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RECONSTRUCTING THE ONTOLOGICAL STRUCTURE OF *WUJŪD* IN MULLĀ ṢADRĀ'S PHILOSOPHY AS A FOUNDATION FOR CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC ECOLOGICAL ETHICS

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Abstract: *The global environmental crisis not only reflects technical and policy failures but also reveals an ontological problem in understanding the human–nature relationship. The discourse on Islamic environmental ethics remains predominantly normative-textual, centered on the concepts of khalifah and mizān, without sufficient metaphysical grounding, thereby creating a gap between normative sources and the ontological legitimacy of ecological ethics. This study aims to reconstruct the concept of wujūd in the philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā as an ontological foundation for the formulation of contemporary Islamic ecological ethics. This research constitutes a qualitative study based on library research, employing philosophical and hermeneutical analysis of texts. Data was collected through documentary study encompassing relevant primary and secondary sources. Data analysis was conducted systematically through stages of conceptual identification, thematic reduction and classification, and the formulation of conclusions grounded in argumentative coherence. The findings demonstrate that the reconstruction of wujūd as a graded and dynamic ontological reality reconfigures the conceptual basis of the human–nature relationship, shifting it from an anthropocentric dualism toward an integrated existential continuum. The results further indicate that ecological ethics can be formulated as an ontological consequence of the structure of reality rather than as an external normative system. The reinterpretation of the concepts of khalifah and mizān within the horizon of existential yields principles of participation, ontological responsibility, and cosmic harmony as the foundation of environmental ethics. This study contributes to strengthening the metaphysical basis of Islamic environmental ethics and to advancing Islamic philosophical discourse in response to the global ecological crisis.*

Keywords: *Aṣālat al-Wujūd, Environmental Crisis, Islamic Ecological Ethics, Mullā Ṣadrā, Ontology.*

Abstrak: Krisis lingkungan global tidak hanya menunjukkan kegagalan teknis dan kebijakan, tetapi juga problem ontologis dalam memahami relasi manusia–alam. Diskursus etika lingkungan Islam masih dominan normatif-tekstual melalui konsep khalifah dan *mīzān*, tanpa penguatan fondasi metafisik yang memadai, sehingga terjadi kesenjangan antara sumber normatif dan legitimasi ontologis etika ekologis. Penelitian ini bertujuan merekonstruksi konsep *wujūd* dalam filsafat Mullā Ṣadrā sebagai fondasi ontologis bagi perumusan etika ekologis Islam kontemporer. Penelitian ini merupakan studi kualitatif berbasis kajian kepustakaan dengan analisis filosofis dan hermeneutik terhadap teks. Data dikumpulkan melalui studi dokumentasi yang mencakup sumber primer dan sekunder yang relevan. Analisis data dilakukan secara sistematis melalui tahap identifikasi konsep, reduksi dan klasifikasi tematik, serta penarikan kesimpulan berdasarkan koherensi argumentatif. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa rekonstruksi struktur ontologis *wujūd* dalam filsafat Mullā Ṣadrā menegaskan kesatuan eksistensial yang bersifat gradasional dan dinamis, yang sekaligus menyediakan dasar konseptual untuk menafsirkan ulang relasi manusia–alam sebagai suatu kontinuum yang terintegrasi, bukan sebagai oposisi dualistik. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa etika ekologis dapat dirumuskan sebagai konsekuensi ontologis dari struktur realitas, bukan sekadar norma eksternal. Reinterpretasi konsep *khalifah* dan *mīzān* dalam horizon eksistensial menghasilkan prinsip partisipasi, tanggung jawab ontologis, dan harmoni kosmik sebagai dasar etika lingkungan. Penelitian ini berkontribusi dalam penguatan basis metafisik etika lingkungan Islam serta pengembangan diskursus filsafat Islam yang relevan terhadap krisis ekologis global.

Kata-kata Kunci: *Aṣālat Al-Wujūd, Etika Ekologis Islam, Krisis Lingkungan, Mullā Ṣadrā, Ontologi.*

Introduction

The issue of the global environmental crisis today is not merely a technical or economic problem, but also an ethical and epistemic crisis that demands profound philosophical reflection on the human–nature relationship. Human activities grounded in the domination of nature have led to ecosystem degradation, climate change, and unprecedented biodiversity loss (Gulzar et al. 2021, 1–10). Several scholars of Islamic environmental ethics, the concepts of *khalifah* (human stewardship over nature) and *mīzān* (cosmic balance) constitute essential moral foundations for rethinking this relationship; however, systematic philosophical inquiry into their ontological grounding remains limited (Munji 2016, 288).

At its core, this crisis is rooted in a modern epistemological paradigm that sharply separates subject and object and positions nature as a neutral entity available for instrumental exploitation. This dualistic mindset has generated an anthropocentric and extractive model of development, thereby stripping the human–nature relationship of its sacred and ontological dimensions. In this context, the environmental problem cannot be reduced to issues of regulation or green technology; rather, it concerns the fundamental worldview through which reality is understood. Without revising its ontological and epistemological foundations, technical solutions risk remaining temporary and failing to address the root causes of the crisis. Therefore, philosophical inquiry is required to reassess the fundamental assumptions concerning the nature of existence, the intrinsic value of nature, and the position of the human being within the cosmic order (Hajam and Saumantri 2024, 307).

