



Beyond Consensus: Agonistic Pluralism and the Moral Politics of Spiritualistic Ecologism

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Abstract:

The topic involves political imagination and differing views of the relationship between people and the natural world. Environmental politics often appeals to notions of common interest, a sense of shared responsibility, and a supposed moral agreement about the need to protect nature. However, ecological issues are rooted in deep disagreements regarding development, justice, identity, economic priorities, the kinds of lifestyles people lead, and the meaning that is given to nature. This article looks at these disagreements by means of a dialogue between Chantal Mouffe's theory of agonistic pluralism and the idea of spiritualistic ecologism. It seeks to find out if an ecological morality based on interconnectedness and spiritual responsibility can be compatible with a political theory which sees conflict and contestation as essential features of democratic life.

This text treats spiritualistic ecologism as an ethical approach which sees human beings as participants rather than as masters within a broader ecological community. It aims to go beyond the narrow anthropocentric and instrumental views of nature by stressing interconnectedness, responsibility, respect, and the moral importance of the more-than-human world. Nevertheless, this kind of approach brings about a political problem: if ecological interconnectedness is presented as a universal moral truth from which political agreement should result, it may neglect the variety of values and the conflicting interpretations that are present in democratic societies. This is exactly the point where Mouffe's critique of consensus-based politics becomes important.

Drawing upon Mouffe's distinction between antagonism and agonism, the article argues that ecological politics should neither suppress conflict in the name of a universal ecological morality nor abandon substantive ethical commitments in the name of pluralism. Instead, spiritualistic ecologism can be reconstructed in agonistic terms. From this perspective, ecological values enter the democratic arena as deeply held ethical and political commitments that must encounter competing visions of development, justice, freedom, human flourishing, and human-nature relations. The objective is therefore not to dissolve disagreement but to create democratic conditions under which ecological conflicts can be transformed from antagonistic struggles between enemies into agonistic contests among legitimate adversaries. The article consequently develops the idea of an agonistic spiritualistic ecologism. This position retains the spiritual-ethical insight that ecological existence is relational and interconnected while rejecting the assumption that recognition of interconnectedness necessarily produces political or moral consensus. It proposes that ecological responsibility can provide a powerful ethical orientation without becoming an uncontested moral doctrine. The apparent tension between connectedness and conflict can thus become theoretically productive: ecological interconnectedness describes and morally interprets relationships of dependence, while agonistic pluralism acknowledges that the political meanings assigned to those relationships remain contestable.

By bringing spiritualistic ecologism into conversation with Mouffe's agonistic theory, the article contributes to environmental political thought by proposing a framework in which ecological commitment, moral plurality, and democratic contestation can coexist. It concludes that a politically

viable ecological ethics must cultivate responsibility toward the natural world while simultaneously preserving spaces in which the meaning and implications of that responsibility remain open to democratic struggle.

Keywords: Chantal Mouffe; Agonistic Pluralism; Spiritualistic Ecologism; Ecological Ethics; Moral Pluralism; Environmental Politics; Human–Nature Relations.

1. Introduction

The ecological crisis presents contemporary societies with a strange paradox in that people are being forced more and more to acknowledge their dependence on ecological systems which go beyond political boundaries, cultural identities and personal interests, even though there is very little agreement as to what this interdependence demands of us. Although climate change, the loss of biodiversity, the extraction of resources and environmental inequality have made it hard to deny ecological interconnectedness, they have not led to a parallel moral or political consensus. Individuals may live in a common ecological world while still holding deeply differing views on development, consumption, justice, responsibility and even on the value that should be assigned to the non-human world. The ecological problem is therefore also a problem of diversity: it is unclear how strong ecological commitments can be maintained in a society where the meaning and implications of such commitments remain politically disputed.

