

## **THE ECOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF CONFUCIAN RELIGION: Perceiving Human-Nature Relation in the Anthropocosmic Principle**

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### **Abstract**

*The religious discourse has been dominated by the paradigm of world religions especially the Abrahamic religions like Islam and Christianity, shaping the way religion being understood and associated with other issues. Its strong emphasis on the ultimate being called God has resulted in commonly accepted categories of what could be counted as religion or more religious. It then brings a strict distinction between the sacred and the profane or secular. The issues of ecology, economics, politics, etc., therefore, are often dissociated from religions. This paper aims to challenge that paradigm by promoting Confucian distinctive ways of being religious which have been commonly perceived as having much to do with humanity or social matters. This paper, by using literature study as the method of research, further show the important significance of Confucian religiosity on the issue of ecology. In so doing, the discussion is framed in the underlying assumption of the contemporary ecological discourse on the idea of interconnectedness that humanity and ecology, as well as social and natural science, are actually intertwined and inseparable. Putting that under the term 'religiosity', it broadens our understanding of religiosity and implies great significance religions can contribute to the contemporary issues. It is also assumed here that social welfare of human beings cannot be separated from natural welfare of non-human beings since both are interdependent.*

**Keyword:** *Anthropocosmic Principle; Confucianism; Ecology.*

### **Abstrak**

Wacana keagamaan yang didominasi oleh paradigma agama dunia khususnya agama-agama Abrahamik seperti Islam dan Kristen, membentuk cara pandang terhadap agama yang dipahami dan dikaitkan dengan isu-isu lain. Penekanannya yang kuat pada wujud tertinggi yang disebut Tuhan telah menghasilkan kategori-kategori yang diterima secara umum dari apa yang dapat dianggap sebagai agama atau lebih religius. Ini kemudian membawa perbedaan tegas antara yang sakral dan yang profan atau sekuler. Oleh karena itu, isu-isu ekologi, ekonomi, politik, dan lain-lain., seringkali dipisahkan dari agama. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menantang paradigma tersebut dengan mempromosikan cara-cara beragama yang khas Konfusianisme yang selama ini dianggap banyak berhubungan dengan kemanusiaan atau masalah sosial. Dengan menggunakan studi kepustakaan sebagai metode penelitian, selanjutnya artikel ini menunjukkan pentingnya religiositas Konfusianisme dalam masalah ekologi. Dengan demikian, diskusi dibingkai dalam asumsi yang mendasari wacana ekologi kontemporer tentang gagasan keterkaitan bahwa kemanusiaan dan ekologi, serta ilmu sosial dan alam, sebenarnya saling terkait dan tidak dapat dipisahkan. Menempatkan bahwa di bawah istilah 'religiusitas', itu memperluas pemahaman tentang religiositas dan menyiratkan signifikansi besar agama dapat berkontribusi pada isu-isu kontemporer. Di sini juga diasumsikan bahwa kesejahteraan sosial manusia tidak dapat dipisahkan dari kesejahteraan alam non-manusia karena keduanya saling bergantung.

**Kata Kunci:** Prinsip Antropokosmik; Konfusianisme; Ekologi.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is commonly believed that Confucianism has nothing to do with the discourse of ecology for it mostly focuses on the matter of social relations. However, in recent decades, in line with the emergence of unprecedented environmental challenges and the need to call on all elements of global citizens to address the issue, there have been intriguing discussions on how the richness of Confucian religiosity could contribute to such matters. Religion, as the most influential one in human life, indeed cannot avoid the summons. Rather, it has to show its relevance and significance by taking into account seriously the issue. In this regard, the long historical course of Confucianism with all its richness has been explored by many scholars to accentuate its distinctive point of view in examining the issue of ecology. It was started in June 1966 when there was a conference talking about and then concluding the ecological significance of Confucianism in the published work entitled *Confucianism and Ecology: The Interrelation of Heaven, Earth, and Humans*.

