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SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF THE WORD IHSAN: ECOLOGICAL CONCERN IN THE ERA OF GLOBAL WARMING

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ABSTRACT

The ecological crisis caused by global warming represents an ethical challenge rooted in anthropocentrism, necessitating the retrieval of spiritual ethics. This study analyses the semantic shifts of "Ihsan" to explore its potential as a framework for ecological care. Utilizing Stephen Ullman's theory of historical semantics within a qualitative library research method, the analysis relies on primary data from the Al-Qur'an an MUI Fatwa No. 4 of 2014. The findings reveal that "Ihsan" has undergone three significant semantic changes: broadening, where the object of Ihsan extends to explicitly encompass ecosystems; amelioration, elevating the status of natue conservation from a recommendation (fadhilah) to a binding obligation (wajib) as evidenced by the Fatwa; and transfer of meaning, which views nature as a "community" (umamun amthalukum) based on Q.S al-An'am: 38. This evolution demonstrates that Ihsan is dynamic concept capable of shifting the pardgm from anthropocentrism to theocentrism. Ulrimately, this research establishes a proactive theological foundation for sustainability, offering a significant scientific contribution to the field of Islamic eco-ethics.

Keywords: Ihsan; historical semantics, stephen ullmann; environmental ethics; global warming.

1. INTRODUCTION

Global warming has become a major global concern and is included as one of the key agendas of the United Nations (UN) within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically Goal 13: Climate Action. This issue is urgent, as it poses far-reaching impacts on the environment, the economy, and human health. The rise in the Earth's average temperature has triggered increasingly frequent and intense natural disasters, while also threatening the survival of numerous species.[1] The extinction of these living organisms disturbs the balance of ecosystems, ultimately resulting in serious consequences for human life.

[1] Jefri Kurniawan et al., "Pemanasan Global: Faktor, Dampak Dan Upaya Penanggulangan," *INSOLOGI: Jurnal Sains Dan Teknologi* 3, no. 6 (2024): 646–55, https://doi.org/10.55123/insologi.v3i6.4627.

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The world is currently witnessing the tangible impacts of global warming through the fourth global mass coral bleaching event. Confirmed by scientists from NOAA (the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), the phenomenon has spanned from 2024 to 2025. Data indicate that rising sea surface temperatures have triggered extreme heat stress, devastating coral reef ecosystems worldwide, from the Great Barrier Reef in Australia to the waters of Indonesia.[2] This event is not merely a climatic statistical record; it is a concrete manifestation of ecological degradation (*fasād*) that threatens biodiversity and the sustainability of life.

The environmental degradation occurring today is fundamentally rooted in an ethical crisis. Its primary cause lies in an anthropocentric worldview—a human-centered perspective that positions humans as the most important rulers of nature.[3] As a consequence, large-scale exploitation of the environment is deemed acceptable. This worldview drives humans to exhaust natural resources to serve their needs and interests without regard for ecological sustainability.[4] Nature is no longer perceived as a fellow creation of God with inherent value; rather, it's worth is reduced to that of mere "objects" or "resources" for human consumption. This ethical failure ultimately triggers systemic destruction. Therefore, technological solutions alone are insufficient; what is required is a transformation in humanity's spiritual outlook and ethical relationship with the natural world.

In response to the ethical failure of anthropocentrism, scholars have proposed revisiting spiritual and ethical values embedded in religious traditions—particularly Islam—as potential solutions. This approach is grounded in the argument that religious traditions offer alternative worldviews that do not reduce nature to an object of exploitation. Islam, for instance, possesses a rich theological heritage, including concepts such as *Khilāfah* (human beings as stewards of the earth) and *Amānah* (the trust-based responsibility), which situate humans within a morally accountable relationship with other creations of God.[5] Eco-theologians argue that the modern ecological crisis is fundamentally a spiritual crisis, and that its solution must involve the revitalization of a sacred perspective toward nature.[6]

Within this search for spiritual values, the present study focuses on the concept of *Ihsan*. Ihsan is selected because it represents one of the most fundamental ethical principles in Islam, with significant potential for contextualization within environmental ethics. While concepts such as *Khilāfah* (responsible stewardship) and the prohibition of *fasād* (corruption and destruction)

[2] National Environmental Satellite Data and Information Service, "Coral Reef Watch Satellite Monitoring and Modeled Outlooks," 2025, https://coralreefwatch.noaa.gov/, (diakses pada 23 Oktober 2025).