The concept of spiritualistic ecologism, developed in my earlier engagement with the evolutionary philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, offers one point of entry into this problem (Varghese, 2022). That argument emerged from Aurobindo's refusal of a rigid separation between material and spiritual existence and from his attempt to conceive human and social development through their integration. Spiritualistic ecologism, in this sense, does not treat nature simply as an external object to be preserved for human benefit. It invites a reconsideration of the human place within a larger order of life and, consequently, of the moral character of ecological responsibility. The present article takes that argument into a different terrain. Rather than asking principally how spiritual consciousness might transform the human relationship with nature, it asks how such an ecological morality might function within a political world marked by disagreement.

This is where Chantal Mouffe's theory of agonism becomes significant. Mouffe (2000, 2005, 2013) challenges the expectation that democratic politics should ultimately culminate in rational or moral consensus. Political life, in her account, is constituted by competing interpretations of justice, freedom, equality and collective identity. Conflict cannot therefore simply be reasoned away. The democratic task is instead to prevent conflict from assuming an antagonistic form in which opponents regard one another as enemies to be eliminated, and to create conditions in which they can confront one another as legitimate adversaries. Agonism consequently does not celebrate hostility; it recognises contestation as an enduring feature of plural democratic life.

Bringing this insight into ecological thought creates a difficulty that spiritualistic ecologism must confront. An ecological spirituality can easily move from affirming interconnectedness to assuming that recognition of interconnectedness should generate a shared morality. Yet ecological interdependence does not erase differences of culture, belief, economic interest or political aspiration. Nor does acknowledgement of ecological crisis tell us automatically how its burdens should be distributed or what forms of sacrifice are justifiable. Ecological connectedness and moral agreement are not the same thing. Spiritualistic ecologism therefore requires a political language capable of preserving ecological responsibility without turning that responsibility into a demand for moral uniformity.

This problem resonates with a wider transformation in contemporary ecological political thought. Val Plumwood (2002) challenged the anthropocentric treatment of nature as an instrument of human purposes and moved towards both a dialogical interspecies ethics and a spirituality grounded in place. Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter* (2010) similarly unsettles the assumption that agency belongs exclusively to

human subjects, describing political and ecological events as emerging through configurations of human and non-human forces. William E. Connolly's *Facing the Planetary* (2017) is especially important for the present argument because it connects pluralist political thought to planetary processes, climate change and what he terms "entangled humanism." Connolly's attention to spiritual affinities across differences also suggests that spiritual sensibilities need not depend upon uniformity of creed. Together, these interventions make it increasingly difficult to think of politics as an exclusively human affair conducted against the passive background of "nature."

The encounter between spiritualistic ecologism and agonism can therefore be framed around a more precise question: Can a spiritually grounded ecological morality acknowledge deep political and moral disagreement without surrendering its commitment to ecological responsibility? This article argues that it can, but only if interconnectedness is distinguished from consensus. To recognise that human and non-human lives are relationally embedded does not require all political communities to interpret those relations in identical ways. Spiritualistic ecologism can provide an ethical orientation towards ecological responsibility while agonism provides a political vocabulary through which the meaning, extent and distribution of that responsibility remain open to contestation. What emerges from this encounter may be described as agonistic spiritualistic ecologism. The term does not imply an uncomplicated synthesis between spirituality and agonistic politics. On the contrary, it preserves the tension between them. Spiritualistic ecologism asks us to recognise relations of dependence, belonging and responsibility that exceed the isolated human subject; agonism reminds us that no single interpretation of those relations can be placed permanently beyond political contestation. Ecological responsibility, on this account, need not await universal moral agreement.

The argument of this paper thus begins from a simple but consequential distinction: we may be ecologically interconnected without being morally unanimous. The political significance of spiritualistic ecologism lies not in overcoming this disagreement but in asking how ecological responsibility might endure within it. An agonistic approach offers the possibility of an ecological politics in which competing visions of the human–nature relationship remains contestable while the shared conditions of ecological existence acquire greater ethical and political significance.

