

Animal Rights In Islam: Sarra Tlili's Criticism of the Anthropocentric Reading of the Qur'an

Muhammad Yasser¹, Alven Putra², Muhammad Yusuf Qardlawi³

¹Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Tarbiyah Daarul Fatah Tangerang Selatan, Indonesia

²Institut Agama Islam Negeri Curup, Indonesia

³Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Aji Muhammad Idris Samarinda, Indonesia

Correspondence: penerbityes@gmail.com

DOI: 10.29240/alquds.v8i3.9660

Submitted: 2024-01-31 | Revised: 2024-06-28 | Accepted: 2024-11-27

Abstract. This study raises the theme of criticism of anthropocentric readings implemented in the Qur'an, as Sarra Tlili often voices in his various scientific works and seminars. As commonly known, anthropocentrism (the dominant paradigm of the modern age) is receiving widespread criticism because it is considered the root of the global environmental crisis and various forms of violence against animals. Anthropocentric reading of the Qur'an itself has given birth to a biased view of nature and non-human animals so that they are only assessed from the aspect of their use for human interests (instrumentalism) as God's golden children (favoritism). As an alternative, Tlili (re)promotes *theocentrism* and *ecocentrism* which are considered more in line with the cosmology of the Qur'an. This research itself uses the hermeneutic *verstehen* method and active reading techniques which are carried out on various works of Tlili regarding the research theme. This research concludes that it is necessary to reinterpret some of the core concepts in the Qur'an as Tlili did so that it does not give rise to biased views of nature and various forms of violence against non-human animals.

Keywords: Sarra Tlili, Anthropocentric Readings, Animal Rights, Animals in Qur'an, Qur'anic Cosmology.

Introduction

The Qur'an is a holy book that was revealed to mankind, so what is wrong with the anthropocentric interpretation or rather human-centered reading of the Qur'an?! Doesn't the Qur'an itself on many occasions emphasize the primacy of man over all nature, and that nature was created to serve the interests of man?! The answer to this question can be found in the history of anthropocentrism itself, which led to the environmental crisis of the modern century as a consequence of the exploitation of nature for the benefit of human beings who have never found the word "enough". Anthropocentrism itself can simply be interpreted as one of the theories of environmental ethics that views humans as the center of the universe, and therefore various policies related to nature must be determined based on human interests (read, economic benefits).¹

Anthropocentrism is also synonymous with racism, sexism, and—with this study—speciesism. If racism is related to discrimination against fellow human beings based on the color

¹ The environmental damage that has occurred throughout the modern century, as Western environmentalists view, is actually a reflection of the intellectual and spiritual crisis as an implication of anthropocentrism that dichotomizes humans with sacred nature. Among the proponents of this view were John Muir, Rosevelt Arne Naess, Lynn White, and Philip Shabecoff. As quoted from, Junaidi Abdillah, "Deconstruction of Anthropocentric Interpretation: An Analysis of Environmentally Insightful Verses", in the journal, *Kalam*, Vol. 8, No. 1, June 2014, pp. 66-67.

of their skin, where white skin is considered superior, both genetically and civilizationally, over black and colored skin (with its colonialism and imperialist project); sexism is related to discrimination against fellow human beings based on their gender, where the male side is identified with active masculinity while the female side is the passive feminine side; Thus, in speciesism, the same pattern is repeated but on a wider scale, where there is discrimination of certain animal species that consider themselves superior to other animals, namely, the human species (*Homo sapiens*). Discrimination against non-human animals has led to acts of violence committed by humans against animals on a much wider and more horrific scale, ranging from the use of animals as guinea pigs in the laboratory (vivisection), the factory *farm* industry, to *animal massacres* in the name of religion—such as the tradition of Eid al-Qurban in Islam. In all levels of anthropocentric discrimination, reason or the ability to think rationally has become the basis for justifying various acts of violence committed by the powerful (white, male, human) against the weaker (colored skin, women, non-human animals).

The justification of rationalism as the foundation of speciesism—as the fruit of anthropocentrism related to the relationship between humans and animals—is not without problems. As voiced by the main proponents of animal rights Peter Singer (representing the school of utilitarianism) and Tom Regan (representing the school of deontology). According to Singer, the issue of animal rights is an inevitable consequence of the liberation *movement* that occurred throughout the 20th century—starting from the liberation movement of people of color over white domination (racism) and women over the oppression of men (sexism), until now there is an awareness to liberate animals from the oppression carried out by one animal species that unilaterally claims superiority based on its rationality and therefore the right to monopolize and dominate for its interests. The question is, if this line of thinking is followed consistently, then what about the fate of the members of the human species who are mentally retarded, attacked by diseases that degrade their thinking ability, and children whose thinking ability has not yet developed? Instead of rationality, Singer then proposed *pain/pleasure experience* as the basis of morality in human-animal relations. Regan, on the other hand, more fundamentally demanded a radical egalitarianism that included the right of animals to live themselves in addition to welfare. In contrast to Singer who still provides space for the use of animals for human interests as long as he continues to pay attention to the aspects of animal welfare and/or the benefits that result are greater than the losses, Regan's demands include the abolition, dissolution, and total elimination of the exploitation of animals based on their intrinsic value as fellow subjects *of life* as well as humans.

In relation to the science of interpretation, as a source of knowledge, law as well as morality of Muslims, it is necessary to be wary of anthropocentric reading of the Qur'an because it has the potential to distort the understanding of the people towards the messages they want to convey, especially related to the relationship between humans and animals. Sarra Tlili noted that no less thinkers of Fazlur Rahman's caliber were exposed to the "virus" of anthropocentrism in their interpretation. Despite claiming that Islam is inclined to theocentrism (a God-centered paradigm), Rahman still views that the entire universe was created for the benefit of humans as well as humans themselves to worship God (anthropocentric).² From this point of view, animals are legitimate to be exploited by mankind for their own sake as long as they are carried out according to the demands

² Sarra Tlili, "Qur'anic Creation: Anthropocentric readings and Ecocentric Possibilities", dalam buku, George Archer dkk (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to the Qur'an*, (London: Routledge, 2022), h. 136.

of the Shari'ah. As Tlili emphasized, if this lens of anthropocentrism can be removed, various verses in the Qur'an indicate the primacy of animals regardless of humanity's interest in them (intrinsic value in animals); leading to the recognition of the reality of animal rights that must be respected and protected. In one of her presentations, Tlili mentioned that there are at least three themes in the Qur'an that indicate the intrinsic value of animals: first, regarding the taking of vows made by God based on the name of the animal (*divine oath*); second, regarding the complexity of the *inner dimension* of animals; and third, regarding the resurrection of animals in the hereafter. These three themes are an indication of the virtue of animals in the cosmology of the Qur'an, which makes them more than just instruments for the fulfillment of human needs. The author will return to this issue in the following chapters.

Thus, there are three intertwined questions to be asked in this study. First, related to Sarra Tlili's criticism of the anthropocentrism bias in the interpretation of the Qur'an. The second question is how Sarra Tlili reinterprets the verses that have been the basis for anthropocentrism. Finally, the third question is about the position of animals themselves in the Qur'an—regardless of anthropocentrism bias—as the basis for the recognition of animal rights in Islamic teachings. To answer this series of questions, it is necessary to first explain the methods used in this study, a brief biography of Sarra Tlili and her works (especially about animals in the Qur'an), and of course the academic debate regarding the position of animals in the Qur'an. This research itself is important to be carried out considering the scarcity of interpretation studies that specifically raise the theme of animals in animal rights discourse, as well as as a basis for further studies regarding anthropocentrism bias in the reading (interpretation) of the Qur'an.