[3] Risno Tampilang, "Dualisme Ekosentrisme Dan Antroposentrisme: Sebuah Implikasi Teologis Kejadian 1-3 Dan Respon Terhadap Gerekan Ekofeminis Dalam Melihat Tindakan Eksploitasi Lingkungan," *Jurnal Mahasiswa Kristen* 4, no. 2 (2023): 18–36, https://ejournal-iakn-manado.ac.id/index.php/mello/index.

[4] Yusup Rogo Yuono, "Melawan Etika Lingkungan Antroposentris Melalui Interpretasi Teologi Penciptaan Sebagai Landasan Bagi Pengelolaan-Pelestarian Lingkungan," *Fidei: Jurnal Teologi Sistematika Dan Praktika* 2, no. 1 (2019): 186–206, https://doi.org/10.34081/fidei.v2i1.40.

[5] Muhammad Idnan Akbar, "Ekospiritualisme Al-Qur'an (Studi Atas Tanggungjawab Manusia Sebagai Khalifah Fî Al-Ardh Dalam Penyelamatan Alam)" (Institut PTIQ Jakarta, 2023), https://doi.org/10.57096/blantika.v2i5.141, h 104.

[6] This idea forms the core of the critique articulated by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who argues that the modern environmental crisis is rooted in the "desacralization" of nature brought about by the modern Western worldview. See Seyyed Hossein Nasr Nasr, *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1976).

frequently serve as foundational references in eco-theology, Ihsan provides a unique perspective. Etymologically, Ihsan does not merely connote "the avoidance of wrongdoing"; it encompasses meanings such as "doing good in the most excellent manner," "performing actions with perfection," and "beautifying."[7] Makna This proactive dimension is particularly relevant in the era of global warming, which demands not only the cessation of environmental harm but also active engagement in caring for and restoring ecosystems. This study argues that a vital semantic shift has occurred within the concept of Ihsan as a response to contemporary ecological challenges.

Previous studies on the concept of Ihsan tend to be dominated by theological-sufistic, normative ethical, and pedagogical perspectives. For instance, Ai Rohmatul Zakiah and Azzura Melan Sari (2024) examined Ihsan in the formation of Insan Kamil (the pPrfect Human) through the perspective of Ibn 'Arabi.[8] Meanwhile, Ayi Yusri Ahmad Tirmidzi (2023) positioned Ihsan as a basis for spiritual education for self-development.[9] In the linguistic domain, Siti Hafsari Nurul Fajri (2019) analyzed the derivation of the word Ihsan using Toshihiko Izutsu's semantics.[10] However, no research has yet mapped the semantic evolution of Ihsan specifically for ecological issues using Stephen Ullmann's theory.

This research focuses on three central questions. First, what are the basic meanings (both etymological and terminological) of the word Ihsan within the classical Islamic intellectual tradition? Second, how has the meaning of *Ihsan* evolved or shifted semantically when confronted with contemporary issues of global warming and ecological crisis? Third, according to Stephen Ullmann's historical-semantic framework (including broadening, amelioration, and transfer of meaning), which type of semantic change is most dominant in shaping the contemporary environmental interpretation of *Ihsan*?

Corresponding to these research questions, this study has three objectives. First, to describe and map the basic meanings of the term *Ihsan* based on classical Islamic sources. Second, to analyze the semantic shift of Ihsan from its classical meanings to its ecological reinterpretation in the era of global warming. Third, to identify and elucidate the types of semantic changes— particularly Broadening, Amelioration, and Transfer of Meaning— using Stephen Ullman's framework, ultimately positioning Ihsan as a pivotal concept within the discourse of Islamic environmental ethics and Qur'anic eco-theology.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using the library research method. The primary data consist of 4 key Qur'anic verses and 1 authoritative Hadith text that contain the term Ihsan

[7] Ibnu Manzhur, *Lisan Al-Arab*, 15th ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 2003), h 114.