As Tucker argues, the East Asian traditions such as Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, and Shinto have much significant insights to offer in examining the interrelatedness of nature and the need for humans to be in harmony with nature (Tucker, 2001). With keeping in mind that every religion has their distinctively unique perspective on the issue, this work is trying to articulate the trajectory of anthropocosmic-based ecological dimension in Confucianism, according to several discussions on that topic. As Tucker further adds, in rethinking the contemporary ecological matters, Confucian traditions provide so many suggestive resources from the early integration of humans into the great triad with heaven and earth to the dynamic interactions of nature as shown in the *Book of Changes* even up to the more complex metaphysical discourse of principle and material force (Tucker, 2001)

Those discourse might be seldom known and discussed due to the fact that the discourse about religion in Indonesia, perhaps also in the World, has been dominated by the Abrahamic perspective which emphasizes the conviction to the one god (monotheism) and one religion which eschatologically guarantee an eternity or immortality. This dominant idea of being religious is inevitably related to the history of colonialism. As Esposito argues, Asian societies have been forced to follow the European ideas, technologies, and institutions by European modernity, who attempt to establish a global world order (Esposito et al., 2018, p. 444). That imperialism challenged the fundamental understanding of East Asians about humanity and cosmos through science and Christian missions. However, despite the destructive effects of colonialism, the fusion of older traditions with modern changes results in a number of compelling and original religious innovations (Esposito et al., 2018, p. 445). Confucian ways of being religious, which is one of those results, and its ecological dimension will be explored in this work in order to show the diversity of religiousness throughout the world, especially those in the third world countries which are seldom to be accentuated (Rosyid & Kushidayati, 2021).

In the East Asian context, people do not perceive “being religious” as choosing one religious tradition and thus excluding the other. This is in contrast to the common western idea that religious conviction means adopting one creed and forsaking all others (Esposito et al., 2018, p. 416). In China, it is common that people belong to more than one tradition as different traditions are related to

different need and purpose. As Eric Sharpe argues, any scholar has to admit that there is a possibility for a Chinese to belong to all three religions of China at the same time (Sharpe, 1994, p. 82). In this case, we have to firstly recognize that religion has been understood differently in China. As Fung insists, the word “religion” is primarily suggestive of superstitions in which a religion is usually regarded as a superstructure which consists of superstitions, dogmas, rituals and institutions (Fung, 1961, p. 3). For this reason, the things connected to religion were not greatly appreciated in China (Yao, 2000, pp. 40–41). In short, there is a need to dialectically reconstruct the dominant understanding of what it means to be religious by taking into account seriously those forms of religiosity that are often unrecognized.

Confucianism itself is not considered a religion by the earlier western scholars who were influenced by a Christian definition of religion. They judged the Confucian tradition based on the Christian doctrine which then put it between religious and agnostic or between good and evil (Yao, 2000, p. 39). Historically the west maintained a division between the secular and the religious, which is inappropriate for the ancient Chinese whose religious worldview is not intentionally distinguished from the philosophical and political view (Yao, 2000, p. 41). As Yao insists, some writers have failed to recognise Confucian spirituality because it has been examined and judged with the yardsticks of a theistic system. Within a theo-centric framework, Confucianism is definitely not a religion, because there is no priesthood, church, bible, creed, conversion, or a fixed system of gods (Yao, 2000, p. 44). Certainly, those prototypes must be reconstructed at least by firstly taking a closer look to a kind of religion like Confucianism.

Nevertheless, many modern scholars in the West have surpassed the old Christian definitions of religion so that many different traditions and cultures can be counted under the umbrella of religion (Yao, 2000, p. 42). One of them is Rodney Taylor who argues that Confucianism is a tradition that bears a deep and profound sense of the religious. He adds that the scholars who ignored this quality had lost the essential feature of Confucianism (Taylor, 1986, pp. 1–2). For other scholars who respect the traditional and cultural function of Confucianism, it is considered a religion as it has a central role in shaping the Chinese, Korean, and Japanese cultures. It also has a strong dimension of ritual including offerings and sacrifices to ancestors (Yao, 2000, pp. 39–40). In short, contemporary scholars attempt to establish that Confucianism is religious, as a tradition of a unique character that is distinctive from other religions in many ways (Yao, 2000, p. 42). In line with that awareness, this work will explore the religiosity of Confucianism especially in its ecological dimension. By conducting a literature study, this work would show that Confucianism is certainly religious, in its distinctive ways, and it has much to do with ecological discourse; in contrast with the long-standing assumption that Confucianism only has much to say about social relation and humanity. To do so, this work would firstly discuss the Confucian distinctive ways of being religious. Secondly, discussing the humanistic features of Confucianism. Entering the discussion related to ecology, this work would firstly provide a theoretical discussion of religion and ecology as the framework. This then brings to the next part discussing what in this study called Confucian religious ecology, examining the ecological dimension of the so-called social-humanistic religion.