Research Methods

As scientific research, a research method is needed that is per the problem raised. This research is included in the category of literature research conducted on Sarra Tlili's works related to the research theme, so the right method to use is descriptive-analytic qualitative. For this purpose, it is necessary to distinguish between primary and secondary sources: primary sources include various works by Sarra Tlili herself regarding the theme of animals in the Qur'an and anthropocentric criticism of interpretation; While secondary sources include all references to related themes in general—secondary sources themselves are needed to clarify the issues raised while placing the research theme into a broader framework of thought. To capture the meaning meant by Tlili when criticizing the anthropocentric reading of the Qur'an, the author uses Wilhelm Dilthey's reproductive-empathetic-epistemological hermeneutics approach which views that the meaning of a text can be obtained by understanding as best as possible (*verstehen*) the epistemological conditions that background a writer to write down his thoughts.³ In this context, it is important to

³ Dilthey's Hermeneutics is basically a continuation of Scheirmarcher which emphasizes more on the author's psychological state. According to Dilthey, *verstehen* is the right method in the humanities. On the one hand, he agrees with Scheleirmarcher's view that human beings have an inner (psychological) side and therefore cannot be equated with the study of nature (*naturewissenschaften*); But on the other hand, he also sees that the inner side in question can be understood objectively, perhaps by understanding (*verstehen*), the inner world (*erlebnis*) and at the same time the external world (*ausdruck*) of an author. What is meant by *erlebnis* here is the society where the author is sheltered, while *ausdruck* includes the author's work and its references. For more details, see, Antono Wahyudi, "Hermeneutic Interpretation: Observing the Discourse of the Art of Understanding Through the Lens of Modern and Postmodern Philosophy", in journal, *Clause*, Vol 2 No 2, 2018, pp. 56-59 <https://doi.org/10.33479/klausav2i02.150>

understand the socio-historical background of Sarra Tlili and the discourse of animal rights in the contemporary era. The author himself views this hermeneutic model as the most appropriate considering that Tlili until this article was compiled is still actively working, so (supposedly) there is no difficulty in understanding the context of his time.

In particular, this study analyzed the book *Animals in the Qur'an* and several scientific articles by Tlili. To carry out the analysis, an active reading was carried out as suggested by Mortimer J. Adler. This active reading began by asking four interrelated questions: about what is a book as a whole?; what does this book say in detail and how?; does this book contain the truth, either in whole or in part?; What is its relevance to the context of belonging? Thus there is a dialogue between the reader and the author on an imaginary level.⁴

Sarra Tlili: Biography and Works

Not much data is available concerning Sarra Tlili's biography. This is quite natural considering that he is not a mainstream Islamic thinker and mufassir, and most of his works deal with less popular themes. However, this does not necessarily reduce the urgency and credibility of his work, especially concerning the theme of animals in the Qur'an, considering that there have not been many works on this theme raised from an Islamic perspective. In the literature study conducted by the author, there are at least four works related to animal rights from an Islamic perspective and are often referenced: *Islamic Welfare in Islam* by Masri⁵, *Animals in Islamic Tradition and Muslim Cultures* by Richard Foltz⁶, *Risalah al-Hayawan* by Ikhwan Al-Shafa⁷, and *Animals in the Qur'an* by Sarra Tlili.⁸ The work of Masri Foltz and Tlili was compiled after the rise of animal rights advocacy in the treasures of Western thought—with two of its main predecessors, Peter Singer and Tom Regan—while *the 11th-century A.D. treatise on Al-Hayawan*, which shows how the Islamic tradition of thought recognized the existence of a kind of sacred right of animals long before the West realized it but was deteriorated as the anthropocentric paradigm became stronger throughout the modern century.⁹

Sarra Tlili is a professor of Arabic language and literature at the University of Florida. He earned his B.A. from the Universite de Tunis (1988), his M.A in Islamic and Arabic studies at the University of Pennsylvania (2006), and his Ph.D in the same field and campus in 2009 with a dissertation titled, *From an Ant's Perspective: The Status and Nature of Animals in the Qur'an*—the results of his research were then widely published in the form of a book in 2012 with the title, *Animals in the Qur'an* is the focus of this article.¹⁰ His interests in scientific research include tradition and modernity in Arabic literature, the stylistic of the Qur'an, and *environmental ethics and animal rights* in

⁴ According to Adler, there are four levels of reading, elementary, inspective, analytical, and synoptic (reading many books at the same time as one study subject). Analysis of a book can only be done by asking the four questions above first. See also Mortimer J. Adler and Charles van Doren, *How to Read a Book*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972).

⁵ Basheer Ahmad Masri, *The Islamic Welfare in Islam*, (Nairobi: The Islamic Foundation, 2007).

⁶ Richard C. Foltz, *Animals In Islamic Tradition and Muslim Cultures*, (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006).

⁷ Ikhwan Al-Shafa's view of this animal is contained in his work *Rasa'il Ikhwan Al-Shafa*, precisely the 22nd treatise (*epistle*). The treatise has been translated several times, among others, by Lenn E. Goodman and Richard McGregor, *The Case of Animals Versus Man Before the King of Jinn*, (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009).

⁸ Sarra Tlili, *Animals in the Qur'an*, (New York: Cambridge, 2012).

⁹ To find out what deterioration means, see the article, Sarra Tlili, "Animal Ethics in Islam: A Review Article", in the journal, *Religions*, 9, p. 269, doi:10.3390/rel9090269

¹⁰ His dissertation can be obtained in <https://repository.upenn.edu/dissertations/AAI3363677/>

Islamic teachings.¹¹ In his *curriculum vitae*, it is said that he mastered six languages, Arabic (*native*), English and French (*near native*), Italian (*advanced*), Persian, and German (*reading knowledge*), which gives him wide access to various sources of contemporary and classical Islamic thought. Although his scientific specialization is more on the Arabic language and literature as well as the stylistics of the Qur'an, it is his thoughts about animals that make his name widely known. This is proven by the many scientific articles and seminar invitations with the theme of animal ethics from an Islamic perspective.¹²

Tlili's main work, as mentioned above, is titled *Animals in the Qur'an*—in fact, Tlili wrote only one of these monographs, in addition to scientific articles published in various religious journals and contributors to several encyclopedias. In the book, he questioned the view of the inferiority of animals compared to humans. On several occasions, the Qur'an shows the superiority of animals over humans. Tlili shows how the Qur'an's depiction of animals and nature as a whole is very positive and has value in itself (intrinsic value)—some verses of the Qur'an show the status of spirituality and morality in animals, and the possibility of resurrection in the afterlife—regardless of human interests. Likewise, the status of human superiority in some verses of the Qur'an, in the interpretation of Tlili, indicates the opposite, that humans have the potential to be inferior to animals (humans as *syarrul dunnab*).¹³ The author will return to this issue in the next chapter.

Tlili's work on other animals is spread in various religious journals and encyclopedias. Some of them that are referenced in this study are: *Qur'anic Creation: Anthropocentric Readings and Ecocentric Possibilities* (2020¹⁴), *A Case for Vegetarianism in Islam?* (2019)¹⁵, *The Canine Companion of the Cave: The Place of the Dog in Qur'anic Taxonomy* (2018)¹⁶, *Animal Ethics in Islam: A Review Article* (2018),¹⁷ *I invoke God Therefore I am: Creation's Spirituality and its Ecologic Impact in Islamic Texts* (2016),¹⁸ *Animals Would*

¹¹ In addition to the interpretation of the Qur'an, Tlili also conducts an assessment of animal values in classical Arabic literature, such as in *the book Al-Hayawan* by Ikhwan Al-Shafa' and others. See, among other things, Sarra Tlili, "All Animals Are Equal, or Are They? The Ikhwan al-Ṣafā's Animal Epistle and its Unhappy End", in, *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 16, 2014, pp. 42-88.

¹² Among the presentations of the seminar in question was IQSA (*International Qur'anic Studies Association*) Zoom Seminar on Qur'anic Studies, with a paper entitled *Ecology of Wonder: The Ecological Dimension of Three Qur'anic Motifs*, and can be watched on the official website <https://iqsaweb.org/videos/>. Apart from that, IQSA itself has collaborated with AIAT (Association of Qur'an and Tafsir Sciences) by holding a series of seminars to get to know the development of Qur'an studies in Indonesia in 2020.

¹³ About this, Tlili quoted QS. Al-Anfal (8): 22, "Indeed, the worst living creatures (*syarrul dunnab*) in the sight of Allah are those who are deaf and dumb (do not hear and understand the truth), that is, those who do not understand (*alladzina la ya'qilun*). The words *ya'qilun* here, of course, are characteristic of human beings. Sarra Tlili, *Animals in the Qur'an...*, p. 248.

¹⁴ Sarra Tlili, "Qur'anic Creation: Anthropocentric Readings and Ecocentric Possibilities", dalam buku, Daniel Madigan dan Maria Massi Dakake (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to the Qur'an*, London: Routledge, 2022), h. 135-144.