Within the tradition of Islamic philosophy, the metaphysical doctrine of *wujūd*

(understood as the philosophical account of existence as ultimate reality) serves as the foundation for understanding cosmic reality as a holistic order in which the human being is not regarded as an entity separate from nature, but as an integral part of the totality of existence, interconnected in a hierarchical and unified structure. This concept affirms that reality is not merely a collection of discrete material entities; rather, it is a graded manifestation of a single source of existence. Such a perspective resonates with the current of Islamic environmentalism, which views nature as a manifestation of divine creation possessing intrinsic value rather than as a mere object of human exploitation (Ragozina 2023, 240).

At this juncture, reconstructing the ontological basis of Islamic environmental ethics becomes imperative. If nature is understood as part of the spectrum of existence, endowed with its own degree of ontological reality, then the human–nature relationship can no longer be reduced to a utilitarian framework. Instead, it must be conceived as a participatory relationship within a shared network of existence. Consequently, violations of ecological balance constitute not only social or moral transgressions but also deviations from the ontological structure of reality itself. This perspective opens the possibility for a shift from an ethics grounded solely in normative obligation toward an ethics rooted in ontological consciousness.

The thought of the classical philosopher Mullā Ṣadrā (*Ṣadr al-Muta‘allihīn*) (1571–1640), particularly his doctrine of *aṣālat al-wujūd* (the primacy of existence over essence), introduces a metaphysical vision in which reality is understood as a dynamic unity of graded existence. In his major work *al-Hikmah al-Muta‘aliyyah fī al-Asfār al-Aqliyyah al-Arba‘ah (al-Asfār)*, Ṣadrā explicitly argues that existence (*al-wujūd*) constitutes a single, graded reality (*ḥaqīqah wāhidah mushakkikah*), within which all entities participate according to varying degrees of intensity (Sadra 2022, 35). In this perspective, existence is hierarchical (*tashkīk al-wujūd*), such that every entity, including non-human nature, possesses a distinct intensity of being while remaining within a single ontological continuum. This conception provides a philosophical basis for viewing nature and humanity as ontologically interconnected within a shared continuum of existence, rather than as entities separated by traditional anthropological dualism (Irawan et al. 2021, 28).

From a theoretical standpoint, Mullā Ṣadrā’s transcendental ontology articulates the relationship among cosmic reality, the human being, and God within a structure that is not only philosophical but also ethical (Walid 2019, 67). This relational structure is further grounded in Ṣadrā’s exposition in *al-Asfār*, where existence is treated not as a mere attribute (*‘arad*), but as the fundamental reality that underlies and unifies all levels of being. Existence is therefore not merely an attribute of entities; rather, it constitutes a dynamic relational reality in which each level of being possesses inherent value within the cosmic order, including the natural world (Saumantri et al. 2025, 165). Moreover, Ṣadrā’s doctrine of substantial motion (*al-ḥarakah al-jawhariyyah*), as elaborated in *al-Asfār*, posits that all beings undergo continuous ontological transformation toward higher intensities of existence, thereby establishing a dynamic and teleologically

oriented cosmos (Sadra 2022, 42–45). The doctrines of substantial motion and the gradation of existence thus provide a foundation for a model of ecological ethics that challenges extreme anthropocentrism and enables a transformation of ecological consciousness grounded in metaphysical principles.

Within a more explicitly philosophical domain, Diah Qurrotul'ain and Soleh have begun to relate the thought of Mullā Ṣadrā to the issue of the environmental crisis through the concepts of substantial motion and the unity of reality (Qurrotul'ain and Soleh 2024, 255). Nevertheless, although the discourse on Islamic environmental ethics has developed, studies that explicitly reconstruct Mullā Ṣadrā's ontology of *wujūd* as a philosophical foundation for contemporary ecological ethics remain limited. This condition indicates the need for a more rigorous and systematically articulated conceptual framework.

The ideal condition of Islamic environmental ethics would involve an understanding that is not confined to normative moral principles but is also grounded in a robust ontological foundation. However, much of the existing scholarly literature on Islamic ecological ethics remains focused on textual interpretation and offers limited systematic philosophical reconstruction capable of bridging classical Islamic metaphysical theory with contemporary environmental challenges.

The novel contribution of this study lies in its conceptual and systematic reconstruction of the doctrine of *aṣālat al-wujūd* within the philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā as a coherent ontological foundation for the formulation of Islamic environmental ethics that transcends a merely normative dimension and is rooted in rigorous metaphysical reflection. Unlike previous studies, this article does not merely appropriately select concepts from Ṣadrā's thought for ethical reflection but reconstructs the internal coherence of his ontological system, specifically the integration of *aṣālat al-wujūd*, *tashkīk al-wujūd*, and *al-ḥarakah al-jawhariyyah* as a unified philosophical basis for ecological ethics.