[8] Ai Rohmatul Zakiah Muhamad and Azzura Melan Sari, "Faith, Islam and Ihsan in Forming Insan Kamil in the Perspective of Ibn 'Arabi (Thematic Interpretation Study)," *Takwil: Journal of Quran and Hadith Studies* 3, no. 1 (2024): 19–38, https://doi.org/10.32939/twl.v3i1.3481.

[9] Ayi Yusri Ahmad Tirmidzi, "Konsep Ihsan Sebagai Basis Pendidikan Ruhani Dan Signifikasinya Terhadap Pengembangan Diri" (Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah, 2023).

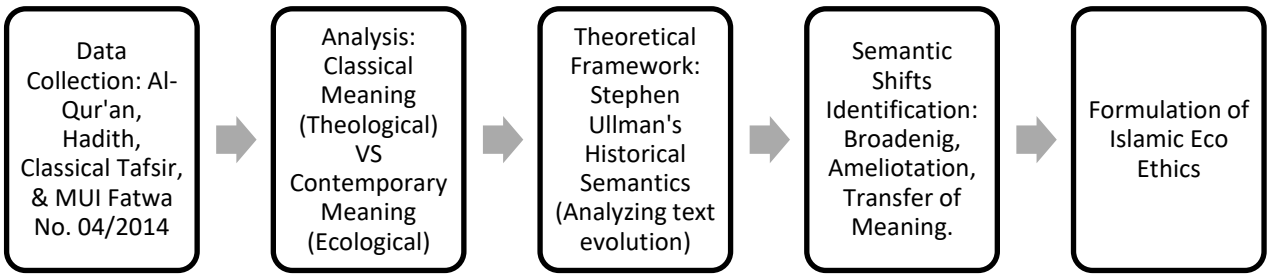
[10] Siti Hafsari Nurul Fajri, "Analisis Makna Pada Kata Ihsan Dan Derivasinya Dalam Al-Qur'an" (UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2019).

and its derivations. The secondary data were selected based on temporal and thematic criteria: classical data were drawn from authoritative exegetical works (e.g., Tafsir Misbah from Quraish Shihab, Ibn Kathir) to establish the baeline theological meaning, while contemporary data were curated from eco-theological journal articles and institutional fatwas (specifically MUI Fatwa No. 04/2014) to represent the modern ecological shift.

Analytically, this research operationalizes Stephen Ullmann's historical-semantic framework. Rather than covering al types of semantic change, this study focuses specifically on three categories pertinent to the findings: *broadening* (expansion of scope), *amelioration* (elevation of status), and *transfer of meaning* (metaphorical shift).[11]

The data were analyzed using content analysis techniques. The analytical steps include:

1. Collecting textual data on Ihsan from both classical and contemporary sources.
2. Establishing the baseline meaning of Ihsan derived from classical sources.
3. Analyzing contemporary data concerning Ihsan and environmental discourse.
4. Comparing contemporary meanings with the baseline meaning using three relevant categories from Ullmann (broadening, amelioration, and transfer of meaning) to identify the types of semantic shifts occurring.



3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Basic Meaning of the Term *Ihsan*

Etymologically, *Ihsan* (إحسان) is a verbal noun (*masdhar*) derived from the verb *ahsana - yuhsinu* (أَحْسَنَ - يُحْسِنُ), meaning "to do good", which stands in contract to *al-isā'ah* (الإساءة), "to do harm".[12] Its root, H-S-N (حسن), in its basic triliteral form (*tsulasi mujarrad*), *hasuna - yahsunu - husnan* (حَسُنَ - يَحْسُنُ - حُسْنًا), is an intransitive verb *fi'il lazim* (intransitif) denoting "goodness", "beauty", or "excellence," as a ooposite of *al-qubhu* (الْقُبْحُ) meaning "ugliness".[13] When prefixed with the hamzah of *qaṭ'* at the beginning, forming *ahsana*, the verb becomes transitive (*fi'il muta'addi*), requiring a direct object. This morphological shift also alters the meaning, from "being

[11] Joseph M. Williams, "Synaesthetic Adjectives: A Possible Law of Semantic Change," *JSTOR* 52, no. 2 (June 1976): 461–78, https://doi.org/10.2307/412571.