## 2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 2.1. Confucian Distinctive Ways of Being Religious

As Esposito insists, Confucianism and Daoism, which tend to be claimed as not religions at all, challenge the western monotheistic model of being religious. They show another way for humans to be religious by not centering the sacred on a single God above but seeing as sacred this world “below,” in which humans live together within nature (Esposito et al., 2018, p. 480). Hence, with full respect and reverence, they maintain the reciprocal relatedness in their society and make it sacred as they live in harmony with the energies of nature and respect the creative power of the universe. Their most unique-optimistic character is in seeing the potential of individual and social improvement as sacred goals that can be reached by cultivating character and practical knowledge. In short, their concern is for the sake of this world, not the dictate of a transcendent deity, which is typical of monotheistic west religions. The concern of Confucianism is not about the life in the other world, but in this world, not about the possible salvation from without but about the process of self-transformation through moral cultivation and social engagement (Taylor, 1986, p. 157) since the focus of Confucians is not on the individualism of human beings (Shun & Wong, 2004, p. 59).

In the Confucian worldview, the world is not a division between good and evil or heaven and hell, but between the civilized and the barbarian or the cultivated and the uncultivated (Taylor, 1986, p. 159). Hence, human beings must pursue harmony in their social relations because they are a combination of heaven (*yang*) and earth (*yin*) (Esposito et al., 2018, p. 431). The Ch’ondogyo, which merges elements of Confucianism, Daoism, shamanism, and Roman Catholicism, could be a good example of an Eastern learning as the contrast to the Western learning. Its original name is Tonghak (Eastern learning), which indicates its origins as an indigenous response to the imported Christianity (Western Learning). The founder, Ch’oe Suun (1824-1864), based on their scriptures, received a direct revelation of a new “Heavenly Way” designed to awaken each person to the totality of life in the universe (Esposito et al., 2018, p. 450).

The core of Confucian doctrines is composed of three principles: harmony and unity between humanity and Heaven, harmony and unity between descendants and ancestors, and harmony and unity between the secular and the sacred (Yao, 1996, pp. 31–33). In analysing these three dimensions of harmony, Confucianism develops a systematic and unique doctrine of human religiosity which is a kind of humanism that concentrates on solving secular problems and insists on human perfectibility. Confucianism is a kind of humanism that seeks sacredness in an ordinary and yet disciplined life. By relating the secular to the sacred and the humanistic to the religious, Confucianism demonstrates a unique understanding of the Ultimate and of transcendence, and opens a distinctive path to human eternity (Yao, 2000, p. 45). This doctrine then has an important significance in Confucian religious views related to the values of humanity.

Confucian concept the transcendence could be grasped in the point about heaven, but certainly heaven with different meaning to the concept of heaven in Abrahamic tradition. By its faith in Heaven (*tian*) and the Mandate of Heaven (*tian ming*), and by its belief that humanity can achieve perfection and live up to heavenly principles, Confucianism insists that humans have their mission in the world which cannot be fulfilled unless men and women have done their best to fulfil their ethical and moral duties, from which there develops a unique

understanding of the moral as the transcendental and the secular as the sacred (Yao, 2000, p. 46). To this extent, Confucianism once again proposes a totally different religious worldview, in which the sacred, for them, could be, if not must be, grasped in the secular.