For instance, Qurrotul'ain and Soleh primarily employ Ṣadrā's ideas in a descriptive manner by linking substantial motion and the unity of reality to environmental issues, yet their analysis remains fragmentary and does not formulate a systematic ontological framework that translates these concepts into a coherent ethical theory (Qurrotul'ain and Soleh 2024, 257). Similarly, Yasser discusses the metaphysical structure of graded existence but does not extend this ontology into a normative ecological framework that addresses contemporary environmental crises (Yasser 2014, 52).

In contrast, this study advances a more rigorous reconstruction by: (1) systematizing the core ontological principles within Ṣadrā's *ḥikmah muta'aliyah*; (2) explicating their internal philosophical relations; and (3) demonstrating their direct implications for formulating an ontologically grounded ecological ethics. This integrative reconstruction allows for a shift from partial conceptual borrowing toward a comprehensive philosophical model.

Based on this ontological formulation, the study aims to advance an alternative ethical paradigm that is not only theoretically relevant within the discourse of

Islamic philosophy but also practically significant in addressing the complexity of the current global environmental crisis. Furthermore, this study provides a philosophical foundation that can be operationalized in policy contexts, where policymakers may utilize this ontological perspective to formulate environmental regulations that recognize the intrinsic value of nature, rather than reducing it to purely economic utility. Such orientation may contribute to the development of more integrative approaches to resource management, conservation, and sustainable development.

This study constitutes a qualitative research project grounded in library research, employing philosophical-hermeneutical and conceptual analysis. This design was selected because the object of inquiry concerns metaphysical doctrines in the philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā and the theoretical construction of Islamic ecological ethics, both of which require in-depth interpretation of classical philosophical texts as well as contemporary scholarly literature. Data were collected through documentary research involving primary and secondary sources.

The primary sources include Mullā Ṣadrā's seminal work, *al-Hikmah al-Muta'aliyyah fī al-Asfār al-Aqliyyah al-Arba'ah*, selected due to its comprehensive and systematic articulation of his mature ontological system, particularly concerning the doctrines of *aṣālat al-wujūd*, *tashkik al-wujūd*, and *al-ḥarakah al-jawhariyyah*. This work was complemented by other relevant texts by Ṣadrā, such as *Kitāb al-Mashā'ir*, as well as classical and contemporary commentaries that specifically engage with the ontology of *wujūd*. The selection of these sources was based on their direct relevance to Ṣadrā's ontological framework and their influence within the broader discourse of Islamic metaphysics.

The hermeneutical analysis was conducted through several analytical steps: (1) contextualizing key ontological concepts within the internal structure of Ṣadrā's philosophical system; (2) tracing the development and interrelation of core doctrines across different sections of *Asfār*; and (3) reconstructing their conceptual coherence in relation to contemporary ecological ethical concerns. This process was supported by a comparative reading of secondary scholarly interpretations to critically evaluate and refine conceptual reconstruction.

The data collection process was conducted through systematic searches of academic databases. Data credibility was ensured through source triangulation by systematically comparing interpretations derived from primary texts with established scholarly commentaries and critical studies on Ṣadrā's philosophy. For example, interpretations of *tashkik al-wujūd* extracted from *al-Asfār* were cross-referenced with analyses by contemporary Ṣadrian scholars such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Sajjad Rizvi to ensure conceptual consistency, clarify terminological ambiguities, and avoid isolated or decontextualized readings (Creswell and Plano Clark 2018, 112).

Data analysis employed an interactive qualitative model encompassing data reduction, thematic categorization, and reflective conclusion drawing. The analysis was carried out thematically and argumentatively in order to establish logical coherence between the metaphysical structure and its ethical implications,

in accordance with theory-driven qualitative research procedures (Miles et al. 2014, 241).

Reconstruction of *Wujūd* in *Hikmah Muta'aliyah*

The ontological structure articulated by Mullā Ṣadrā demonstrates that the principle of *aṣālat al-wujūd* is not merely an abstract metaphysical thesis concerning the primacy of existence over essence; rather, it constitutes a systemic foundation that reorients the understanding of inter-entity relations within the totality of reality (Muhammad 2020). Faiz explains that within the philosophy of *ḥikmah muta'aliyah*, existence is conceived as a single, graded reality (*tashkīk al-wujūd*), such that every entity, human and non-human alike, participates in the same ontological spectrum (Shah 2021, 137).

In Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophy, differences among entities do not arise from separate essential distinctions, but from varying intensities of existence within the same *wujūd*. This doctrine, known as *tashkīk al-wujūd*, affirms that existence possesses unity of essence (*waḥdat al-ḥaqīqah*) alongside multiplicity of degrees (*ikhtilāf bi al-tashkīk*) (Sadra 2022, 278). This structure indicates that human beings, animals, plants, and other cosmic entities inhabit a single ontological continuum. Their differences are gradational rather than dichotomous.