2. Spiritualistic Ecologism: Moral and Philosophical Foundations

Spiritualistic ecologism begins from a dissatisfaction with the modern tendency to separate the human from the natural world and, more fundamentally, to separate material existence from questions of value, meaning and interiority. In its earlier formulation through the evolutionary thought of Sri Aurobindo, the concept sought to recover an understanding of existence in which material and spiritual dimensions are not opposed but integrated. Such a view challenges the reduction of ecology to resource management, technological adjustment or environmental administration. Ecological crisis, from this perspective, is not merely a crisis in the external environment; it is also a crisis in the way human beings understand themselves, their desires and their place within a wider order of life.

The philosophical significance of this position becomes clearer when set against the dominant anthropocentric assumptions of modern political and moral thought. Much modern ethics begins with the human subject as the primary locus of value and agency. Nature then appears either as an object of use or as something requiring protection because of its importance to human flourishing. Spiritualistic ecologism reverses the direction of this reasoning. Human beings do not first exist as autonomous subjects and subsequently enter into relations with nature; they are constituted through ecological relations from the beginning. Responsibility consequently emerges not simply from moral choice but from ontological dependence. We owe something to the ecological world because we are already implicated in it.

This position finds an important contemporary parallel in Jane Bennett's account of "vital materiality." In *Vibrant Matter*, Bennett challenges the idea that agency is an exclusively human capacity and argues

instead that political events emerge through configurations of human and non-human forces. Her aim is not to spiritualise matter, but to unsettle the picture of matter as passive and inert. Agency becomes distributed across assemblages rather than concentrated in sovereign human actors. Bennett suggests that such an understanding could cultivate a more ecologically responsible politics precisely because it dislodges the assumption of human mastery. Spiritualistic ecologism reaches a similar conclusion from a different metaphysical direction. Where Bennett proceeds through vital materialism, spiritualistic ecologism proceeds through an account of relational existence in which materiality need not be understood as spiritually empty. The difference matters here for its academic viability. Spiritualistic ecologism should not simply be collapsed into new materialism, yet the comparison reveals a shared philosophical target. Both positions ask what becomes of ethics once the non-human world is no longer conceived merely as background. William E. Connolly provides an even more direct bridge between ecological relationality and political pluralism. In *Facing the Planetary*, Connolly argues that political theory must respond to planetary processes that are not reducible to human history or intention. Climate systems, evolutionary processes and geological forces participate in shaping the conditions of political life. His notion of “entangled humanism” is particularly useful because it neither abolishes the human nor restores human exceptionalism. Instead, it places human agency within a field of distributed dependencies and fragile planetary processes. Connolly also connects this planetary condition to pluralism, capitalism and what he calls a “politics of swarming,” through which differently situated groups may converge politically without becoming identical in belief or identity.

This aspect of Connolly is especially significant for spiritualistic ecologism. Ecological ethics need not depend upon a single metaphysical or religious worldview. People may arrive at ecological responsibility through different moral, spiritual, philosophical or secular traditions. Spirituality, understood in this broader sense, need not function as an imposed creed; it can instead name a disposition towards relationality, humility, restraint and responsibility. The philosophical strength of spiritualistic ecologism therefore lies not in providing a final doctrine of nature but in challenging the assumption that ecological relations can be understood adequately through instrumental reason alone. Dipesh Chakrabarty’s distinction between the “global” and the “planetary” further sharpens this argument. In *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*, Chakrabarty argues that climate change forces the humanities to rethink human agency, history and modernity. The planetary is not simply a larger version of the global. Whereas the global remains largely organised through human institutions, markets and political projects, the planetary decentres the human by confronting us with processes whose scale and temporality exceed human intention. Spiritualistic ecologism can be read as responding to a similar philosophical displacement. If human beings are not the sole measure of value or agency, then ecological ethics must begin from a conception of existence in which the human is situated rather than sovereign. This relocation of the human creates a normative problem. If ecological interdependence is ontologically given, does a specific morality follow from it? It is tempting to argue that recognition of connectedness should produce care, restraint or solidarity. But that inference is not automatic. One may accept ecological dependence while disagreeing radically about political responsibility, economic sacrifice or the moral standing of non-human life. The philosophical mistake would be to turn ontology directly into consensus. This is where spiritualistic ecologism requires an additional political dimension. Its ethical force derives from the claim that human life is embedded in relations that exceed instrumental self-interest. But its democratic viability depends upon acknowledging that the interpretation of those relations remains contested. Connectedness may ground responsibility, but it cannot predetermine the form that responsibility must take. The philosophical task, therefore, is not to discover a universally binding ecological morality but to develop a conception of ecological responsibility capable of surviving disagreement.