[12] Ibnu Manzhur, *Lisan Al-Arab*, 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 2003), h 876.

[13] Ahmad Warson Munawwir, "Kamus Al-Munawwir Arab-Indonesia" (Surabaya: Pustaka Pogresif, 1997), h 264.

good" to "making something good" or "showing kindness to others." Thus, the core semantic essence of *ihsan* is "goodness." Classical lexicons such as *Lisān al-'Arab*, *al-Maqāyīs*, *al-Munawwir*, and *al-Munjid* consistently affirm this fundamental meaning, which also encompasses the notions of "beauty" and "freedom from deficiency."

Terminologically, in Wahbah al-Zuhaili's *Tafsīr al-Munīr*, *ihsan* is defined as the effort to perfect acts of obedience in both quantity—through the enhancement of voluntary deeds—and quality.[14] This understanding aligns with the well-known Hadith of Gabriel narrated by Bukhari and Muslim on the authority of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (r.a.), in which the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said:

أَنْ تَعْبُدَ الله كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ

"Al Ihsan is to worship Allah as if you see Him; and if you do not see Him, indeed He sees you."

This Hadith indicates that *ihsan* entails worship imbued with sincerity, excellence, precision, and professionalism. A person who practices *ihsan* responds to good deeds with something better, and to harm with something lesser in severity. Imam al-Nawawi interprets *ihsan* as أَنْ تَعْبُدَ الله كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ *"anta 'buda Allāha ka'annaka tarāhu"* emphasizing *mushāhadah*, a spiritual state in which the believer worships with full inner awareness as though seeing Allah. This awareness generates humility, devotion, and a sense of shame that prevents one from turning away from Him. Meanwhile, the phrase فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ *"fa in lam takun tarāhu fa innahu yarāka"* signifies that one who has not attained the level of *mushāhadah* should at least maintain conscious awareness that Allah is ever watchful. This awareness enhances the value and meaningfulness of worship (*afdhal*).[15]

In the realm of Qur'anic semantics, the meaning of Ihsan is not singular but forms a complex semantic field. Utilizing Toshihiko Izutsu's framework, Siti Hafsari Nurul Fajri (2019) maps Ihsan as a multi-relational concept that connects God, Humanity, and the Universe. Her analysis classifies the Qur'anic usage of Ihsan into five distinct relational foci: (1) Toward Allah (e.g., Al-An'am:151); (2) Toward family (e.g., Al-Isra:23); (3) Toward oneself (e.g., Fussilat:33); (4) Toward fellow humans (social ethics); and significantly, (5) Toward the natural environment (Al-A'raf:56).[16]

Classical and modern exegetes further enrich this semantic mapping. Thanthawi Jauhari expands Ihsan to include positive moral responses to wrongdoing,[17] while Ibn Taymiyyah positions it as the highest tier of religiosity above Islam and Iman.[18] Hamka, in Tafsir al-Azhar,

[14] Muhamad and Sari, "Faith, Islam and Ihsan in Forming Insan Kamil in the Perspective of Ibn 'Arabi (Thematic Interpretation Study)."

[15] Imam An-Nawawi, *Syarh Matn Al-Arba'in an-Nawawiyah*, terj. Jazirotul Islamiyah (Yogyakarta: Mitra Pustaka, 2000), h 55.

[16] Siti Hafsari Nurul Fajri, "Analisis Makna Pada Kata Ihsan Dan Derivasinya Dalam Al-Qur'an" (UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2019), h 38-46.

[17] Muhamad and Sari, "Faith, Islam and Ihsan in Forming Insan Kamil in the Perspective of Ibn 'Arabi (Thematic Interpretation Study)."

[18] Ibn Taymiyyah, *Kitab Al-Iman: Book of Faith*, ed and translate by Salman Hassan Al-Ani and Shadia Ahmad Tel (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2009), h 20.

synthesizes these views by emphasizing that Ihsan must manifest in personal quality, social generosity, and spiritual depth.[19] Thus, the "Baseline Meaning" of Ihsan is comprehensive, yet historically, its ecological dimension (based on al-'Araf: 56) remained peripheral compared to its theological and social applications.