¹⁵ Sarra Tlili, "A Case for Vegetarianism in Islam?", dalam buku, Ihsan Karaman dkk (ed.), *Animal Eti*, (Istanbul: Isar Yayinlan, 2019), 2019, 20 - 47.

¹⁶ Sarra Tlili, "The Canine Companion of the Cave: The Place of the Dog in Qur'anic Taxonomy" *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies*. 3.2. 2018, h. 43 – 60.

¹⁷ Sarra Tlili, "Animal Ethics in Islam: A Review Article", dalam, *Religions* 9, 2018, <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/9/9/269/htm>

¹⁸ Sarra Tlili, "I invoke God Therefore I am: Creation's Spirituality and its Ecologic Impact in Islamic Texts", dalam, Louise Westling dan John Parham, *A Global History of Literature and the Environment*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), h. 107-22.

Follow Shafi'ism. Legitimate and Illegitimate Violence to Animals in Medieval Islamic Texts (2015),¹⁹ *All Animals Are Equal, or Are They? The Ikhwān al-Ṣafā's Animal Epistle and its Unhappy End* (2014²⁰), *The Meaning of the Qur'anic Word 'dabba': 'Animals' or 'Nonhuman Animals'* (2010).²¹ All of his works consistently carry the idea of the need for reconstruction of the anthropocentric reading of the Qur'an so that a more balanced and fair view of animals can be realized per the principles of Islam as the religion of the mercy of all nature.

Animals in the Qur'an

In the author's opinion, there are at least four themes related to animals in the Qur'an that need to be explained here: First, regarding the types of animals mentioned in the Qur'an; second, related to animal functions for humans; Third, regarding the life and character of these animals; and fourth, about ethics (including related questions, how humans should treat animals to the position of animals in Qur'anic cosmology as their ethical foundation). The above series of questions are important to ask to get an overview of how Islam is looking at the nature of animals in themselves (rather than from the perspective of humans only), their relationship with humans (as part of the animal community itself), and of course, related to the issue of animal rights and welfare.

According to Quraish Shihab, the Qur'an views animals (of which humans are included) as part of nature. The word '*alam*' itself is rooted in the word '*alamah*', which contains the meaning of "something that explains something else".²² That is, in essence, nature is a very clear address (signs) regarding the existence of an omni-omnipresent Creator Substance. Nature when juxtaposed with God includes everything other than Him—not only the heavens and the earth but also everything in between them (including its inhabitants, such as plants, humans, and animals). From this perspective of nature, animals, and humans are both inhabitants of the earth with their characteristics but have absolute dependence on Him.

In general, there are no less than 200 verses related to animals, either specifically mentioning their type or indirectly mentioning the group of animals. Five of them had the honor of being immortalized by the name of the letter, namely, *An-Naml* (ants), *An-Nabl* (bee), *Al-Baqarah* (cows), *Al-Ankabut* (good-good), *Al-Fil* (elephant); plus two letters that refer to specific animals, namely, *Al-An'am* (livestock) and *Al-'Adiyat* (galloping war horses). In the scientific interpretation compiled by the Ministry of Religion (2012), there are about 27 animals specifically mentioned in the Qur'an, including reptiles and amphibians (snakes and frogs), mammals (dogs, lions, camels, mules, donkeys, monkeys, cows, horses, pigs, sheep, elephants, wolves), aves (crows, hupu, quails), and insects (termites, bees, ants, grasshoppers, flies, mosquitoes); Apart from this, the Qur'an also refers to groups of farm animals (*An'am*), wild (meaning non-livestock, including wild and creeping

¹⁹ Sarra Tlili, "Animals Would Follow Shafi'ism. Legitimate and Illegitimate Violence to Animals in Medieval Islamic Texts", dalam, Robert Gleave dan Istvan Kristo-Nagy (ed.), *Violence in Islamic Thought from the Qur'an to the Mongols*, (Oxford: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), h. 225-244.

²⁰ Sarra Tlili, "All Animals Are Equal, or Are They? The Ikhwān al-Ṣafā's Animal Epistle and its Unhappy End," dalam, *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 16, 2014, h. 42-88.

²¹ Sarra Tlili, "The Meaning of the Qur'anic Word 'dabba': 'Animals' or 'Nonhuman Animals'?", dalam, *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 12, 2010, h. 167-187.

²² M. Quraish Shihab, *He Is Everywhere: God's "Hand" Behind Every Phenomenon*, Series 02, (Ciputat: Lentera, 2004), pp. 19-23.

animals or *Dabbah*), and fish (including all animals living in the sea).²³ Overview Different types of animals that are raised in the Qur'an not only show the closeness (of these animals) to the daily life of the Arab people at that time but also at the same time reflect the virtue and complexity of the animal world in the cosmology of the Qur'an.

Because of its nature, it is not surprising that animals are regularly used as *Tamtsil* (parable) in the Qur'an. *Tamtsil* itself, as commonly understood, is a form of explanation of the essence or meaning of something based on the similarity of properties between the objects of explanation (*mumatsal labu*) which is generally distant (abstract or foreign) with an explanatory medium (*al-mumatsala*) which is closer (concrete or familiar) to the audience's daily life (*mukhotab*). The aspects contained in a *tamtsil* include: *tasybih* (resemblance), *Isti'arab* (alluring parable), and *Kinayah* (beautiful allusions or verses), and *Wisdom* or helpful advice.²⁴ *Tamtsil* is one of the most popular methods of disseminating an idea or idea; included in the case of the Qur'an (*tamtsil qur'aniyyah*), where animals It is one of the most frequently used actors in this example because of its familiar nature (close) to human daily life. Examples of animal use as *tamtsil qur'aniyyah* can be seen, among others, in QS Al-Ankabut 41-43 and Al-Baqarah 26-27.²⁵ Interestingly, in this case, the animals used as examples were not large, beautiful, and admired by the Arabs of the time, but rather small, despicable, and hated animals, namely, mosquitoes and spiders. On the one hand, this shows the uniqueness and strength (value) of the Qur'anic literature compared to literary books in general, on the other hand, it also describes the Qur'an's perspective on animals as entities which has value in itself regardless of biased views of man against him.²⁶

Related to this, Sarah Tlili in her work entitled *Animals in the Qur'an* Explicitly rejects the interpretation of *mainstream* verse-Qur'anic verses concerning the superiority of humans over other animals (and nature) overall) based on its rationality aspect. A careful reading shows the Qur'an as a document that is theocentric (instead of anthropocentric), where the glory of a creature is judged based on its spirituality aspect (read, the proximity of a creature to its God as an entity spiritual)—that is, not only God's creatures with a ratio (angels, humans, and jinn) who have a chance of being close to God but also various other creatures in their way. Tlili also categorically rejects the possibility of reconciliation of some anthropocentric contemporary interpretations that attempt to

²³ *Tafsir Ilmi: Animals in the Perspective of the Qur'an and Science*, (Jakarta: Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an, 2012), pp. xxix-xxx and 25-26.

²⁴ *Tamtsil*, in this context, can be understood as a string of words that contain wisdom, where the wisdom in question is popular (attracts attention and applies in general and is agreed upon by its audience while containing elements of advice to goodness)—in other words, every *Tamtsil* is wisdom, but not every wisdom is a *Tamtsil*. Thus, it is important to emphasize here the difference between *Tamtsil* popular in general (*matsal sa'ir*) with *tamtsil qur'aniyyah* where *Tamtsil* The latter has been recognized as one of the methods in *ulumul Qur'an* which only leads to the recognition of God's greatness. Ja'far Subhani, *Quranic Tourism: Tafsir Verse-Metaphor Verse*, (Jakarta: Al-Huda, 2007), c. 18-19.

²⁵ "The parable of those who take away protectors other than Allah is like a spider that makes a house. And indeed the weakest house is the spider's house, if they knew. Indeed, Allah knows what they cry out for besides Allah. and He is Mighty and Wise. And these parables We made for men; and no one understands it except the learned." (QS. Al-'Ankabut: 41-43).

