the systemic values (X) that are transformed into consciousness within oneself (soul or *nafs*). Within this cluster, holistic charges (a) are consolidated, centered on three main components: integration towards biodiversity conservation, appreciation of rights of non-human entities (organisms), and human dependence on macro-ecological systems (biosystemic). Furthermore, cluster Y comprises three fundamental components that serve as stabilizers for *tazkiyat al-nafs*, supported by *zuhd* or *wara'*, *khawf* or *rajā'*, and *qanā'a* or *iḥsān*.

Here, the *nafs* represents a central point between X and Y, denoted by P. It inclines towards negatives (destructiveness, worldly love, materialism, and the like), which in the context of Sufistic thought is called corruption (*fāsād*). Therefore, individuals must possess both scientific knowledge and insight (science) as well as spiritual insight (Sufism). If X is synonymous with reason,

then Y is synonymous with emotion; however, both are in harmony and interdependent. The description in the above diagram can be formulated as follows: X (systemic values) + a (biodiversity-organisms-biosystemic); P (person) + b (*fāsād al-barr*, *fāsād al-baḥr*); Y (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) + c (*zuhd/waraʿ*, *khawf/rajāʿ*, *qanāʿa/iḥsān*). If  $X + a + P + b + Y + c$ , then the result is  $X + a + P + Y + c$ . This forms the basis of environmental Sufism with the foundation of *tazkiyat al-nafs* by al-Qushayrī and systemic values by Rolston.

## Conclusion

In al-Qushayrī's Sufistic perspective, self-purification is supported by three pillars that guide spiritual life (internal and subjective). Ascetism and profound piety propel the believer to exercise caution and avoid sin, while fear and hope lead the believer away from clinging to the material world. In addition, contentment and personal excellence direct the believer's focus towards God. Meanwhile, the perspective of the environmental activist Rolston focuses on systemic values supported by three main pillars that shape environmental ethics (external-objective). Biodiversity emphasizes the importance of preserving the diversity of life forms, while the intrinsic value of living organisms supposes that each species has a right to exist. In addition, the biosystemic concept highlights the complexity and interdependence within larger systems of life.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of integration between religion (Sufism) and science (environmental ethics), integrating self-purification with systemic values to create a new model of human behavior towards the environment. At the practical level, these findings can help create environmental balance, develop ethical attitudes, and foster responsible interactions between God, humans, and nature. However, this research is limited to ethics and has not yet been connected to practical areas such as *fiqh*, which forms the primary basis for Muslim practices. Therefore, this study recommends that future researchers construct an epistemological framework connecting Sufistic environmental ethics (*taṣawwuf al-bī'a*) with environmental jurisprudence (*fiqh al-bī'a*).

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### Author Contributions:

A.A.M. formulated methods, sorted data, edited, and constructed environmental ethics in line with al-Qushayrī's Sufism, using the systemic ecology approach of Holmes Rolston III in his work *Environmental Ethics*, and prepared the visual representation. M.I.F. collected and studied al-Qushayrī's conceptual thought in his *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt*, supported with relevant references. W.F.R. helped organize the article.

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