Confucianism also has a distinctive rationalism. According to Weber's idea about the degree to which a religion has divested itself to magic and systematically unified the relation between God and the World and thus its own ethical relationship to the world (Weber, 1968, p. 226), Yao concludes that Confucianism is almost devoid of any belief in magic and that fulfilment of Heaven's Mandate is undertaking self-cultivation and extending one's virtues to others and to the world (Yao, 2000, pp. 46–47). This lack of "magical" discourse also bases the argumentation of those who considers Confucianism not religious at all, because in the dominant paradigm, religion is surely related to something supernatural and divided from the natural world.

## **2.2. The Humanistic Feature of Confucianism**

It is agreed that the difficulty in defining Confucianism as a religion lies in its humanistic teachings and rational understanding of the world and life (Yao, 2000, p. 41). It is different to Abrahamic religions which emphasize more on the monotheistic teachings and the hope of another world and life. In that dominant perspective of religious discourse, Confucianism certainly is inappropriate to be labelled as a religion. However, Yao, in another work, also argues that those humanistic approaches to religious matters such as beliefs, rituals and institutions, and in its religious concerns with secular affairs, individual growth, family relationships, and social harmony become the distinctiveness of Confucianism as a religion (Yao, 1996). It is justified by Julia Ching who insists that Confucius is a humanist of a special kind and that there is a profound spirituality in his moral teachings which are the foundation of Confucianism. In addition, by recognising that the main concern of Confucius and Confucianism is with social and moral affairs, it implies that not all humanists are secularists or agnostics (Ching, 1993, p. 6). In short, Confucianism has shown how they become religious by concerning to the so-called secular matters including humanity.

To get a deeper understanding of Confucian religiousness, it is important to know the elements of Confucian teaching. There are three constituent elements of the Confucian Way, which are heaven, humans, and harmony. They basically are not separable from each other. The Way of Heaven is reflected in the Way of Humans and culminates in the Way of Harmony while the Way of Humans is based on the Way of Heaven and functions in the Way of Harmony (Yao, 2000, p. 141). The Way of Heaven must be attained in personal experience and social interchange (Yao, 2000, p. 154). For example, most Confucians insist that the social causes of human corruption cannot be completely removed unless most individuals have cultivated their own nature and made their own character correct and righteous (Yao, 2000, p. 157).

Due to the close relation between the moral and transcendental implications, Heaven as the Confucian Ultimate is distinguished from the God of theistic traditions. Besides, in Confucian politics, the Mandate of Heaven is the same as the will of the people which gives legitimacy to the government (Yao, 2000, p. 147). Consequently, the sacred or the Way of Heavens is harmoniously parallel to the secular or the Way of Human. As Yao argues, the attainment of the Ultimate in a Confucian context means to attain the security of the infinite and sacred ideal

in a life that is finite, historical, secular and cultural. Confucians believe that Heaven and its relation to the earth set up the model and principles of human moral codes as it is more concerned with life rather than death and with humans rather than with spirits (Yao, 2000, p. 148).

*Ren* is one of four virtues in Confucianism namely *ren* (humanity), *li* (ritual propriety), *yi* (appropriate conduct), and *zhi* (practical knowledge). Based on those virtues, Timothy Havens persists that Confucianism is not an anti-religious philosophy, but a religious humanism (Havens, 2013, p. 33). To argue this claim, Havens firstly discusses the characteristics of humanism such as the distinctive view of the supernatural by explaining phenomena or morality reasonably and rationally, self-actualization without the need for an objective imbued morality, and an emphasis on the individual development and the individual ability to transform themselves, the community around them, and possibly the world. According to those features, Havens concludes that Confucianism is different from those but still counted as a form of humanism. The difference is in the emphasis on collectivism before individualism. Consequently, Confucianism could be labelled as a cosmological humanism, because it focuses on the relationships between humans and the universe as a whole (Havens, 2013, pp. 34–35).