²⁶ In this regard, Ibn Qayyim Al-Jauziyah (751 AH) has an interesting view, "God and His Messenger has given examples (*amtsal*) for humans to be able to get closer and convey the intention and understand the meaning in the listener's mind. Because, often, by presenting something similar, it can bring the intention closer, in the relationship, understanding, mastery, and presence. This is undeniable because the 'self' is happy with similarity and similarity. On the contrary, it is not happy with alienation, solitude and the absence of similarity." As quoted from, Ja'far Subhani, *Al-Quran Tourism...*, pp. 10-11.

reconcile the doctrine of human virtue (anthropocentrism) with the principle of natural balance (e.g., doing good to animals not because of their human rights, but based on compassion and humanity); even further accusing this view—meaning anthropocentrism—as a view that is contrary to the principles of monotheism (*oneness*) and justice (*justice* God, even leads to the process of deification (fullness) of man himself.²⁷ In conclusion, just because the Qur'an never specifically talks about the relationship between animals and God like humans and God (through the capacity of the ratio they have) does not mean that these animals do not worship as well as humans, but this is more due to the limitations of language, knowledge, and experience of these humans in describing the reality of the animals themselves. Quoting Tillili's statement,

The cosmos of the Qur'an is highly interactive with its Creator: It makes choices, experiences emotions, takes divine commands, prays, and hymns the praises of God. Naturally, nonhuman beings seem to interact with God in ways that are totally outside the realm of human experience and knowledge, thus, applying to them terminology that is used to describe human experiences is not without problems. The fact that humans do not have the language to describe or the means to perceive other beings' deeper realities, however, does not mean that such realities do not exist. Absence of evidence cannot be taken as evidence of absence.²⁸

Criticism of Anthropocentrism Bias in the Qur'an

The global ecological crisis that is happening today, said Sonny Keraf, is closely related to the attitude and behavior of modern humans who are exploitative and destructive towards the universe and living things in it. This attitude and behavior itself is the fruit of a mechanistic-deterministic paradigm of thinking about the nature of the universe and life in it. The first question concerns the basic substance or matter that makes up the universe; The second problem is about the shape, pattern, and structure that make up the universe including life in it. The metastatic-determinant paradigm itself is a product of the century of enlightenment in Europe that later dominated the world, with Rene Descartes and Isaac Newton as the main figures. In contrast to previous centuries, in the treasure of modern century thought, nature is seen only from its material aspect, like a machine that can only be understood by reducing it to separate parts as a determinant of the whole of nature or an organism. In this perspective, plants and animals are seen as mere machines, while humans are in a more important position because they have reason and soul in their bodies.²⁹ This factor is also the main argument of anthropocentrism in exploiting nature for the sake of, or rather to fulfill all the desires (which are limitless), of modern humans.

Anthropocentrism itself can be interpreted in two aspects: as a philosophical theory and as a theory of environmental ethics. As a theory of environmental ethics, humans are seen as the center of the universe and therefore their importance is considered the most important thing in the order of ecosystems and various policies taken related to nature. Because human beings are the only entities that have value in themselves, nature is seen only as an object or means to meet all human needs and interests. However, when viewed from philosophical theory, anthropocentrism is a paradigm of thinking that says that moral values and principles only apply to humans, this

²⁷ Based on the principle of monotheism and God's justice, Sarah Tlili strongly condemns the interpretation of the word "caliph" in the Qur'an as a representative of God and especially a temporary God (*temporary God*) on the face of the earth, as interpreted by Rashad Khalifa. According to him, this kind of interpretation actually leads to favoritism (God's love for one particular being) and is contrary to the principle of God's transcendence (where God becomes synonymous with rationality itself). See, Sarah Tlili, *Animals Qur'an...*, h. x-xi.

²⁸ Sarah Tlili, *Animals Qur'an...*, h. ix-x.

²⁹ Sonny Keraf himself divides three periods of human-nature relations with his distinctive paradigm. Sonny Keraf, *Environmental Philosophy: Nature as a System of Life*, (Depok: Kanisius, 2014), 10-15.

means that ethics only apply to humans; In the case of nature, the demands of morality are indirect because they must be assessed in terms of human interests and sustainability. From this, it can be understood that some of the characteristics of anthropocentrism, are related to the nature of nature and human relations with it, namely: instrumentalistic and egoistic. Attention to animal *welfare* aspects in the livestock industry and sacrificial rituals, for example, needs to be done not because the animals are considered valuable in themselves but because by doing so, humans will be able to obtain higher quality meat. It is not surprising that Arne Naess later grouped the solutions proposed by anthropocentrism as *shallow ecology* because of its narrow and shallow nature in looking at the entire ecosystem.³⁰

So where does this anthropocentric human-nature relationship paradigm come from? According to Budi Hardiman, in contrast to the medieval era in Europe which was theocentric, the modern century is colored by the spirit of anthropocentrism that sees everything – not only nature and life but also God – from the perspective of humanity. The shift from theocentrism to anthropocentrism occurred gradually through various intellectual and political movements critical of medieval perspectives and traditions in the labels of the Renaissance project (Greek philosophy) and the Reformation (against the church).³¹ Although the origins of anthropocentrism can be traced to Aristotle's thought, it is only in the modern century that it has been able to truly break away from its transcendental roots (efficient and final causes) by acknowledging only causality in material and formal causes. It is not surprising that modern humans feel that it is only legitimate to exploit nature, including violence and even the slaughter of animals (as in the case of the livestock and viviculture industries), to satisfy their economic desires. Lynn White goes so far as to allege that the roots of anthropocentrism can also be found in the doctrines and religious traditions of the Semitic religions, of which Islam is a part.³²

Sarra Tlili himself, with the interpretation of the Qur'an, felt the need to distinguish anthropocentrism into two categories: casual and formal. According to him, the anthropocentric reading of the Qur'an is completely understandable given the fact that the human mind itself is characteristic of the human mind – when looking at animals, the human mind will first, of course, say that they (animals) are not us (humans). As a result, when trying to consider animal psychology (say the psychology of sacrificial animals), humans must compare it with their thoughts or psychology. From this arise the typical questions of anthropocentrism, do animals have intelligence and self-consciousness? Can they think and feel? And others. However, just as astronomers are slowly realizing that the earth is not the center of the universe, so is the possibility of developing a study of animals that is free from anthropocentric bias by placing each animal species at the center of its own life.³³

³⁰ A. Sonny Keraf, *Environmental Ethics*, (Jakarta: Kompas, 2010), 47-50.

³¹ For more on the history of the birth and development of modern philosophy with its anthropocentric nuances, see, F. Budi Hardiman, *Modern Thought: From Machiavelli to Nietzsche*, (Depok: Canisius, 2019), 1-14.

³² In fact, Lynn White only included Christianity and Judaism in her research. But since Islam is also part of the Semitic religion, the same criticism should apply to the teachings of Islam. Interestingly, although he accused the Judeo-Christian tradition of being at the root of the ecological crisis of the modern century, the solution to the problem for him must be found in the same religious tradition. In short, it is necessary to reformulate religious teachings as the basis of ecological principles. See also Lynn White, *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*, <http://www.zbi.ee/-kalevi/lwhite.htm> first published in 1967.

³³ Sarra Tlili, *Animals in the Qur'an...*, h. 51-52.

From this, it can be understood that casual anthropocentrism is the product of the unconscious preconception of the human being (as the interpreter and reader of the Qur'an) about the world and is closely related to its cultural background which is often *taken for granted*. Because of its casual nature, when they find verses of the Qur'an that indicate the virtues of animals (such as their language and communication skills) as well as humans, they can generally accept them without much question. In short, casual anthropocentrism allows for tolerance between opposing points of view, as in the case of the inability of animals to think rationally that makes them inferior to humans, but on other occasions, it is also possible to accept that there are virtues in these animals that cannot be fully rationalized by the human brain. Formal anthropocentrism, on the other hand, is carried out with full awareness, where the statement of human superiority in question is justified by scriptural postulates or rational arguments. With the anthropocentric reading of the Qur'an, especially in the Middle Ages, there was a strong influence of Hellenism—with its main speculative but rational characteristic—with its teachings on the "great chain of existence" and the "hierarchy of existence". As a result, these Hellenistic thinkers had great faith in the capabilities of human reason, where the whole reality of animal life had been pre-assumed by human perception. In later developments, following Aristotle's principle of non-contradiction, animals were placed in diametrically opposite positions to rational humans. About the verses of the Qur'an that indicate the virtue of animals, these anthropocentric (formal) interpreters tend to insist on explaining it in terms of human virtue.³⁴

There are at least two factors, Tlili said, that cause the obscurive (confusion) of non-anthropocentric ideas deep The Qur'an: First, related to several verses The Qur'an that is true "as if" shows the inferiority of animals—animals in the presence of humans. The Qur'an explicitly allows humans to eat (partly) animals and others to be used for human benefit (*twildered and invincible*). The Qur'an also mentions the story of some sinners who were cursed by God to become animals (monkeys and pigs) through a process of metamorphosis (*Masch*). On another occasion, the Qur'an also discusses the problem of farm animals (*An'yin*) who are considered to not know and are therefore easily divided. All the above verses of the Qur'an inevitably show the superiority of man over all animals (*istikhlāf*); Second, concerning anthropocentric ideas themselves that are constantly projected into the Qur'an. It is undeniable that the factor of human interest certainly affects the way humans themselves read the Qur'an.