The interpretation of these findings leads to the conclusion that, within Ṣadrā's perspective, nature possesses intrinsic ontological legitimacy. If existence constitutes the primary reality and essence is merely a mental abstraction, then the value of an entity is not determined by human conceptual categorization but by its degree of being within the structure of *wujūd*. Destructive exploitation of nature is therefore not only an ethical error but also an ontological one, as it disregards the fact that nature is an actual manifestation of *wujūd* itself. In this view, the human–nature relationship is participatory rather than dominative (Abrar 2025, 277).

Modern epistemology, particularly in its Cartesian legacy, grounds the structure of reality in a subject–object dichotomy, which subsequently gives rise to an instrumental paradigm toward nature. Within this framework, nature is reduced to *res extensa*, available for rational manipulation by the human subject (Saumantri 2023, 458). By contrast, the *wujūd* proposes a relational-hierarchical model that unifies subject and object within a single existential reality (Walid and Hamdi 2023, 320). In this context, contemporary relational ontology and the concept of deep ecology share a common rejection of dualism; however, neither explicitly situates ontological unity within an integral theistic metaphysical horizon as articulated in Ṣadrā's system.

The concept of *al-ḥarakah al-jawhariyyah* further reinforces this ontological dynamism. The findings of this study indicate that substantial motion is not merely a cosmological theory, but a conceptual framework for understanding reality as a process of existential intensification. Nature is not conceived as a static entity; rather, it is understood as a reality continuously moving toward its ontological perfection (Usman 2022, 150). Ecological degradation, in this context, may be interpreted as a disruption of this existential trajectory. Such an interpretation

expands environmental ethics beyond the level of moral obligation toward an ontological responsibility for the very process of being itself.

explains that the primacy of existence within Ṣadrā's system yields a non-reductionist conception of reality and rejects ontological fragmentation. He argues that, in *ḥikmah muta'āliyah*, existence is understood as the principle of actuality that unifies the cosmos within a coherent hierarchical structure (Ali 2021, 127). This account demonstrates that each entity possesses ontological value by virtue of its participation in the intensity of *wujūd*.

According to Sadra, existence is a single reality manifested in various degrees of actuality. Consequently, nature cannot be reduced to a passive object, since its being constitutes a concrete actualization of existence itself (Sadra 2022, 280). This interpretation is highly relevant to the discourse of ecological ethics, as the value of an entity is not determined by its economic utility but by the degree of its existential actuality.

The dynamic dimension of Ṣadrā's ontology is articulated through the doctrine of *al-ḥarakah al-jawhariyyah* (substantial motion). He rejects the view that substances are static and maintains that change occurs at the level of substance rather than merely at the accidental level (Sadra 2022, 281). Every entity is engaged in a process of actualization toward a higher intensity of existence. This motion is intrinsic and ontological in nature. Accordingly, the cosmos is understood as an inherently dynamic reality rather than as a collection of fixed and immutable entities.

Walid explains that Ṣadrā's doctrine of substantial motion carries both cosmological and ethical implications, as it conceives nature as a living reality that actively participates in the dynamism of existence (Walid 2024, 416). Similarly, 'Athiyyah et al. affirm that within the classical Islamic metaphysical system, nature is understood as a cosmic sign (*āyah*) endowed with a directed ontological structure ('Athiyyah et al. 2025, 225). This account strengthens the argument that ecological degradation is not merely a material phenomenon but also an ontological disruption, insofar as it interferes with the process of cosmic actualization.

The integration of *aṣālat al-wujūd*, *tashkīk al-wujūd*, and *al-ḥarakah al-jawhariyyah* produces a coherent ontological system. The primacy of existence secures the objectivity of reality; the gradation of existence explains differentiation without fragmentation; and substantial motion accounts for the internal dynamism of the cosmos. These three principles demonstrate that human beings do not occupy an ontologically separate position from nature. Rather, the human being exists at a particular level of existence endowed with a higher reflective capacity yet remains a participant within the same structure of *wujūd*.

Mahyuddin and Rezaniya argue that Ṣadrā's metaphysics provides a conceptual foundation for understanding the cosmos as an integrated existential unity. The doctrine of the gradation of existence (*tashkīk al-wujūd*) rejects materialistic reductionism by affirming that reality is not confined to the physical dimension alone but encompasses multiple levels of being within a single ontological essence (Mahyuddin and Rezaniya 2025, 178). From a theoretical standpoint, Mullā

Ṣadrā's transcendental ontology articulates the relationship among cosmic reality, the human being, and God within a structure that is not only philosophical but also ethical (Walid 2019, 101). Existence is not merely an attribute of entities; rather, it constitutes a dynamic relational reality in which each level of being possesses inherent value within the cosmic order, including the natural world (Faiq and Farhan 2023, 172). The doctrines of substantial motion (*al-ḥarakah al-jawhariyyah*) and the gradation of existence provide a foundation for a model of ecological ethics that challenges extreme anthropocentrism and enables a transformation of ecological consciousness grounded in metaphysical principles.