Semantic Shift Analysis of the Term *Ihsan*

As explained in the previous section, establishing the baseline meaning of the term *ihsan* demonstrates its comprehensive scope, encompassing both theological relations (toward God) and social relations (toward fellow human beings). It was also found that the meaning of "*ihsan toward the natural environment*" (QS. Al-A'raf: 56) is present within the textual tradition. The increasing number of scholarly works over the past decade that specifically examine Q.S al-'Araf: 56 as a foundation for environmental ethics- such as studies by Nafisa Qotrul Hidayah,[20] and by Abdul Aziz together with Yadi Syafaat Fadillah,[21] is not a coincidence. Rather, this academic phenomenon serves as empirical evidence of a semantic shift in the meaning of *ihsan*.

The meaning of a word within a linguistic lexicon is never frozen in history; it is dynamic, living, and responsive to the challenges of its time.[22] To systematically analyze the semantics of the term *ihsan*, this study applies the historical semantic framework developed by Stephen Ullmann. The following analysis will focus on how the meaning of *ihsan* undergoes Broadening, Amelioration, and Transfer of Meaning within the context of contemporary ecological concerns.

1. Broadening of Meaning

Broadening of meaning occurs when a term that originally had a limited sense develops into a wider usage.[23] In the case of *ihsan*, its historical baseline meaning centered primarily on two domains: goodness toward God (in an act of worship) and goodness toward fellow human beings (in social interaction). However, with the emergence of the modern ecological crisis, contemporary Muslim thinkers have begun to broaden the application of this concept into a newer domain—namely, environmental ethics. An example can be seen in Muhammad Quraish Shihab's interpretation of Qur'an, Surah al-Qasas verse 77:

.....وَأَحْسِنْ كَمَآ أَحْسَنَ الله إِلَيْكَ وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفَسَادَ فِي الأَرْضِ إِنَّ الله لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ

".....And do good (to others) as Allah has been good to you, and do not commit mischief on the earth. Indeed, Allah does not love those who cause corruption."

[19] Prof.Dr. Hamka, *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, 6th ed. (Jakarta: Gema Insani, 2015), h 634.

[20] Nafisa Qotrul Hidayah, "Penanaman Etika Lingkungan Sebagai Penerapan Jiwa Biologis Pada Tiap Individu Serta Korelasinya Dengan Surat Al-A'raf Ayat 56," *Es-Syajar:Journal of Islam, Science and Technology Integration* 2, no. 1 (2024): 167–77, https://doi.org/10.18860/es.v2i1.18139.

[21] Abdul Aziz and Yadi Syafaat Fadilah, "Kelestarian Lingkungan Dan Alam Dalam Al Qur ' an (Membaca Penafsiran Quraish Shihab Terhadapat Surat Al- A ' Raf Ayat 56 Dan Ar Rum 51)," in *Indonesian Proceedings and Annual Conference Og Islamic Law and Sharia Economic (IPACILSE)* (Kediri: Universitas Islam Tribakti Lirboyo, 2023), 257–66.

[22] Nadjet Hocine, "SEMANTIC CHANGE: CAUSES, FORMS, AND SCOPE," *Akofena* 1, no. 14 (2024): 91–98, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.48734/akofena.n014.vol.1.08.2024.

[23] Zamroni, Muhammad Nur Amin, and Eka Prasetiawati, "Analisis Fuqara Dalam Surah Al-Nur Ayat 32: Kajian Tafsir Al-Munir Perpektif Morfologi Derivatif Dan Semantik," *Qur'anic Interpretiation Journal* 1, no. 2 (2024): 109–31.

In this verse, the word **(أَحْسِنْ)** derives from the root **(حَسُنَ)** meaning "good." The term appears here in the imperative form (fi'il amr) and is *muta'addi* (requiring an object). Because the object is not explicitly mentioned, the command becomes general and encompasses all forms of goodness. Thus, the goodness intended may apply to all aspects of life—toward the environment, property, vegetation, animals, fellow human beings, and even toward oneself. Even toward an enemy, goodness may still be extended as long as it remains within the boundaries permitted by the Sharia.[24] The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "Verily, Allah has prescribed *ihsan* in all things**."** (Narrated by Muslim and others through Shaddad ibn Aws).