This is where the importance of Tlili's research in *Animals in the Qur'an* lies, which does not stop at the critical level of anthropocentric reading of the Qur'an, but also reinterprets several core concepts that have often been used as justifications for anthropocentrism. The core concepts include *dabbah* and *hayawan*; then also the concepts of *taskhir*, *tadhlil*, *istikhlāf*, *maskh* and *an'am*. To complement her reinterpretation, Tlili in her more recent writing, *Qur'anic Creation*, also emphasizes three themes in the Qur'an that show the virtues of animals that escape the anthropocentric model of reading the Qur'an. First, the sacred oath in the name of the animal (*divine's oath*); second, the complexity of the inner aspects of animals; and animals as signs *of creation*. Further elaboration is carried out in the next chapter.

Reinterpretation of Some Core Concepts

³⁴ Sarra Tlili, *Animals in the Qur'an...*, h. 53-54.

In Qur'an 2:185 it is affirmed that the Qur'an functions as a guide for mankind (*hudan lin nas*), so it is not surprising that it pays great attention to the characteristics of mankind and its destiny over other creatures. However, in the process of delivering its messages, the Qur'an uses a lot of non-human beings (ranging from natural phenomena to animals) that reflect its complexity, sacredness (its value is intrinsically independent of human interests), and its instrumentality for divine messages. Even so, there is a tendency among *mufasirs* and today's people to explore various themes of non-human nature in terms of theological and (especially) anthropological implications rather than their cosmological and ecological significance. In other words, there has been an imbalance in the interpretation of the Qur'an using the lens of anthropocentrism, where various natural phenomena and non-human animals in the Qur'an are used as instruments to learn more about God and humans (with their various attributes) but not to know and even recognize the *inner aspect* of various non-human beings and their relationship with God. As emphasized by Sarra Tlili, nature and animals in the perspective of the Qur'an play a role that is more than just a *setting* and extras for the drama of human history. Instead, in Qur'anic cosmology, the world is filled with various non-human creations that are "living" and have their roles and ways of interacting with their God—or in other words, the various creations in the Qur'an are active "players" with a wealth of modes of existence, distinctive ways of interacting with God, and important messages to convey (compare with animals in the perspective of capitalism that are judged solely by their economic utility. To demonstrate this, Tlili said, three themes in the Qur'an need to be addressed here: the use of nature and animals as the subject of the *divine oath*, the complexity of the *inner aspect* of non-human beings, and of course the creation in the cosmology of the Qur'an itself.³⁵

It is undeniable that anthropocentric reading of the Qur'an has given rise to an understanding of the privileged status of human beings among other creations. The Qur'an does have a great deal of concern for humans, but a deeper reading shows that it portrays humans more negatively in the face of non-human animals—who are often portrayed as God's obedient people, so the Qur'an itself gives great respect to them. Among mankind itself, as the Qur'an describes, there are indeed some human beings who have obedience to their God (and therefore receive a noble status) but the number does not dominate, so instead of giving priority to humans who alienate them from nature as a whole, the Qur'an pretends to put humanity in the *order of creation* itself. Thus Tlili concluded, that a more integrative approach to the Qur'an shows its tendency to push humanity to the level of equality with other creatures rather than placing it above (*human exceptionalism*).³⁶

One of Tlili's main arguments in support of her view above is related to the theme of divine oath in the Qur'an. The divine oath itself is a substantive theme in the study of the Qur'an where God swears by the names of various beings to validate theological principles, convince Muhammad of his role as God's messenger, and make real promises regarding life after death, and various other forms of affirmation. The majority of these oaths are made in the name of natural and universal phenomena (*al-zawahir al-kauniyah*), including, time, place, and entities (both animals, plants, and *inanimate* objects, ranging from heaven and earth to figs and olive oil). Apart from that, God also swears by using his name, the Qur'an, and the Prophet Muhammad. Interestingly, according to

³⁵ Sarra Tlili, "Qur'anic Creation: Anthropocentric Readings...", h. 135-136.

³⁶ Sarra Tlili, "Qur'anic Creation: Anthropocentric Readings...", h. 136.

Tlili's analysis, Muhammad was the only human being who had the honor of being the subject of the divine oath in QS. 15:72. This is proof, as Tlili quotes from Al-Tabari, that God swears by the names of certain entities about his virtues (*aqsama bibi li 'izami sha'nibi 'indabu*). Related to the theme of this study, the fact that God swears by the names of various non-human beings, including animals, and only one human being (Muhammad SAW), indicates the recognition in Qur'an cosmology of the intrinsic value of animals (and other entities) regardless of human interests, and therefore human rights that must be respected.³⁷

Tlili's view also refutes the opinion of modern Islamic thinkers who rule out the cosmological and ecological significance of divine vows. John Kaltner, for example, who specifically raised the theme of divine vows in the Qur'an, views such oaths (using the names of various phenomena and natural entities) as a custom of pre-Islamic Arab societies and does not necessarily indicate the primacy of the subject of the oath. Likewise, Neuwirth and Aisha Abdul Rahman view divine oath as a mere rhetorical style in Arabic literature. Although it contains truth, it is undeniable that the influence of anthropocentrism in the reading of the Qur'an carried out by these thinkers ignores the possibility of indications of the equality of creatures in Qur'anic cosmology. Moreover, Tlili's view is consistent with other themes in the Qur'an that indicate the same thing, regarding the virtue of animals and the negative character of humans. In this regard, Tlili quoted a hadith from the Prophet who said, "Indeed, there is no creature between heaven and earth who does not know that I am the messenger of God, but from among mankind itself and jinn." Based on this hadith, and other similar Islamic primary texts, instead of speciesism, the foundation of a creature's virtue lies in its obedience to the figure of the Creator.³⁸ In summary, the theme of divine oath in the Qur'an indicates God's inclination towards various non-human entities and his dislike for some characteristics and groups of humanity.³⁹

Sarra Tlili also analyzed how the Qur'an describes the complexity of the *inner aspects* of various non-human animals that often escape human observation, including aspects of emotions, knowledge, and their ability to make choices. QS. 2:116 affirms that everything in the heavens and earth is subject (*qanitun*) to God; QS. 3:83 declares that all that exists surrenders (*aslama*) to God; while QS. 16:48 shows the characteristics of humility and humility before God (*sujjadan lillabi wahum dakbirun*); the same goes for QS. 17:44 states that the seven heavens and the earth and anything in between chant praise and praise to God, and QS. 24:41, "Do you not see that everything in the heavens and on the earth worships the Lord, and the birds flap their wings? Every one of them knows how to worship and praise Him." The obedience of these various non-human beings, thus, is multifaceted, including, submission, humility, and obedience to Him.⁴⁰

Furthermore, the submission of these non-human beings, Tlili emphasized, is not caused by mere instinctive or mechanical factors, as described in various verses of the Qur'an, they are also able to reject the offer given by God—as in the Qur'an. 33:72 when the mandate given to the

³⁷ For more information on this Divine Oath, see, Sarra Tlili, "Qur'anic Creation: Anthropocentric Readings...", pp. 136-138.

³⁸ Sarra Tlili, "Qur'anic Creation: Anthropocentric Readings...", h. 136-138.