At this point, spiritualistic ecologism approaches the threshold of agonistic politics. Its emphasis on relation, dependence and ecological belonging supplies an ethical orientation; agonism will provide a political vocabulary for understanding what happens when such commitments encounter competing values and rival visions of the good. The transition is crucial. Without an ethical account of ecological

relation, agonism risks becoming formally pluralist but environmentally thin. Without an agonistic account of conflict, spiritualistic ecologism risks converting ecological interconnectedness into an expectation of moral agreement. The philosophical promise of bringing the two together lies precisely in refusing both reductions.

3. Agonism, Antagonism and the Limits of Moral Consensus

Starting from a quite different philosophical assumption, agonistic political theory contrasts with spiritualistic ecologism which begins with relationality: people live in a shared world even if they do not hold a common interpretation of it. Political conflict is therefore not merely the result of inadequate knowledge or poor communication; it occurs since values, identities and conceptions of the good are diverse and their demands may be incompatible. This point is at the heart of Chantal Mouffe's political thought and thus poses a major challenge to any ecological ethics that believes the recognition of interconnectedness should lead to moral agreement. Mouffe's concept of agonism arises from the post-Marxist theory of hegemony developed by Ernesto Laclau and Mouffe in 1985. The significance of this philosophy is that it opposes the view that society has a final foundation from which its political structures can be definitively justified; instead, political orders are built up through contingent hegemonic practices, so that specific interpretations of justice, identity and social order become dominant without thus becoming necessary or genuinely true. Oliver Marchart (2007, 2018) takes up this insight and presents it as a kind of post-foundational political ontology. According to Marchart, the lack of an ultimate foundation does not mean that societies have no foundations at all; on the contrary, each foundation remains contingent and is therefore open to challenge. Antagonism thus goes beyond mere occasional political disagreements and addresses the fundamental impossibility of finally closing down the social order.

Mouffe translates this ontological insight into a democratic argument. In *The Democratic Paradox* (2000), *On the Political* (2005), and *Agonistics* (2013), she rejects political theories that imagine democratic legitimacy primarily through the possibility of rational consensus. The problem is not that agreement is undesirable. Democratic institutions plainly require agreements. The problem arises when historically contingent agreements are represented as if they embodied a neutral rationality or universally compelling morality. Every consensus establishes boundaries: certain possibilities are authorised while others are excluded. Politics therefore persists because those boundaries remain contestable.

The distinction between antagonism and agonism is crucial here. Antagonism describes a relation in which conflicting parties confront one another as enemies whose political legitimacy is denied. Agonism seeks to transform that relation without pretending to eliminate the conflict itself. The opponent becomes an adversary: someone whose position may be resisted vigorously but whose right to participate in the political contest is acknowledged. Democracy, from this perspective, is not the achievement of permanent reconciliation but the institutionalisation of legitimate disagreement.

Bonnie Honig's work strengthens this argument by resisting what she calls the displacement of politics. In *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics* (1993/2023), contestation is not treated merely as an unfortunate disturbance that better institutions might eventually remove. It is a constitutive feature of democratic existence. The thirtieth-anniversary edition makes the point particularly clearly: democratic agonism requires shared spaces in which diverse groups repeatedly contest and renegotiate the conditions under which they live together as equals. Mark Wenman (2013) similarly situates agonistic democracy around pluralism, tragedy and the positive political significance of conflict, linking agonism to the question of constituent power. William Connolly complicates the picture further through his notion of agonistic respect. Connolly's pluralism is particularly valuable for the present argument because difference need not be reduced to indifference. One may remain deeply committed to a particular moral, religious or metaphysical orientation while cultivating an ethos that allows competing orientations to inhabit the same political world. Contemporary work drawing together Connolly, Mouffe and James

Tully similarly emphasises their shared concern with difference and their resistance to political legitimacy conceived solely through fixed legal or procedural frameworks.