A practical example can be seen in the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) Fatwa No. 4 of 2014 concerning endangered species, which employs the term *ihsan* to mandate benevolence toward all living beings, including endangered wildlife. The fatwa is grounded in Qur'anic verses, including Surah al-An'am 38 and Surah al-Qasas 77..[25] This fatwa represents an institutional response to the biodiversity crisis (as part of global warming). MUI officially "broadens" the meaning of *ihsan* from a personal-social ethic to a legally binding ecological ethic (*wajib*).

Both examples constitute empirical evidence of semantic broadening as explained by Ullmann. A shift has occurred in the direction of the application of *ihsan*: whereas in the classical context *ihsan* focused on human relations with God and with fellow humans, in contemporary discourse its scope expands to include human relations with ecosystems and the natural world. Thus, *ihsan* is now understood not only as a theological and social ethic, but also as a comprehensive ecological ethic. This shift is not a distortion of meaning, but a dynamic linguistic adaptation of religious language to contemporary challenges, semantically falling under broadening of meaning.

2. Amelioration of Meaning

Amelioration refers to an improvement or elevation of meaning. As stated by Ibrahim Anis, "A word may be fortunate enough that its meaning becomes elevated; although such occurrences are rare in the evolution of meaning." For example, the word **rasūl** ("messenger"), which originally referred to anyone sent on an errand of any kind, acquired a sacred connotation with the coming of Islam—designating a person who receives revelation and is commanded to convey it. Likewise, the word al-qimāsh (cloth), which initially referred to leftover scraps of scattered fabric, now denotes fine woven cloth.[26]

A parallel process of amelioration is now occurring with the term *ihsan* in relation to the contemporary ecological crisis. As established earlier, the baseline meaning of *ihsan* is already highly positive— "doing good in the best, most excellent, and most perfect manner." However, the *value* and *urgency* of that meaning undergo a significant elevation when confronted with the existential threat of global warming.

[24] Muhammad Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah: Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Penerbit Lentera Hati, 2004), h 406.

[25] The Indonesian Council of Ulama, "Fatwa on Protection of Endangered Species to Maintain the Balance of the Ecosystems," 2014, 1–28.

[26] Hocine, "SEMANTIC CHANGE: CAUSES, FORMS, AND SCOPE."

This phenomenon aligns with linguistic insights that semantic change is strongly influenced by social factors and historical demands. Abdul Chaer explains that one of the key drivers of semantic change is the development of science and technology, as well as shifts in worldview and value systems within society.[27] Global warming represents a concrete transformation in humanity's worldview. Within this context, the meaning of *ihsan* toward the environment experiences an increase in value—an amelioration. What was once perceived as an additional moral virtue (*fadhīlah*) is now seen as a foundational ethical principle for the survival of human civilization.

Evidence of this amelioration can be observed in the previously mentioned MUI Fatwa No. 4 of 2014. The fatwa not only broadens the object of *ihsan* but also elevates its normative status. By declaring that "Treating endangered wildlife with goodness (*ihsan*)… is obligatory," MUI institutionally raises the rank of ecological *ihsan*. The shift from what might once have been considered merely *sunnah* or moral recommendation to an obligatory act (*wajib*) represents the clearest form of amelioration. The meaning of *ihsan* now occupies a more elevated and urgent position within the ethical hierarchy of modern Islamic thought—much like the term *rasūl* "rose in status" from profane to sacred.

3. Transfer of Meaning

Transfer of meaning refers to the shift of a word from its original domain to another domain with which it shares a related or analogical connection.[28] According to Ullmann, such shifts often occur due to associations or psychological analogies between two different "fields of thought." A term commonly used in one domain may be "borrowed" in another domain because of perceived similarity or conceptual association.[29]

In analyzing the term *ihsan*, we can identify a transfer of meaning driven by an analogy between two ethical domains:

a. Source Domain: Social ethics (relations among human beings). This is the domain in which *ihsan* is most established and frequently employed (e.g., doing good to parents, neighbors, or orphans).
b. Target Domain: Ecological ethics (relations between humans and the natural world). This is the emerging domain of focus due to the global crisis of warming.