*Ren* is the highest importance and commonality among the four other virtues. It is believed that *ren* is the sum of all virtues within an individual and the pillar of the *junzi* or the exemplary person. *Ren* itself can be translated as person, goodness, or humane. The four virtues of Confucianism are dependent and related to the relationship of person in the cosmology, the universe as a whole. Hence, Confucianism is centered on humans but within the context of cosmology; to use Weimung's term, "anthropocosmic" philosophy. The humanness and religiousness of Confucianism also could be accentuated by seeing that they believe in the purpose of the universe which is deterministic but contains indeterminate qualities. Those qualities are associated with human beings and their freewill to act (Havens, 2013, p. 39). However, humans must use this freewill responsibly in their action which has a certain impact on the natural world and their relation with others. In short, Confucianism is surely a form of religious humanism which is unique and distinctive, not concerned with the other world or supernatural beings.

The sense of humanity in Confucianism could be grasped in the words "If you are not yet able to serve humans, how can you possibly serve spiritual beings? If you do not yet understand life, how can you possibly understand death?". In this sense, when the world is currently dominated by the theo-centric faith, Confucianism represents an essentially anthropo-centric faith which believes that humans could transform the world with their educability and perfectibility (Yao, 2000, p. 284). To this extent, the Confucian faith is fundamentally humanistic, meaning that the responsibility for a better world and for a secured future is not in the hands of a supremely detached God, but in the hands of ordinarily engaged humans (Yao, 1996, p. 15). As Xinzhong Yao concludes, the diversity of human spirituality is manifested in the interaction between Confucianism and other doctrines (Yao, 2000, p. 286). Finally, by keeping in mind that influential role of humans in Confucianism, the discussion in relation to religion and ecology becomes the space in which such religiosity found its relevance. In ecological discourse, it is called the Anthropocene;

“a new geological epoch in which *Homo sapiens* has acquired new powers over the Earth, so that the present and future evolution of life on Earth, including the numbers and distribution of species, is in future determined by the actions and powers of humans. This is because humans – especially *Homo industrialis* – have overtaken nonhuman creatures and forces in the movement of materials on Earth and even in the determination of the chemistry of the Earth.” (<https://crcs.ugm.ac.id/creaturely-ethics-in-the-anthropocene/>)

### 2.3. Religion and Ecology

Lynn White could be considered the one who started the earliest discussion on connecting ecological discourse to religion with his most influential work called “White Thesis” in 1967. In that thesis, he argues that the ecological deeds of people are depending on what they think about themselves in relation to everything around them. Human ecology is determined by one’s beliefs about nature and destiny, which mainly come from religion. Therefore, he concludes that, because the roots of our environmental crisis are religious, the solution must also be essentially religious (White, 1967, pp. 1205–1207). In the same time, Nasr developed further the discussion by arguing that the cause of our crisis is actually the triumphalist idea of modernity about dominating nature, which then desacralizes nature. It has to do with religion, but the root of ecological problems is not religion per se but rather the secularized or modernized religion (Nasr, 1968).

For Nasr, the image of nature and natural science has been secularized because in order to establish modern science, the substance of the cosmos has to be emptied first, so its sacredness becomes profane. In this way, the worldview of modern science has contributed to the secularization of nature and its substance. To this extent, the option is to protect the religious worldview or being trapped in the secularized worldview (Nasr, 1968, pp. 21, 24). According to those discussions, one could understand that as a consequence, the cosmos has lost its spiritual meaning. Therefore, it becomes the challenge for all religions to protect their religious perspective from the influence of modernization and secularization. In this sense, a religious worldview is very necessary in facing ecological crisis, due to the negative impact of modernization to human perception and action on nature.

The main criticism proposed to the idea of modernity makes people think in categories as if everything is divided. Latour claims that modernity comes from a separation between Nature and Society. On one hand, modernity has been perceived as a better way of life for better civilization, but on the other hand, it brings a huge negative impact on the ecological crisis (Blok & Torben, 2011, pp. 52–53). To this extent, instead of defending the modernization which emphasizes the *separation*, Latour offers *ecologization* as a non-modern constitution which emphasizes *collectivity*. Ecologization is necessary due to the fact that we are living a hybrid life, not an isolated one. A non-modern one takes simultaneously into account the hybrids that have been rejected by the modern constitution (Latour, 1993). In this regard, Latour by his criticism aims to break down the boundaries between the human and the non-human, in other words; between society and nature. This does not mean a shift from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism, but a movement to eliminate any center; “decentering”. To conclude,

the interconnectedness of human and nature has to be taken into account, as well as the other inseparable categories (Blok & Torben, 2011, pp. 89, 90).