This becomes important for ecological morality. Climate change may provide overwhelming reasons for action, yet scientific knowledge cannot by itself determine the morally correct distribution of ecological burdens. Should a developing society restrict economic growth because of emissions historically generated elsewhere? How should the claims of indigenous communities, industrial workers, future generations and non-human species be weighed against one another? What constitutes a “good” ecological life? These are not merely technical questions awaiting expert solutions. They contain competing accounts of justice, responsibility, freedom and flourishing.

Here agonism places an important limit upon spiritualistic ecologism. The recognition that life is interconnected does not authorise one interpretation of ecological responsibility to present itself as politically incontestable. Indeed, doing so could reproduce precisely the problem Mouffe identifies: a particular conception of the good might conceal its political character by presenting itself as universal morality. If all ecological meanings remain contestable, what prevents ecological politics from becoming an endless negotiation in which the material conditions of planetary life are treated as simply another political opinion? Ecological degradation does not wait for consensus. Species extinction, atmospheric warming and ecosystem collapse possess material consequences that cannot be suspended by democratic disagreement. Agonism therefore requires an ecological corrective just as spiritualistic ecologism requires an agonistic one. The philosophical encounter between the two positions can now be stated more precisely. Spiritualistic ecologism reminds agonism that political contestation takes place within ecological conditions that human beings do not sovereignly create; agonism reminds spiritualistic ecologism that ecological interdependence does not abolish moral and political plurality. The first establishes limits to human mastery; the second establishes limits to moral certainty. The task, then, is neither to subordinate ecological ethics to political conflict nor to resolve political conflict through ecological spirituality. It is to ask whether responsibility can remain morally substantial while politically contestable. An agonistic spiritualistic ecologism would begin precisely at this intersection: ecological limits are real, responsibility is unavoidable, but the political meaning of that responsibility remains open to democratic struggle.

4. Between Connectedness and Conflict: An Agonistic Spiritualistic Ecologism

The contradiction in the relationship between spiritualistic ecologism and agonistic politics is obvious. Spiritualistic ecologism is based on the idea of relationality, according to which human existence is part of a broader ecological reality and cannot adequately be understood by means of the image of an autonomous subject separated from nature. On the other hand, agonistic theory starts from the concept of division; for Mouffe (2000, 2005, 2013), political communities are characterised by conflicts among values and identities which cannot be settled by reference to a final rational or moral consensus. Since the one approach focuses on connectedness and the other on conflict, can the two positions be included in the same political philosophy?

The contradiction does not seem so great when we distinguish between interconnectedness and agreement. Ecological dependence refers to a state of existence and does not dictate how that state will be understood. It is possible for human beings to depend on the same rivers, forests, atmosphere and climatic systems yet have completely different views of their value. A forest can at the same time be seen as a sacred territory, a source of biodiversity, an ancestral homeland, a carbon sink, an economic resource or private property. Although these interpretations may overlap, they can also be in conflict. Ecological relationality therefore does not remove politics; on the contrary, it often provides the very ground on which politics takes place.

Donna Haraway's *Staying with the Trouble* (2016) is instructive here because her notion of “making kin” challenges human exceptionalism without imagining an uncomplicated return to natural harmony.