³⁹ See among them QS. 103:1-3, "For the sake of time. Actually, humans are in a state of loss. Except..." QS. 100:1-3, "For the sake of the galloping war horse..." In other narrations it refers to camels. And others.

⁴⁰ As quoted from, Sarra Tlili, "Qur'anic Creation: Anthropocentric Readings...", pp. 136-138.

heavens, the earth, and the mountains, is rejected outright before it is accepted by man⁴¹—which indicates that they, like humans, also have freedom of choice and complexity in their inner aspects. Tlili in this case quotes Al-Baghawi (d. 510/1117) who affirms that God has created in his various creations (both *inanimate beings* and non-human animals) a kind of knowledge known only to him (*kbalaqa 'ilman fil jam'adât wa sa'ir al-hayawanat shiwa al-aqil la yaqifu 'alaibi ghoiruhu*)—a view that is plural in the mainstream interpretation of Muslims, both Sunni and Shi'a. However, the tendency towards anthropocentrism has obscured this, as happened to thinkers of the caliber of Fazlur Rahman, who interpreted the ability to choose in an ambiguous term, *automatic volition*.⁴² Al-Mawardi (d. 450/1058) also reports that there is a view that interprets freedom in non-human creation as *an ibâ kbilqa (innate predisposition)* rather than the inherent freedom of choice (as in the case of humans), while others view this as a matter of miracles that have limited implications. Answering this, Tlili reminded that the Qur'an itself has warned that humans will not be able to grasp the glorification (praise) carried out by various non-human beings (including animals) due to their limitations in sensory understanding and experience; Tlili also cited various hadiths that reported the Prophet's ability to communicate with various non-human animals, which indicated the complexity of his inner aspect.⁴³

Komaruddin Hidayat, in his book titled, *Religion Has a Thousand Lives*, divides God's verses into four complementary categories, the verses of the *kitabiyah* (holy book), the verses of *kauniyah* (the universe), the verses of *nafsiyah* (human self), and the verses of *tarikibiyah* (history). Sarra Tlili emphasized the first two categories, the Qur'an and the universe which in his view are both sacred and become a guideline for life for humans. According to Tlili, the use of verse words that refer to both the holy book and the universe is not without reason, both are no different from "books" whose contents are filled with signs that teach their readers about God and the purpose of his creation. The question of the creation of the universe itself is a central theme in the Qur'an, which is a clear indication of the glorious status of nature itself. Tlili's view refutes the anthropocentric argument about the creation of the universe for the benefit of man, as voiced, among others, by Parvez Manzoor, who interprets QS. 14:32-34 as proof of man's privilege as the telos of creation. But Tlili, referring to the same verse, says that the end of the verse—which says that man is actually the most unjust and least grateful—seems to negate the virtue of man who has been awakened

⁴¹ Tlili even further interprets that the rejection of this mandate is done in a very wise way so that they do not fall into the nature of disobedience to God. However, the choice made by humans to accept the mandate is considered unwise. Further see,

⁴² In responding to Rahman's statement, Tlili did not absolutely reject it. According to him, there is truth in Rahman's statement, that man's ultimate goal is to worship Him, but this cannot be immediately interpreted as the exclusive right of man, while non-human animals only function to serve the interests of man (which means that his devotion to God must be through the medium of man). Sarra Tlili, "Qur'anic Creation: Anthropocentric Readings...", p. 140.

⁴³ In science, human interest in the nature of the animal mind is reflected in the study of ethology, as a sub-branch of biological science that specifically examines the nature of the animal mind through its observed behavior. One of the famous ethologists was Jane Goodall who devoted her life to researching about apes. See the results of his research in <https://janegoodall.org/> In philosophy itself there is a quite famous essay by Thomas Nagel, *What is it like to be a Bat?* (1974). In his paper, Nagel came to the conclusion that it is impossible for humans to know what it is like to be a bat because of their limitations on their own subjective experience. See, Thomas Nagel, "What is it like to be a Bat?", in the journal, *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 83, No. 4 (Oct., 1974), pp. 435-450. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2183914>

before. Thus it would be more appropriate to interpret this verse as proof of God's mercy and love rather than human privilege; and the service of the universe for the benefit of mankind as evidence of the dependence of fellow creatures (creatures) on each other and on the figure of His creator. At this point, Tlili emphasized that there has been a logical leap from the principle of service to the principle of privilege served as a result of the anthropocentric approach to the Qur'an.⁴⁴

It does not stop at the criticism of the anthropocentric approach against the Qur'an, Tlili also tried to reinterpret some of the core concepts of the Qur'an related to human-animal relations. For example, instead of interpreting the word *Dābbah* as a creeping or four-legged animal, as is generally interpreted, Tlili returns it to its original meaning which includes not only non-human animals, but also humans themselves, jinns, angels, and various other similar creatures that are (probably) unknown. Although contextually (that is, in its general use among Arab societies) the word *Dābbah* often refers to a certain type of animal, but the Qur'an itself often uses it as a reference for every living thing that can move on its own (*self-propulsion*)—etymologically the word *Dābbah* It comes from the syllable d-b-b which means movement and refers to everything capable of moving intentionally.⁴⁵ On this basis, Tlili rejected the generalization of non-human animals which later became the basis for the idea of human superiority over other animals, instead of humans as part of the animal world.⁴⁶ Through the same etymological considerations (regardless of bias anthropocentrism and favoritism) can be explained why the word *Hayawān* deep The Qur'an, which contextually refers specifically to non-human animals, has a different meaning, namely, actual life (*true life*).⁴⁷ The implication is that through readings like this, (some) animals not only have the same degree as humans but in some cases also surpass humans (among other things, by being teachers to humans).⁴⁸ Although it does not have to be interpreted as egalitarianism, at least the reading model carried out by Tlili requires that there is some kind of intrinsic value—regardless of human interests—in each species of animal that must be respected and protected.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Sarra Tlili, "Qur'anic Creation: Anthropocentric Readings...", h. 140-141.

⁴⁵ Through his thematic research (tafsir maudu'i) on various verses that use the word *dabbah*, Tlili divides them into four categories: ambiguous meanings (which refer to non-human animals but can also refer to humans); inclusive meanings, where humans belong to the category of animals; exclusive meanings, to which humans do not belong to them; and specific meanings, which refer to individuals of certain animal species. See among others QS. 2:164, where the word *dabbah* here is interpreted as Tlili, referring to some mufassirs, such as Ibn 'Assyria, including human beings. Sarra Tlili, "The Meaning of the Qur'anic Word 'dabba'...", pp. 170-171.

⁴⁶ Generalizations of non-human animals also give rise to biased views, such as lack of awareness, unfamiliarity, and indifference, which ultimately make humans fail to see the value and virtues of various animal species and justify the exploitation of animals. See, Sarra Tlili, "The Meaning of the Qur'anic Word 'dabba'...", p. 184.

⁴⁷ Word *hayawan* this, which means the actual life in the hereafter, appears in QS. Al-Ankabut 64 as *Musytaq* (derivative) from the word *good* which means a temporary life in the world. On the basis of such etymological considerations, Tlili, referring to various classical books of tafsir (such as Ibn Katsir and At-Thobari), rejects the view that makes animals-Animals as inferior to humans only because of their ability to rationalize.

⁴⁸ For example, the story of the crow who teaches children Adam to bury his own brother (QS. Al-Maidah 31). Insults and killing of animals It can even bring disaster and God's wrath for mankind, as reflected in QS. Al-A'raf 77-78. Further see, Sarah Tlili, *Animals Qur'an...*, pp. 87-89.

⁴⁹ In this case, Tlili gives an example of the interpretation carried out by Al-Razi, where even though in his interpretation the meaning of *dabbah* here includes humans and even angels, but at the same time he maintains his Aristotelian view that animals are at the lowest level in a hierarchical scheme. But this does not necessarily negate the value and virtue of the animals themselves, as is the case with anthropocentrism in the modern century. Tlili's own position in this case, in the author's opinion, expressly rejects this view of Aristotelianism, where rationality is used as the basis of human virtue, but the factor of piety or spirituality (closeness to God) as the basis of the virtue of certain humans or animals. See, Sarra Tlili, "The Meaning of the Qur'anic Word 'dabba'...", p. 185.