It is important to note, however, that Ṣadrā's doctrine of *aṣālat al-wujūd* emerged within a broader philosophical debate in Islamic thought, particularly in contrast to the doctrine of *aṣālat al-mābiyyah* (the primacy of essence) associated with earlier Peripatetic traditions. While proponents of essentialism maintain that quiddity constitutes the primary reality, Ṣadrā reconfigures this position by asserting the ontological primacy of existence as the ground of all intelligibility and value. This debate reflects the plurality of metaphysical orientations within Islamic philosophy and indicates that Ṣadrā's framework represents a specific, though highly influential, philosophical resolution rather than a universally uncontested doctrine.

Several contemporary studies have sought to relate Islamic philosophy to environmental ethics; however, the majority continue to emphasize a normative-textual orientation. Mukhlis, for instance, underscores the importance of the concepts of *khalīfah*, *amānah*, and *mīzān* as Qur'anic foundations for ecological morality, yet does not develop a systematic ontological grounding for these principles (Mukhlis 2022, 92). Similarly, Mashadi positions Islamic environmental ethics as a cultural framework for global sustainability policies (Mashadi 2025, 8), while Muniri et al. examine ecological concerns within the perspective of Islamic spirituality (Muniri et al. 2025, 102).

In addition, variations in the interpretation of *khalīfah* and *mīzān* can also be found within Islamic intellectual traditions, ranging from juridical-theological readings that emphasize normative obligation to mystical and cosmological interpretations that stress harmony and interconnectedness. These diverse interpretations indicate that Islamic environmental ethics is not conceptually monolithic, but rather shaped by differing epistemological and ontological commitments.

Within a more explicitly philosophical domain, Muslih et al. have begun to relate the thought of Mullā Ṣadrā to the issue of the environmental crisis through the concepts of substantial motion and the unity of reality (Muslih et al. 2025, 166). Nevertheless, although the discourse on Islamic environmental ethics has developed, studies that explicitly reconstruct Mullā Ṣadrā's ontology of *wujūd* as a philosophical foundation for contemporary ecological ethics remain limited. This condition indicates the need for a more rigorous and systematically articulated conceptual framework.

Critique of the Modern Anthropocentric Paradigm

The modern anthropocentric paradigm is rooted in an epistemological structure that sharply separates the knowing subject from the known object. Since the formulation of modern rationalism, particularly within the Cartesian tradition, reality has been conceived as something that stands before consciousness as an external object capable of being measured, classified, and manipulated (Fernando et al. 2025, 175). Within this construction, the human being is positioned as both the epistemic center and the center of value, while nature is reduced to a neutral material entity. Saumantri explains that Western modernity constructed a naturalistic cosmology that radically distinguishes human interiority from the physicality of nature, rendering their relationship external and instrumental. This separation provides philosophical legitimacy for the exploitation of nature, since value is determined by the interests of the rational subject (Saumantri 2022, 237).

According to Baumann, the narrative of modern progress rests upon the assumption that nature constitutes a reserve of resources that may be extracted without limit, provided that technology can control it. This conception reinforces the view that nature possesses no independent ontological value apart from human interests (Baumann 2021, 36). Within the framework of modern epistemology, nature is understood as an object that can be mathematically represented and regulated through rational calculation. Consequently, the human–nature relationship becomes instrumental in character. Nature is not regarded as a participant in shared reality, but as a means for achieving human economic and political objectives (Hidayatulloh et al. 2024, 385). Criticism of this position has developed within contemporary environmental philosophy, which rejects the reduction of reality to material objects. However, such critiques often remain normative and are not consistently accompanied by a systematic ontological justification.

The *wujūd* in the philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā offers a conceptual contrast to such dualism. The doctrine of *aṣālat al-wujūd* affirms that existence constitutes the objective reality underlying all entities, while differentiation is gradational in nature (*tashkik al-wujūd*) (Atrak and Shaminejad 2023, 103). Accordingly, the relationship between human beings and nature is not external but rather a relation among degrees within a single existential unity. Yasrebi explains that the graded structure of existence in Ṣadrā's metaphysics rejects ontological fragmentation and affirms the unity of reality within the plurality of levels of being (Yasrebi 2022, 18).

Within this system, the subject–object separation lacks absolute ontological legitimacy. Although the human being possesses reflective intellectual capacity, human existence represents one actualization within the same existential reality shared with nature. Consequently, the relational paradigm embedded in the *wujūd* replaces dualism with hierarchical continuity. This relationship affirms the ontological interconnectedness of humanity and the cosmos without eliminating differentiation in degrees of existence.

The modern utilitarian paradigm evaluates nature according to its contribution

to human welfare. Value is determined by economic utility, productivity, and efficiency. In environmental economics literature, nature is frequently categorized as natural capital, measurable through market-based indicators (Khan and Haneef 2022, 170). Sistyamurti et al. explain that the global economic system has historically treated nature as an asset subject to exploitation without adequate consideration of its regenerative limits (Sistyamurti et al. 2024, 46).