Haraway's multispecies worlds are constituted through difficult relations of dependence, survival and response rather than through the recovery of an original unity. Her insistence upon remaining with complexity rather than searching for technological salvation or apocalyptic resignation is useful for spiritualistic ecologism. Ecological connectedness need not signify harmony. Relation itself can contain vulnerability, asymmetry and conflict. (dukeupress.edu)

Rosi Braidotti's posthuman philosophy develops a related challenge to the sovereign human subject. In *The Posthuman* (2013), Braidotti questions humanist assumptions that position "Man" as the universal measure of moral and political value and instead advances a relational understanding of subjectivity extending across human, animal, technological and ecological relations. (politybooks.com) Spiritualistic ecologism shares this displacement of human self-sufficiency, although its philosophical route is different. Aurobindonian foundations do not require to abandon spirituality in order to overcome anthropocentrism; rather, spirituality becomes a means of questioning the isolation of the human self from a wider order of existence.

But neither relationality nor posthumanism resolves the political problem identified by Mouffe. One may reject human exceptionalism and still disagree about what justice requires. Recognition of non-human agency, for example, does not automatically tell us whether a forest should be protected absolutely, inhabited sustainably, or used for economic development. Ontology cannot simply substitute for politics. This is a crucial qualification for spiritualistic ecologism: what exists relationally does not dictate a single political programme. A second distinction therefore becomes necessary—between ecological limits and political interpretations of those limits. Climate systems, extinction processes and ecological thresholds are not produced simply by political discourse. Dipesh Chakrabarty's (2021) account of the planetary is important precisely because planetary processes exceed the human histories through which politics normally understands itself. The global concerns about climate confronts political communities with forms of causality and temporality that cannot be reduced to human intention. Nevertheless, acknowledging planetary constraints does not determine how responsibility should be allocated. Questions concerning historical emissions, development rights, intergenerational justice and unequal vulnerability immediately return us to politics.

This distinction prevents the argument from falling into either relativism or ecological authoritarianism. Agonism need not mean that every ecological claim is merely one opinion among others. Material ecological conditions can constrain political possibilities. Conversely, the reality of those conditions does not confer unquestionable authority upon one moral or political interpretation of them. Scientific knowledge may tell us much about atmospheric warming; it cannot by itself determine a just distribution of the costs of decarbonisation. William Connolly's *Facing the Planetary* (2017) offers an important bridge at precisely this point. His "entangled humanism" situates political agency within interacting human and non-human processes while retaining a commitment to pluralism. Connolly's planetary politics does not require participants to converge upon one metaphysical worldview. Different constituencies may form alliances across religious, secular and philosophical differences in response to shared planetary dangers. (dukeupress.edu) This suggests an important development of spiritualistic ecologism: spirituality need not operate as a doctrine to which ecological citizens must subscribe. It can function instead as one source of ethical motivation among several.

This leads to the possibility of agonistic spiritualistic ecologism. By this term I mean an ecological orientation that recognises the relational and more-than-human character of existence as ethically significant while accepting that the meaning and demands of ecological responsibility remain subject to democratic contestation. Its spiritual dimension concerns the transformation of the human understanding of self, nature and responsibility; its agonistic dimension prevents this transformation from becoming a demand for metaphysical or moral uniformity. Such a position also alters the meaning of ecological solidarity. Solidarity need not require identical reasons for acting together. A community defending a forest may include those who regard it as sacred, those concerned with biodiversity, indigenous groups

defending ancestral relationships, climate activists concerned with carbon storage and citizens motivated by intergenerational justice. Their reasons are not interchangeable, and their differences need not disappear before political cooperation becomes possible. An agonistic ecological politics allows these differences to remain visible.

This argument also places a limit upon Mouffeian agonism. Political contestation does not occur in an infinitely malleable world. There are ecological conditions within which disagreement itself becomes possible. A democratic community may contest the distribution of water, but it cannot politically negotiate away prolonged drought. It may dispute responsibility for climate change, but political disagreement cannot suspend physical climatic processes. Spiritualistic ecologism therefore introduces into agonistic politics an account of dependence and limits that political contestation alone cannot provide. The relationship between agonism and spiritualistic ecologism should consequently not be understood as a reconciliation of opposites. Each exposes an insufficiency in the other. Spiritualistic ecologism without agonism risks converting ecological interconnectedness into moral certainty; agonism without ecological relationality risks treating the material conditions of political existence as merely another field of contestation. Their conjunction produces a more demanding proposition: we are bound together ecologically without being destined to agree politically.