Other than words *Dabbah* and *Hayawān*, Tlili further tried to interpret Concepts *Tidbalil*, *Invincible*, *istikblaf*, *distortion*, and *An'am*. As mentioned above, these concepts were deliberately chosen because they are the key concepts that are the basis of biased anthropocentrism of Qur'anic recitation which gives birth to various views and arbitrary attitudes of humans towards nature Universe and animals-other animals. Of course, it is not in the place to explain in detail one by one the reinterpretations carried out by Tlili, but the author will only review the conclusions he has drawn regarding the special position of human beings as representatives of God on earth (*Khalifatullah fil ardh*). On this matter, Tlili came to one conclusion that the interpretation of God's representative (*vicegerency*) as a result of anthropocentric readings of the Qur'an. Various studies carried out, both from historical, grammatical, and contextual aspects, actually show that at first the word "caliphate" was simply interpreted as "successor" and "follower" (of the previous state, group, or leader). Meanwhile, the idea of representation or representation comes from the interpretation that comes later, in the post-revelation era. According to Tlili, it is almost impossible for God to make man His representation on earth, especially among other animals, considering that the Qur'an itself in various verses refers to humans (*al-insān*) as God's most disobedient and ungrateful creation, so the appointment of man as His representation would have implications for a fundamental theological question—how could God point to one of His creations which in the Qur'an is repeatedly described as tyrannical (inclined to injustice) and ignorant (inclined to violence) as His representation (as the Most Just and Most Wise), among other creations (in this context the animals). non-human) who is often described as a figure who is submissive and obedient to God?⁵⁰ Related concepts *Tajdhib* and *Taskbir*, Tlili does not deny that some types of animals were created to serve the interests of humans (as is the case with camels in Arab society), but Tlili also emphasizes that in the redaction of the verse in question these animals answer only to God (theocentric) and not to humans (anthropocentric); and that God never delegates His authority to man—furthermore, God does not even hesitate to punish man if he acts beyond the limits in such use.⁵¹

The Qur'an and Animal Rights Issues

In 1978 UNESCO (*United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization*) issued a *universal declaration of animal rights*. This declaration was later perfected by the International League for Animal Rights (ILAR) in 1989 and was soon disseminated to the public. Since then, October 15 has been celebrated as Animal Rights Day.⁵² Here are 10 animal rights points as quoted from the UNESCO website:

1. That all animals have the same right to live in the context of biological balance. This equality of rights does not necessarily deny the diversity of species and individuals.

⁵⁰ Sarah Tlili, *Animals Qur'an...*, h. 253-254.

⁵¹ From this theocentric and ecocentric point of view, Tlili also concludes that it is not only humans who take advantage of animals, the opposite also applies where humans become servants of the needs of animals (the principle of dependence). This principle of interdependence, said Tlili, is not immediately read in the Qur'an because it was revealed as a guide for humans. See, Sarah Tlili, *Animals Qur'an...*, p. 253.

⁵² The declaration was first made at UNESCO headquarters in Paris on October 15, 1978, in response to the environmental crisis of the modern century and the rise of animal violence in the name of progress. Check out the official website, <http://www.esdaw.eu/unesco.html>

2. That all living beings, without exception, have a fundamental right to be respected.
3. Animals should not be subjected to ill-treatment or acts of violence in any form. If killing an animal is necessary, then it should be done immediately, painlessly, and without causing concern. Animals that have died must be treated well.
4. Wild animals have the right to live and breed freely in their natural environment. Prolonged denial of the freedom of wild animals, hunting and fishing as a hobby, and the use of wild animals for non-essential reasons, are contrary to this fundamental right.
5. Any animal that depends on humans has the right to good food and care. Under no circumstances should they be abandoned or killed arbitrarily. All forms of animal breeding and utilization must respect the specific physiology and behavior of the species. Exhibitions, performances, and films involving animals must also respect their dignity and must not include violence of any kind.
6. That scientific experiments carried out on animals, which cause physical or psychological suffering, constitute a violation of animal rights. Alternative methods must be developed and applied systematically.
7. Any unnecessary act involving the death of an animal, and any decision that leads to such an action, constitutes a form of crime against life.
8. Any action that endangers the survival of a wild species and any decision that leads to such an act can be equated with an act of genocide, i.e. a crime against the species. The slaughter of wild animals and the pollution and destruction of biotopes are acts of genocide.
9. The specific legal status of animals and their rights must be recognized by law. Animal protection and safety must be represented at the level of government organizations.
10. Education authorities and schools must ensure that citizens learn from childhood to observe, understand, and respect animals.⁵³

In this regard, Sarra Tlili, in her introduction to the issue of animal rights in Islam, has an interesting and worthy view: there has been a deterioration of the treatment of animals by Muslims; and on the other hand, an increase in awareness of animal rights in Western countries and societies.⁵⁴ Tlili came to this conclusion by comparing the testimonial texts of Western society on the treatment of Muslims to the animals around them: where the texts written two centuries ago show great appreciation for Muslims regarding their treatment of animals that are considered to be attentive; while the texts written in the early 21st century are more pessimistic and even pejorative. Bacon and Whately, for example, in 1860 compared the condition of dogs on the streets of London and Cairo, where although Muslims viewed dogs as unclean wild animals (*impure brutes*), they were allowed to roam freely in the streets in search of food, a sight that could not be

⁵³ Lihat, <http://www.esdaw.eu/unesco.html>

⁵⁴ Regarding this phenomenon, it is interesting to ponder the metaphor of "snake of civilization" by Mulyadhi Kartanegara. According to him, the condition of Muslims today is like eating the fruit of simalakama, where Muslims are so eager to adopt science from the West (with anthropocentrism as the captain of their civilization), while in the West itself—along with the occurrence of a multidimensional environmental crisis—there has been a tendency to learn the wisdom of the Eastern world (including Islam).

found on the streets of London at the time. They also mentioned the existence of a hospital for street cats in Cairo, which gets food supplies from the community.⁵⁵

Deteriorization is reflected, among other things, in various religious lectures regarding the relationship between animals and humans. In one of the lecture sessions, a worshipper asked one of the popular ustadz about what is the actual law of killing lizards. Is it true that by killing lizards, the killer will get a reward? If this is true, does it not show that Islam is a religion that promotes violence against animals? Answering this question, the ustadz referred to QS. Al-Baqarah (26) and hadith narrated by Bukhari number 3358. According to him, there are three lessons of animal creation from the perspective of the Qur'an (Islam): first, in the context of the test of fame; second, as a test of harm; and third, the character designation test. The Qur'an shows the virtues of several animals, such as the bee—which is immortalized as the name of one of the letters in the Qur'an, An-Nahl—which produces honey and is a remedy for many diseases in humans. On the other hand, there are animals such as mosquitoes and lizards that are dangerous to humans, created as an indicator of harm in the environment where humans live. In the latter case, killing mosquitoes and lizards is a very natural thing – the ustadz even reminded us how the prayer beads and solemnity of these "humiliated" animals are to show humans that there is harm that must be eliminated.⁵⁶ In this anthropocentric interpretation, the discourse on animal rights becomes absurd.⁵⁷

In fact, according to Tlili, one of the most important principles of Islamic teachings is egalitarianism, both at the level between humans and on a wider scale the human species as part of the animal kingdom. In QS. 49:13 It is said that diversity among human beings, both in terms of gender and race, is a provision of God indicating the principle of equality, and that there is no basis for sexism or racism in the teachings of Islam.⁵⁸ However, still in the same verse, the Qur'an also emphasizes that the best human being by God's side is the pious one. The same seems to apply to human-animal relations, where humans are one of the animal species with a certain uniqueness (but not necessarily superior). In QS. 6:38 It

⁵⁵ Teks lengkap testimony Bacon dan Whately ini, “The Mussulman preserves the lives of animals solicitously. Though he considers the dog impure, and never make a friend of him, he thinks it sinful to kill him, and allows the neighbourhood and even the streets of his towns to be infested by packs of masterless brutes, which you would get rid of in London one day. The beggar does not venture to destroy his vermin: he puts them tenderly on the ground, to be swept up into the clothes of the next passer-by. There are hospitals in Cairo for superannuated cats, where they are fed at public expense.” Sebagaimana dikutip oleh, Sarra Tlili, “Animal Ethics in Islam: A Review Article”,

⁵⁶ Although not entirely scientific, Ustadz Adi Hidayat's (UAH) lecture was delivered in a public recitation forum, but the views conveyed are still important to be raised. This is because it represents the mainstream view of the people regarding human relations with the animals around them. <https://wartakota.tribunnews.com/2020/04/27/bolehkah-membunuh-cicak-dan-nyamuk-begini-hadist-dan-penjelasan-ustadz-adi-hidayat>

⁵⁷ Regarding this phenomenon of deterioration, it is interesting to ponder the metaphor of the "snake of civilization" by Mulyadhi Kartanegara. According to him, the condition of Muslims today is like eating the fruit of simalakama, where Muslims are so eager to adopt science from the West (with anthropocentrism as the captain of their civilization), while in the West itself—along with the occurrence of a multidimensional environmental crisis—there has been a tendency to learn the wisdom of the Eastern world (including Islam).