The reduction of value to economic utility entails the legitimization of excessive exploitation. If the value of nature is determined solely by its usefulness, then when its economic benefit declines, its value is likewise considered diminished. Such a conception neglects the ontological dimension of nature's being. Critiques of ecological utilitarianism argue that monetary measurement is incapable of representing the complexity of ecological, spiritual, and existential values.

From the perspective of *tashkik al-wujūd*, this reduction contradicts the ontological structure of reality. If every entity possesses an actual degree of existence, then its value does not depend upon its instrumental relation to human beings. Rather, value derives from the actuality of *wujūd* itself (Effendi 2021, 71). Wahyudi and Mahaswa further explain that, in Ṣadrā's metaphysics, existence functions as the principle of value because it constitutes the actual reality underlying all things (Wahyudi and Mahaswa 2020, 202).

Accordingly, the intrinsic value of nature possesses an ontological foundation independent of utilitarian calculation. Non-human entities hold a legitimate degree of being within the cosmic structure. The recognition of this value does not depend on economic benefit but on participation in the intensity of existence. This argument is reinforced by the doctrine of *al-ḥarakah al-jawhariyyah*, which maintains that every entity moves toward an intensification of being. If reality is dynamic and teleologically oriented, then actions that damage ecosystems may be interpreted as obstructing the process of existential actualization.

Nasr explains that in classical Islamic cosmology, nature is understood as a living reality endowed with ontological orientation, rather than as inert matter (Nasr 2017, 211). The *wujūd* thus provides a rational justification for acknowledging intrinsic value, since existence is conceived as the source of actuality and the ground of reality's legitimacy. Consequently, the critique of modern anthropocentrism is not merely ethical but ontological in character. The human–nature relationship must be understood as a relation among degrees of existence within a unified reality, rather than as a relation between a dominant subject and a passive object.

Formulation of Ecological Ethics Based on *Wujūd*

The formulation of ecological ethics grounded in the *wujūd* proceeds from the metaphysical thesis that the structure of reality determines the basis of normativity. In the philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā, the doctrine of *aṣālat al-wujūd* affirms that existence is the fundamental and objective reality, while essence is mental and derivative. In *al-Hikmah al-Muta'aliyah fī al-Asfār al-'Aqliyyah al-Arba'ah*, Ṣadrā states that "*al-wujūd ḥaqīqah wāḥidah mushtarakah*" (existence is a single, shared reality manifested in graded degrees) (Sadra 2022, 179). This statement indicates

that all entities are actualizations of the same ontological essence, differing only in intensity. Consequently, ethics cannot be separated from ontology, since value inheres in existential actuality itself.

Muhammad explains that in Ṣadrā's metaphysics, the intensity of existence determines the ontological status of an entity without severing its connection to the totality of the cosmos (Muhammad 2020, 149). This account affirms that the human being possesses a higher intellectual capacity than other entities yet remains within the same existential network. Therefore, functional superiority cannot be interpreted as legitimizing ontological domination. Human beings participate in the same structure of reality as nature and do not stand outside that system.

This conception of participation is reinforced by the doctrine of *al-ḥarakah al-jawhariyyah*. In *al-Asfār*, Mullā Ṣadrā states that all entities move toward a more intense existential actualization (Sadra 2022, 180). His motion is ontological and universal in nature. Accordingly, the human–nature relationship may be understood as a dynamic co-existence within the process of cosmic actualization. Human actions that damage ecosystems therefore constitute an interruption of this ontological process. According to Hajam, in classical Islamic cosmology, nature is conceived as a living reality endowed with ontological orientation and existential purpose (Hajam and Saumantri 2023, 156).

From this perspective, ecological ethics is not grounded merely in pragmatic utility, but in awareness of the human being's ontological position within the structure of the cosmos. In Ṣadrā's metaphysics, value is directly linked to the actuality of existence itself; thus, ethical action is grounded in the recognition of an objective and graded structure of reality (Rosowulan et al. 2022, 115). Normativity in ecological ethics therefore derives from ontology rather than from social consensus or economic calculation.

The formulation of ecological ethics grounded in the *wujūd* yields several normative principles supported by ontological justification. *First*, moderate non-anthropocentrism. This principle does not deny the human role as a rational being but rejects claims of ontological exclusivity. Within the system of *tashkik al-wujūd*, the human being occupies a particular level of existence endowed with reflective capacity yet remains inseparable from the cosmic structure. Consequently, the value of non-human entities does not depend upon human interests. This principle differs from radical biocentrism in that it continues to acknowledge differentiation in existential degrees.

Second, existential interconnectedness. The graded structure of existence demonstrates that all entities are linked within a single ontological unity. Schober et al. explain that critiques of modern dualism call for a relational conception of reality (Schober et al. 2025, 903). The ontology articulated by Mullā Ṣadrā provides a metaphysical foundation for such a relational conception by affirming that the plurality of entities does not negate the unity of existence. In ecological terms, this interconnectedness implies that damage at one level of existence affects the integrity of the entire cosmic structure.