A transfer of meaning occurs when the logic of the source domain ("doing good to fellow beings") is analogically extended to the target domain ("doing good to the natural environment"). Cognitively, Muslims begin to treat the natural world as though it were a "fellow community" likewise deserving of *ihsan*.

The basis for this analogy is provided by the Qur'an itself, which offers theological justification for associating non-human communities with human communities. The strongest foundation is Surah al-An'am verse 38:

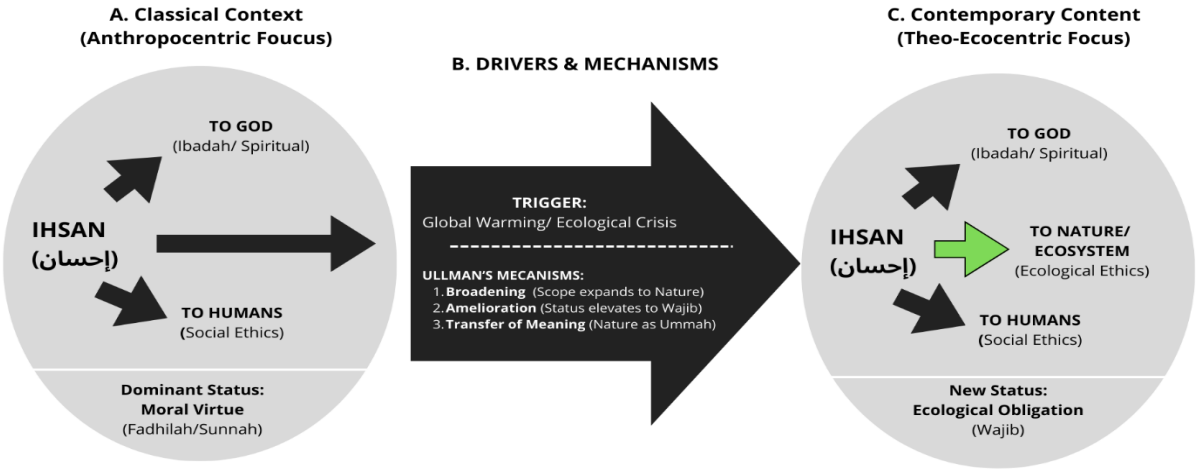
[27] Abdul Chaer, *Linguistik Umum* (Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 2012), h 304.
[28] Hocine, "SEMANTIC CHANGE: CAUSES, FORMS, AND SCOPE."
[29] Stephen Ullman, *Semantics: An Introduction to the Science of Meaning* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), h 220.

وَمَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَلَا طٰٓىِٕرٍ يَّطِيْرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ اِلَّآ اُمَمٌ اَمْثَالُكُمْۗ مَا فَرَّطْنَا فِى الْكِتٰبِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ثُمَّ اِلٰى رَبِّهِمْ يُحْشَرُوْنَ

"There is no creature on earth nor any bird that flies with its wings, but they are communities like you. We have left nothing out of the Book; then unto their Lord they shall all be gathered".

The key phrase "اُمَمٌ اَمْثَالُكُمْ" ("communities like you") is a textual justification that validates the analogy between animal communities and human communities. This legitimizes the transfer of the meaning of *ihsan*: an ethic that previously operated mainly in the social-humanistic domain is now legitimately transferred into the ecological domain.

Figure 1. Semantic Map Illustrating the Evolution of Ihsan from Anthropocentric to Theo-Ecocentric Ethics.



Implications: From Paradigm Shift to Pragmatic Challenges

The semantic analysis above demonstrates that Ihsan is not a static concept but a dynamic one. The mechanisms of broadening, amelioration, and transfer of meaning collectively function to shift the environmental paradigm. Historically, ethics were dominated by anthropocentrism (human-centered), where nature was merely a resource. The semantic evolution of Ihsan transforms this into eco-theocentrism (God-centered ecology). By recognizing nature as an object of Ihsan (Broadening) and a "community like us" (Transfer), the environment is desacralized no longer, but re-sacralized as a trust (*Amanah*) from God that demands ethical care.[30]

[30] The shift from anthropocentrism (a modern, human-centered worldview) to theocentrism (a God-centered worldview) is a central theme in Nasr's works. He argues that the ecological crisis is fundamentally a spiritual crisis that can only be addressed by restoring the notion of the "sacredness of nature." See, for example, Nasr, *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*.