#### **2.4. Confucian Religious Ecology**

The underlying principle of Confucian ecology is arguably the relationship between human and nature within its anthropocosmic cosmology. Tucker argues according to Tu Weiming that Confucian tradition is best understood as anthropocosmic rather than simply anthropocentric. It implies that humans are embedded in nature and not dominant over nature (Tucker, 2001, p. 129). All beings are interdependent and interrelated in nature that is not only inherently valuable but rather it is indeed morally good. Parallel to this notion, nature is the basis of stability in society so that the imbalance of nature will surely imbalance the society (Tucker, 2001, p. 130). Tucker further adds that in Confucianism there is no self-realization apart from nature, meaning that an individual is always in relationship to others so that he/she can only attain his/her humanity by relating to heaven and earth. The form of their relation is in the principle that nature poses the position as the great parents providing guidance for humans while nature requires respect and care from humans. In this regard, human is perceived as a microcosm in relation to the macrocosm of the universe (C. Huang, 2006, pp. 316–317; Tucker, 2001, pp. 131, 134; Weiming, 1998, p. 19).

Malton also insists on the same in articulating the Confucian idea of humanity in which human is understood to exist in a single interconnected system of life so that they cannot only take care of their own physically separated individual well-being (Kalton, 2010, p. 197). The Confucian idea of humanity is likely to be opposed to that of modernity and enlightenment which perceive humanity through a simplistic reductionist way. As Tu Weiming insists, Confucianism perceives human beings as sentient beings who have the capability of internal resonance not only among themselves but also with other non-human beings. Other than that, human beings are understood as social and political beings who will be weak if isolating themselves and who are part of an organic society, not a mechanic one as insisted by the enlightenment notion. In addition, human beings are also metaphysical in the sense that they are characterized not simply by anthropocentrism but rather constantly inspired by and continuously responsive to the mandate of Heaven (Weiming, 1998, p. 13).

The *Book of Changes* describes Heaven in the first hexagram with the characteristics of origination, flourishing, benefiting, and firmness. This implies the basic process of the world; starting from how one's life originates a new cycle of life and growth, then flourished and benefited from the world until it is stored firmly (Kalton, 2010, p. 194). In the other part, the *Book of Changes* explains the fundamental disposition of the universe as the *dade* which is to produce and give life so that as Zhu Xi insists humanity is the heart-mind of Heaven and Earth whereby they produce and give life to creatures. In this regard, cultivating one's heart-mind can unite humans to the flow of life in the universe (Kalton, 2010, p. 195). This idea indicates the religious ecology of Confucianism through its cosmological orientation, anthropocosmic. As human is understood as the microcosm that relates to the macrocosm of the universe, the religious ecology of Confucianism is described, by Grim and Tucker (Grim & Tucker, 2010, pp. 113–114), as a series of concentric circles within which human is at the center grounding in the overlapping rings of family, society, and government. It means human is not isolated from the outer circles. For Brasovan, this is a kind of

ecological humanism in which the main purpose of self-cultivation is not anthropocentric, but rather since caring for the self and family is also inherent with caring for the surrounding supporting world (Brasnovan, 2016, p. 853).

Zeng also takes into account some dimensions of Confucianism as discussed previously. Zeng argues that all creatures in the universe is a theory of living chains. It is argued based on the *Book of Changes* which describes a cosmic chain with repetitive cycles involving man and nature. The Qian hexagram in the book, “seeing a flock of dragons without a leader, fortune,” represents the organic connections and periodic repetitions of the natural world. The six unbroken lines of the Qian hexagram depicts the group of dragons without leader flying according to the power of Heaven, and the affective state and regulating law of the interconnection in the natural world (Zeng, 2019, pp. 153–154). Other than Qian, the *Book of Changes* in another part depicts the Kun hexagram implying the thickness of the earth supporting all things. For Zeng, this reflects the noble motherly character of giving birth and nourishing all creatures. In this regard, Zeng accentuates clearly various ecological dimensions of Confucianism which for him, and other scholars, are even still relevant to contemporary discourse.