Third, ontological responsibility. If the human being constitutes part of the same

existential structure, then human actions bear implications for the entire order of *wujūd*. According to Khan and Haneef, the failure of the global economic system to account for ecological limits stems from neglecting the interconnected value of nature (Khan and Haneef 2022, 166). The *wujūd* provides a rational justification for asserting that responsibility toward nature is not merely a moral obligation, but a consequence of the human being's ontological position within the hierarchy of existence. As an entity endowed with a higher intensity of existence, the human being possesses reflective capacity that entails accountability for the consequences of his or her actions.

Fourth, cosmic harmony. In Ṣadrā's system, substantial motion indicates that the cosmos moves toward a more perfect existential actualization. Harmony therefore signifies not merely ecological balance, but alignment within ontological dynamism. In line with Putra, who explains that the modern anthropogenic crisis reflects a disruption of the Earth's systemic equilibrium, the *wujūd* interprets such disruption as a disturbance within the graded structure of existence. Accordingly, the principle of cosmic harmony requires human action to align with the ontological orientation of reality (Putra 2023, 60).

Based on the integration of the primacy of existence, the gradation of existence, and substantial motion, ontological ecological ethics affirms that the human–nature relationship is participatory and grounded in responsibility. The value of nature does not depend on its economic utility, but on the actuality of its being. Human beings do not function as dominators, but as reflective participants within a dynamic spectrum of existence. This formulation provides philosophical legitimacy for recognizing the intrinsic value of nature and offers an argumentative foundation for transforming the paradigm of Islamic ecological ethics in response to the contemporary global environmental crisis.

Reinterpretation of *Khalīfah* and *Mīzān* within the Framework of *Wujūd*

In classical discourse, *khalīfah* is often understood as the representative mandate of the human being on earth based on Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 30, while *mīzān* is interpreted as the principle of cosmic balance as stated in Q.S. Ar-Raḥmān [55]: 7–9. However, dominant readings tend to situate these concepts at the level of prescriptive ethics without substantial exploration of their metaphysical foundations. The *wujūd* in the philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā provides a conceptual basis for reinterpreting both concepts as expressions of the existential structure of reality.

Within the system of *aṣālat al-wujūd*, existence constitutes an objective reality manifested in graded degrees (*tashkīk al-wujūd*). Consequently, human beings do not stand outside the cosmos but occupy a particular degree of existential intensity. Usman explains that the graded structure of existence in Ṣadrā's metaphysics affirms ontological continuity among cosmic entities, such that differentiation does not negate the unity of existence (Usman 2022, 150). In many contemporary readings, however, the concept of *khalīfah* has often been interpreted in a dominative sense, whereby humans are viewed as possessing a superior authority that legitimizes the

control and exploitation of nature. This interpretation is frequently grounded in anthropocentric theological assumptions that separate human beings from the broader structure of existence.

In contrast, within the ontological framework of *wujūd*, such a dominative understanding loses its philosophical basis. *Khalīfah* cannot be reduced to a form of sovereign authority over nature; rather, it signifies the ontological position of the human being within the hierarchy of *wujūd*, where human existence represents a particular degree of intensity that remains intrinsically connected to the totality of being.

Izutsu, in his study on the semantic structure of *wujūd* in Islamic philosophy, explains that the unity of existence in the Islamic metaphysical tradition presupposes an unbroken ontological interconnectedness between human beings and nature (Izutsu 2022, 134). Although this work predates recent scholarship, it remains a principal reference in contemporary studies of Islamic ontology. Accordingly, *khalīfah* cannot be understood as a relation of external superiority, but rather as an internal function within the totality of existence.

This interpretation rejects the reduction of *khalīfah* to a justification for resource exploitation. If the human being represents an existential manifestation with a higher intensity within the spectrum of *wujūd*, then rational and moral capacities arise as consequences of that existential degree. These capacities do not confer absolute rights; rather, they entail ontological accountability. Nasr explains that in classical Islamic cosmology, the human being is understood as the microcosm (*al-‘ālam al-ṣaghīr*) reflecting the structure of the macrocosm, thereby rendering human responsibility both representative and participatory (Nasr 2017, 156).

Chittick explains that within Islamic metaphysics, the human being’s position as an image of the cosmos entails the responsibility to preserve ontological harmony (Chittick 2019, 104). Contemporary studies on Islamic ethics and the environment draw upon this thesis to reject dominative interpretations of *khalīfah* (Permadi et al. 2022, 100; Ragozina 2023, 240). Accordingly, the mandate of vicegerency possesses a participatory and reflective character rather than an exploitative one.

Within the framework of the ontology of *wujūd*, the mandate of *khalīfah* signifies the preservation of the integrity of the existential structure rather than its domination. The human being acts as an agent endowed with reflective awareness of cosmic order. Therefore, an ontologically grounded reinterpretation of *khalīfah* positions the human being as a conscious participant in the dynamism of *wujūd*. Functional superiority cannot be separated from ontological responsibility toward other entities within the spectrum of existence.