Agonistic spiritualistic ecologism therefore seeks neither consensus nor permanent conflict. It asks how ecological responsibility can remain substantive while its political interpretation remains open. Its central wager is that plurality need not weaken ecological responsibility and that ecological commitment need not suppress plurality. The challenge for contemporary environmental politics is to create forms of collective action capable of holding these two truths together.

5. Conclusion

The article consequently develops the idea of an agonistic spiritualistic ecologism. This position retains the spiritual-ethical insight that ecological existence is relational and interconnected while rejecting the assumption that recognition of interconnectedness necessarily produces political or moral consensus. It proposes that ecological responsibility can provide a powerful ethical orientation without becoming an uncontested moral doctrine. The apparent tension between connectedness and conflict can thus become theoretically productive: ecological interconnectedness describes and morally interprets relationships of dependence, while agonistic pluralism acknowledges that the political meanings assigned to those relationships remain contestable. By bringing spiritualistic ecologism into conversation with Mouffe's agonistic theory, the article contributes to environmental political thought by proposing a framework in which ecological commitment, moral plurality, and democratic contestation can coexist. It concludes that a politically viable ecological ethics must cultivate responsibility toward the natural world while simultaneously preserving spaces in which the meaning and implications of that responsibility remain open to democratic6. Conclusion: Sharing our lives on a planet that is contested.

The article starts from a tension which is ever more difficult for ecological thought to escape. Although human beings live in a world characterised by deep ecological interdependence, they do not live in a world marked by moral or political agreement. The problem of climate change and ecological degradation makes the first of these facts more apparent; at the same time democratic conflict, cultural diversity and inequalities of power make the second equally inevitable. A proper environmental philosophy must therefore find a means of taking interconnectedness seriously without supposing that this interconnectedness will lead to the disappearance of difference.

The idea of spiritualistic ecologism first arose as a result of engagement with Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of evolution and his rejection of the strict separation between material and spiritual existence (Varghese, 2022). The reason for its ongoing importance is that it is able to question the instrumental view of nature and the idea of the autonomous human subject situated outside the ecological world. From this point of view, the ecological crisis involves more than just damaged environments; it reveals a deeper crisis in

the way human beings understand their position within the relationships of life, dependence and responsibility.

However, spiritualistic ecologism comes up against a political problem when interconnectedness is too easily interpreted as implying a shared morality. Just because we recognise our ecological interdependence does not mean that we will come to agreement on questions of development, justice, consumption, sacrifice or the moral status of non-human beings. Here, Mouffe's agonistic theory of politics offers an important correction. By stressing that conflict is 不可 eradicated, her approach stops ecological ethics from mistaking moral commitment for moral consensus. Democratic politics does not demand that disagreement should vanish; rather it calls for institutions and practices that allow disagreement to take place without opponents becoming enemies (Mouffe, 2000, 2005, 2013).

The argument put forward in this essay therefore does not see agonistic spiritualistic ecologism as a form of reconciliation which would eliminate the tension between spirituality and conflict, but rather as an effort to keep that tension in a productive way. The main idea is that ecological interconnectedness can lead to a sense of responsibility without fixing a particular interpretation of what this responsibility entails. In this view, spirituality is not a doctrine imposed on societies that are diverse in terms of belief. Instead, it refers to an ethical attitude. The ecological crisis does not present humanity with either simple unity or complete fragmentation. Although we are in different positions, carry different responsibilities and are in different situations of vulnerability, we are still materially interconnected in such a way that no single community can create or control these conditions. The task at hand is therefore not to find a final moral language which would end ecological disagreement. Instead, it is to learn how to disagree while still being accountable to the relationships that make life possible. We shall never be able to live on Earth through a single moral vision, but we can no longer act as if our various visions refer to different Earths.

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