However, while the paradigm has shifted theoretically, a gap remains in its social realization- a tension between Semantic Change and Pragmatic Reality.

1. The Gap Internalization

Despite the amelioration of Ihsan into a religious "obligation", widely observed behaviours such as littering indicate that this shift has not fully penetrated the public habitus. The justification that "cleaners will handle it" reflects what environmental psychology terms weak ascription of responsibility.[31] Linguistically, this signifies that while Ihsan has evolved in the "text" (fatwas/theology), in faces resistance in "context" (daily practice).

2. Contestation of Meaning and the Role of Normative Foundation

Furthermore, efforts to operationalize this new paradigm face social scepticism. Youth-led clean-up initiatives (e.g., on TikTok) meant to embody "Active Ihsan" are often dismissed by the public as "image-building" (*pencitraan*), revealing a contestation of meaning. To address this crisis of trust, the reconstruction of ihsan must involve religious instructions, such as "Green Pesantren" to certify that ecological care is an authentic expression of faith.[32]

In this context, emphasizing the normative foundation become crucial, as Islamic environmental ethics rests upon its primary source. This reinforces that the Noble Qur'an is the principal foundation of Islamic legislation and one of the great text that contains profound linguistic, social, and moral meanings, playing a significant role in shaping human values and guiding social conduct.[33] Thus, grounding the semantic shift of Ihsan within this authoritative Qur'anic framework is the key to bridging the gap between linguistic definition and social action.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that *ihsan* has undergone a significant semantic evolution through three of Ullmann's mechanisms: the broadening of its objects to include the ecological domain; the amelioration of its status from a moral recommendation to an urgent ethical obligation; and the transfer of meaning that legitimizes the position of nature as a theological entity parallel to humankind. This transformation establishes *ihsan* as the foundation of a theo-ecocentric environmental ethic that demands "active concern" rather than passive restraint.

[31] Pengya Ai and Sonny Rosenthal, "The Model of Norm - Regulated Responsibility for Proenvironmental Behavior in the Context of Littering Prevention," *Scientific Reports*, 2024, 1–13, https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-60047-0.

[32] Nur Kasanah, Muhammad Husain As Sajjad, and Dawan Multazamy Rohmatullah, "Responsive Islamic Boarding School Management to Environmental Sustainability Through Green Pesantren Program," *Muslim Heritage: Jurnal Dialog Islam Dengan Realitas* 8, no. 2 (2023).

[33] Baso Pallawagau, Zakirah Jahantab, and Sherif Muhammad Alsadiq, " البعد الدلالي والسوسيولغوي لكلمة 'قوامون' في النص القرآني: دراسة نقدية عن سلطة الزوج في الأسرة," *Journal of The Association for Arabic and English* 11, no. 1 (2025): 34–48, https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.31332/lkw.v0i0. 11022.

Nevertheless, the critical analysis indicates that this lexical shift alone is insufficient to address pragmatic challenges such as weak personal responsibility and public scepticism toward digital activism. Therefore, the actualization of *ihsan* requires concrete integration between religious education, communal institutions, and civil society to transform this value from an abstract concept into an internalized social norm—where environmental preservation becomes an authentic expression of *syi'ar* and a tangible embodiment of piety in the era of global warming.

Scientifically, this research contributes to *Islamic semantic studies* by demonstrating the adaptive capacity of sacred lexicon in responding to modern crises and enriches eco-theology by offering a linguistically grounded ethical framework beyond the traditional *khalifah* discourse. Explicitly, this study recommends that future research should further investigate the pragmatic reception of ecological Ihsan among Muslim communities through quantitative approaches or explore the semantic evolution of other key Qur'anic environmental terms—such as *fasād* (corruption) and *mīzān* (balance)—within the context of the Anthropocene.

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