The concept of *mīzān* acquires a more explicit ontological dimension when related to the doctrine of *al-ḥarakah al-jawhariyyah*. In *al-Asfār*, Mullā Ṣadrā states that all entities move toward a more intense existential actualization (Sadra 2022, 186). This motion unfolds within an ordered hierarchical structure. Cosmic balance, therefore, is not merely a matter of physical proportion, but harmony within the dynamism of existential actualization (*wujūd*) (Walid 2024, 417).

Accordingly, *mīzān* may be understood as a principle of ontological order that secures the coherence of the cosmos' existential process.

Bisri et al. explain that the modern ecological crisis is rooted in a failure to comprehend the ontological relationship between human beings and nature (Bisri et al. 2024, 289). Likewise, Ragozina, in her study of the environment in the Muslim world, argues that the concept of cosmic balance in Islam possesses metaphysical foundations that extend beyond normative ethics. She demonstrates that the Qur'anic principle of balance contains a cosmological dimension intrinsically linked to the structure of creation (Ragozina 2023, 241).

In this context, *mīzān* cannot be reduced to a merely moral concept of ecological balance. Rather, it represents the internal order of the structure of *wujūd*. Violations of ecological balance may therefore be interpreted as distortions of that ontological structure. Accordingly, an ontologically grounded reinterpretation of *mīzān* expands its meaning from an ethical norm to an existential principle. Riko explains that the anthropogenic crisis results from a modern paradigm that neglects the Earth's systemic order (Riko 2024, 460). When viewed in relation to the ontology of *wujūd*, such neglect may be understood as a deviation from the principle of existential order embodied by *mīzān*. Ecological imbalance is thus not merely the consequence of policy failure, but of deviation from an ontological principle of balance. Consequently, the reinterpretation of *mīzān* within the horizon of *wujūd* affirms that cosmic harmony arises from ontological consciousness.

The integration of *khalīfah* and *mīzān* within the structure of *wujūd* yields a coherent conception of ecological ethics. *Khalīfah* signifies the ontological position of the human being as a reflective agent within the hierarchy of existence, while *mīzān* denotes the structural order that must be preserved within the dynamism of the cosmos. Neither functions as an external norm; rather, both emerge as implications of the structure of reality itself. Mohd Akib et al. explain that, in Ṣadrā's metaphysics, value derives from the actuality of existence, and therefore ethical action must conform to that ontological structure (Mohd Akib et al. 2023, 241).

This reinterpretation also rejects a voluntaristic theological understanding. The mandate of *khalīfah* is not merely a normative command, but a consequence of the human being's existential position within the gradation of *wujūd*. Likewise, the principle of balance is not solely a moral demand, but a reflection of the ontological order inherent in reality. Accordingly, environmental preservation acquires metaphysical legitimacy independent of utilitarian justification.

Ateh Laue affirms that cosmic balance in Islamic metaphysics possesses an ontological dimension related to the structure of being, rather than functioning solely as a moral norm (Ateh Laue 2018, 125). This reference demonstrates that the reinterpretation of *mīzān* within the horizon of *wujūd* is firmly grounded in the Islamic intellectual tradition. Based on this analysis, it can be asserted that *wujūd* enables a conceptual transformation of both *khalīfah* and *mīzān*. Human beings are understood as conscious participants in the process of cosmic actualization, while balance is conceived as harmony within the existential structure. This

reinterpretation provides a philosophical foundation for an Islamic ecological ethics that consistently integrates theological and ontological dimensions.

Conclusion

1 The findings of this study affirm that the reconstruction of the concept of *wujūd* in the philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā provides a coherent ontological foundation for the formulation of contemporary Islamic ecological ethics. The doctrine of *aṣālat al-wujūd* establishes existence as an objective and graded reality (*tashkīk al-wujūd*), such that all entities, human and non-human alike, exist within a single, integrated existential continuum. This structure rejects ontological dualism between subject and object and undermines the metaphysical legitimacy of anthropocentric domination over nature. The integration of the primacy of existence, the gradation of existence, and substantial motion (*al-ḥarakah al-jawhariyyah*) demonstrates that cosmic reality is dynamic and teleologically oriented; accordingly, the human–nature relationship must be understood as participatory within the same existential order.

1 Based on this ontological structure, ecological ethics is not positioned as a set of external norms, but as a rational consequence of awareness of the human being's ontological position within the hierarchy of *wujūd*. The reinterpretation of the concepts of *khalīfah* and *mīzān* within the horizon of existential ontology affirms that the mandate of vicegerency entails ontological responsibility for preserving cosmic order and harmony, rather than legitimizing resource exploitation. Thus, the *wujūd* provides metaphysical justification for recognizing the intrinsic value of nature and offers a consistent theoretical foundation for transforming the paradigm of Islamic ecological ethics in response to the global environmental crisis.

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