⁵⁸ For the full redaction of this verse, "O man! Truly, We have created you from a man and a woman, and We have made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble among you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous."

is said, "And there are no animals on the earth and birds that fly with their wings, but a people like you (*umamun amsalukum*). We have not forgotten anything in the Bible, and then it is to God that they are gathered."⁵⁹ This verse, according to Tlili's analysis, uses almost the same redaction as the previous verse (QS. 49:13) which indicates equality among the animals. Furthermore, a deeper reading of this verse also indicates the essence of these non-human animals as spiritual beings as well as humans—with the ability to choose and the possibility of being resurrected on the last day. These two verses, in their relationship with God, emphasize the absolute dependence of humans and non-human animals on His Creator and both have the role of signs of creation. In other words, Tlili quotes a statement from Al-Razi, it can be concluded that God's *fadh*, *inayah*, *mery*, and *ibsan* encompass all His creatures—this statement, although it sounds cliché, indicates the argument that Tlili has built up so far regarding equality among God's creations.⁶⁰

Conclusion

This paper has the pretension to introduce Sarra Tlili's thought to Islamic scholars in Indonesia, where in the literature review conducted by the author has not received the proper place and appreciation. In fact, the themes raised by him regarding animal rights in the Qur'an, the principle of equality between various creatures created by God (in this case man and other animals), and (of course) the anthropocentric criticism of the Qur'an, are themes that are rapidly developing in the study of the Qur'an among Western Islamic scholars. This is in line with the growing awareness of animal rights that have been neglected so far, as an implication of the dictum of human superiority based on its rationality which leads to speciesism. Anthropocentrism as a paradigm of the modern century needs to be criticized because it has led to today's global environmental crisis that threatens not only human existence but also planet Earth itself.

In this paper, the author has demonstrated the arguments put forward by Tlili regarding the research theme. It begins with his criticism of the anthropocentric reading of the Qur'an, and then the possibility of a non-anthropocentric reading and its reinterpretation of some of the core concepts in the Qur'an related to human-animal relations which have been the justification for anthropocentrism in Islamic teachings. Alternatively, he proposes to return to the theocentric paradigm, which places God at the center of existence and the absolute dependence of man and other animals on Him—as well as the principle of interdependence of fellow creatures, in which not only has God made animals servants to humans, but the opposite—in this context the Qur'an promotes an ecocentric perspective. However, as Tlili emphasizes, he does not want to eliminate the fact that the Qur'an was revealed as a guide to mankind, and placed in a context that corresponds to the limits of human knowledge, imagination, and thought. But this can be done with one note, that the primacy status of man depends on his moral and religious qualities, rather than on his human species (*homo sapiens*).

References

⁵⁹ Tlili, quoting Al-Razi, interprets the word "people like you" here as, "That God created them (meaning animals), regulated their lives, and ensured their survival, as well as human beings." However, unlike Al-Razi who denies this understanding because it merely states what is clear (*la yufid fa'ida mu'tabara*), for Tlili this kind of understanding indicates equality among God's beings. That is, God does not favor (favoritism) by prioritizing humans among other creations. See, Sarra Tlili, *Animals in the Qur'an...*, pp. 140-142.

⁶⁰ Sarra Tlili, *Animals in Qur'an...*, h. 138-139.

- Abdillah, Junaidi. "Deconstruction of Anthropocentric Interpretation: An Analysis of Environmentally Minded Verses." *KALAM* 8, no. 1 (July 1, 2014): 65. <https://doi.org/10.24042/klm.v8i1.168>.
- Adler, Mortimer J. dan Charles van Doren, *How to Read a Book*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972).
- Foltz, Richard C., *Animals In Islamic Tradition and Muslim Cultures*, (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006).
- Goodman, Lenn E. dan Richard McGregor, (ed.), *The Case of Animals Versus Man Before the King of Jinn*, (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009).
- Hardiman, F. Budi. *Modern Thought: From Machiavelli to Nietzsche*, (Depok: Canisius, 2019).
- Ja'far Subhani, *Quranic Tourism: Tafsir Verse-Metaphor Verse*, (Jakarta: Al-Huda, 2007).
- Keraf, A. Sonny. *Environmental Philosophy: Nature as a System of Life*, (Depok: Kanisius, 2014).
- Keraf, A.Sonny. *Environmental Ethics*, (Jakarta: Kompas, 2010).
- Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an (ed.). *Tafsir Ilmi*. First printing. Jakarta: Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, Agency for Research and Development & Training, Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf al-Qur'an, 2012.
- Masri, Basheer Ahmad, *The Islamic Welfare in Islam*, (Nairobi: The Islamic Foundation, 2007).
- Nagel, Thomas. "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" *The Philosophical Review* 83, no. 4 (October 1974): 435. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2183914>.
- Sarra Tlili, "All Animals Are Equal, or Are They? The Ikhwān al-Ṣafā's Animal Epistle and its Unhappy End", dalam, *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 16 (2014). <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2014.0148>
- Shihab, M. Quraish, *He Is Everywhere: God's "Hand" Behind Every Phenomenon*, Series 02, (Ciputat: Lentera, 2004).
- Tafsir Ilmi: Animals in the Perspective of the Qur'an and Science*, (Jakarta: Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an, 2012).
- Tlili, Sarra, "A Case for Vegetarianism in Islam?", field buku, Ihsan Karaman dkk (ed.), *Animal Eti eti*(Istanbul: Isar Yayinlan, 2019).
- Tlili, Sarra, "Animals Would Follow Shafi'ism. Legitimate and Illegitimate Violence to Animals in Medieval Islamic Texts", dalam buku, Robert Gleave dan Istvan Kristo-Nagy (ed.), *Violence in Islamic Thought from the Qur'an to the Mongols*, (Oxford: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).
- Tlili, Sarra, "I invoke God Therefore I am: Creation's Spirituality and its Ecologic Impact in Islamic Texts", dalam buku, Louise Westling dan John Parham, *A Global History of Literature and the Environment*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
- Tlili, Sarra, *Animals in the Qur'an*, (New York: Cambridge, 2012).
- Tlili, Sarra. "The Canine Companion of the Cave: The Place of the Dog in Qur'anic Taxonomy." *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies* 3, no. 2 (2018): 43-60. [doi:10.2979/jims.3.2.04](https://doi.org/10.2979/jims.3.2.04).
- Tlili, Sarra. "Animal Ethics in Islam: A Review Article." *Religions*, 9 (2018): 269. [doi:10.3390/rel9090269](https://doi.org/10.3390/rel9090269)
- Tlili, Sarra. "Qur'anic Creation: Anthropocentric readings and Ecocentric Possibilities", dalam buku, George Archer dkk (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to the Qur'an*, (London: Routledge, 2022). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315885360>.

Tlili, Sarra. "The Meaning of the Qur'anic Word 'Dābba': 'Animals' or 'Nonhuman Animals?'" *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, October 2010. <https://doi.org/10.3366/E1465359110001002>.

Wahyudi, Antono. "Hermeneutic Interpretation: Observing the Discourse of the Art of Understanding Through the Lens of Modern and Postmodern Philosophy." *Clause*, Vol 2 No 2 (2018): 56. <https://doi.org/10.33479/klausav2i02.150>

White, Lynn. *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*, <http://www.zbi.ee/~kalevi/lwhite.htm> dipublikasi pertamakali pada 1967.

<http://www.esdaw.eu/unesco.html>

<https://wartakota.tribunnews.com/2020/04/27/>