As mentioned in the very beginning, the underlying principle of Confucian ecology is its anthropocosmic characteristics, human being embedded in the cosmos. The classical Confucian text of the *Great Learning (Daxue)* outlines what for some scholars is the process of widening the Confucian worldview to be more engaged with the matter of natural relations with all existing beings (Brasnovan, 2016, p. 848). It implies the senses of *home (oikos)* incorporating not only human beings but also the natural world and the larger cosmos (Brasnovan, 2016, p. 849; Weiming, 2001, p. 248). The main idea of the *Great Learning* is that persons are radically and essentially situated within an enviroing context, meaning that to be a person is to be a person-in-the-world, in the complex web of relationships individually and collectively with the other human and no-human beings. In this regard, the teaching emphasizes the sense of interconnectedness and relatedness or in other terms; “a unified body of the heavens, earth, persons, and the myriad things” (Brasnovan, 2016, p. 849). Meanwhile, Huang preferred to use, by quoting Wang Yangming, “*being in one body with the ten thousand things*” to describe such anthropocosmic sense. In this regard, humanity or *ren* becomes the very basis of such conception. What is mainly implied in that notion is that,

*“a person takes care of the ten thousand things not because of their intrinsic values but because they are part of his or her own body. Despite its appearance, such a person is not self-centered, as there is nothing outside the person, or, to put it another way, everything is part of the person, while egoism assumes the separateness of the self from others”* (Y. Huang, 2017, p. 58).

In short, as explored in this section, the anthropocosmic character of Confucian worldview, with all ways of explaining it or in other words; the richness of ecological dimension of Confucianism, is very likely to be abstracted in the very first publication of work exploring Confucian ecology, *Confucianism and Ecology: The Interrelation of Heaven, Earth, and Humans*.

At practical extent, in Indonesia for example, the *Supreme Council for the Confucian Religion in Indonesia* or MATAKIN (Majelis Tinggi Agama Konghucu Indonesia) following the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative (IRI) published a guide book about human, forest, and climate change in the perspective of

Confucian religion in 2020. According to the acknowledgment of the General Chairman of the Central Board of MATAKIN, XS. Budi S. Tanuwibowo, that book aims to raise the awareness of Confucians in Indonesia jointly with the global citizens to preserve the sustainability of forest, remember the substance of Indonesia's nature that is situated in the equator area and has tropical climate as the forest area. The spirit to protect forest is the energy of dedication to the nation and state. The book in short talk about deforestation, indigenous peoples, climate crisis, pandemic, tropical forest, climate change, human beings as the earth guard, and the roles of religious leaders in forest protection; all are in the perspective of Confucian religion (Setiawan et al., 2020). This progress might show the Confucian commitment to maintain the relationship not only among human beings and heaven, but also with nature. As Huang argues, the Confucian idea about the continuity and unity between man and nature expresses the possibility to criticise the idea of modernity bringing to the sense of separatedness and isolatedness and thus to establish harmonious relationship between men and cosmos (C. Huang, 2006, p. 330).

### 3. CONCLUSION

As has been discussed in this work, while there is very few, if not absence, of scholarly works that raise the issue, it is shown how Confucianism actually provides a kind of ecological dimension in examining human-nature relationships within the framework of anthropocosmic. In that sense, it is very reasonable to use the term "the Religious Ecology of Confucianism." This is often missing or perceived in separation in the other articles. However, this work sees ecology and religiosity is in many ways interconnected. It, firstly, strengthens the sense of religiousness of Confucianism, and secondly, ensures its ecological dimension, in which both are very often considered missing or not exist. It is important to underline that, firstly, the ecological dimension of Confucianism is certainly religious since it does not only emphasize the relation of human and nature as the "secular" science does but always puts it within its relatedness with Heaven. Secondly, vice versa, the religiosity of Confucianism could not be simply perceived as solely focusing on the social relation because the social relationship of humans occurs within the cosmos as the outest circle of one's life. It means that good relationships in social life implies good relationships in natural life.

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