

Spiritual Ecology: A Path to Ecological Existentialism

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Abstract

This article explores the distinctive opportunities arising from the concept of spiritual ecology, and intersects with religion and ecology, religion and nature, and religion and environmentalism. On one side, these opportunities encompass problematic trends within certain facets of existing ecological aspect entangled with capitalist enclosures and consumerist desires. Conversely, it holds the promise of fostering the commitment to harmony with nonhumans' existence, and suggests for understanding that transcends the conventional confines of religion. Many works on spiritual ecology embrace a broad multiplicity, questioning how to discern between more favorable and less favorable expressions of spiritual ecology. As this, it upholds the value of diversity while differentiating between the anti-intellectual, individualistic, and capitalistic tendencies within spiritual ecology and those that align more closely with what can be characterized as ecological existentialism or co-existentialism. It emerges as a reaction to the ideals and socio-political frameworks of current periods, which have avoided an intimate connection with the world and its revered nature. Over the past century, it has evolved into an intellectual and practice-oriented discipline, addressing the need to reconnect with the sacred dimensions of the natural world.

Keywords: animism, ecology, ecognosis, existentialism, knowledge, spirituality

Spiritual Ecology

The primary objective of this paper is to enhance the conceptual framework of spiritual ecology, building upon the ideas proposed by scholars like Leslie Sponsel (2012). The focus is particularly on synthesizing diverse viewpoints on ecological existentialism, offering pathways to steer clear of anti-intellectual (lacking intellectual depth), individualistic (self-centered), and consumerist (materialistic and dissatisfied) inclinations in spirituality. Jennifer Gosetti-Ferenc perceives ecology as, "...the intellectual and literary landscape of modernity has been explored in ecologically-oriented criticism, existentialist thought has been for the most part neglected by ecocritics" (892). This exploration is not contentious but rather heuristic, seeking ways to recognize the aspects along which spiritual ecology either fosters or hinders the well-being of both humans and the broader-than-human world. It is essential to clarify that this does not detract from the contributions of Sponsel, and

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Vaughan-Lee (2013), instead, it complements and reinforces their approaches. They advocate for an inclusive stance, implying a preference for inclusive rather than exclusive versions of spiritual ecology. It deals with ecological future in which environmental and ecological anthropology delves into fundamental inquiries on nature, and humanity. It enquires what role humans play in the natural order, and how humans ought to position themselves within nature for survival. As this, Pankaj Jain realizes, “Instead of using the categories of ‘environmental ethics’ and ‘religion’ to interpret their ‘way of life,’... (3), it aims to harmonize materialist and mentalist perspectives within cultural anthropology, avoiding the automatic assumption of their antithetical and incompatible nature. Thus, discerning inclusivity from exclusivity serves as a factor by which one can gauge superior or inferior forms of spiritual ecology. To simplify, the less favorable forms may exhibit qualities like ignorance, selfishness, and discontent, whereas the more favorable ones embody a discerning inclusivity akin to an ecological existentialism or co-existentialism (Mickey 2016). In the domain of this paper, the voice becomes intricately interwoven with the voices of the scholars it engrosses with, not to mention the multitude of perspectives from the more-than-human entities that shape the outlook of this paper.

Spiritual ecology, in its broadest sense, pertains to how human beings shape their thoughts, emotions, and religions and spiritualities interact with ecology, nature, and environmental world view. Some individuals discuss that the convergence of religion and nature refer to the combination of religion and ecology. Anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose uses the terms "ecological existentialism" (42), and draws heavily from the perspectives of feminist theory and existential phenomenology. This mode of thought is pivotal for Rose, as it endorses a sense of relationality or interconnectedness among entities and acknowledges an inherent, unalterable difference to retain the uniqueness, and in Top of Form Sponsel's book, *Spiritual Ecology: A Quiet Revolution*, he acknowledges, “spiritual ecology is considered preferable to other labels” (xiii). Chris Coggins and Bixia Chen quote the importance of spiritual ecology from *Bhagvata Gita* as:

Look at these fortunate trees protecting us against rain, wind, heat and snow. Their life is exclusively there for the benefit of others! [T]hese trees offer support to all living entities, . . . With their leaves, flowers and fruits, shade and roots, bark and wood, their fragrance, sap, ashes, pulp and shoots, they offer everything you desire. To perform with one's life, wealth, intelligence and words always for the sake of the welfare of all embodied beings, to be in this world of such a kind of birth, is the perfection of life. . . (1)

Throughout the extensive history of human alteration of terrestrial ecosystems, sacred forests have been instrumental in preserving biodiversity, safeguarding agricultural ecologies, shaping cultural values, and enhancing the human civilization. Thus, spiritual ecology serves as a more concise alternative to the terms religion, ecology, nature and existentialism, and it offers the advantage of brevity. Ultimately, it presents itself as a more

ample and broad category compared to religion, which often conveys associations with organized religious practices and may not encompass with non-traditional or informal expressions of religious life. In Japanese Zen tradition, Dogen perceived it as quoted by Martine Batchelor, “It is not only that there is water in the world, but there is a world in water. It is not just water. ... There is a world of living things in the phenomenal world” (12), and as this, it deals with environmental coexistence and spiritual or natural ecology.

Spiritual ecology is a multifaceted, varied, and dynamic domain that intersects among religions, spiritualities, and nature. There is a certain provocative and transformative quality linked to spirituality, evoking experiential and experimental lifestyles. Its resonance is felt with the feelings of inspiration, possibly the kind of sentiments needed today for allowing the people to confront the multiple risks of present time (Mickey 2016). All manifestations of spiritual ecology, however, are not inherently helpful to human beings, and earth's ecosystems. Spiritual ways of life have the potential to either empower adaptive, peaceful, and just responses to the escalating ecological crises or hinder them. In the same ground, Sponsel states an “intellectual history” of transcendent ecology provides “resource guide for spiritual ecology” (xix), and it is “an eclectic, inclusive, and relativistic approach... to understand and appreciate... and not to judge which one or ones are more valid, useful, or better” (xix). The diverse study at certain spiritual ecologies adept at incorporating scientific principles of ecology. Everyone can raise a common query as: what distinctive opportunities emerge within the realm of spiritual ecology. What political stances underlie spiritual ecology?

Sisyphean Existence

Existentialism, as a philosophical construct, holds promise for an enriched existence by accentuating the human being as the catalyst for change and alteration. It harbors the risk of fostering despair, hopelessness, and nihilism. It highlights human existence, the lack of inherent meaning and purpose in life, and the intrinsic solitude of the human experience. Gosetti-Ferenc opines, “Camus does not of course reject science -nor can we do without it in reckoning with our contemporary ecological crisis. Yet he questions an exclusively scientific attitude, particularly one which would express human hubris, as if nature could by virtue of our knowing it be rendered our possession” (897). As a mystery of the world, it focuses on the uncertainties and voids within human reality. A. Kalland observes ecological problems are not within religious and spiritual setting which becomes the part of socio-cultural context. She concludes that the significance of ecological existence as:

[H]uman beings are considered to become indebted to nature when exploiting it, but can ‘repay’ harm that has been inflicted upon nature, animate or inanimate, through, for instance, memorial rites... leaving the rest to nature itself to mend. A divine nature is, therefore, by no means a guarantee against environmental degradation, as has often been claimed (155).

As this, Jan Boersema, Andrew Blowers and Adrian Martin explore, “Many cultures and religions have a deep reverence and respect for nature and all life” (218), and Sisyphus' eternal struggle with the boulder teaches human beings a profound lesson of seemingly endless and repetitive tasks, there exists the opportunity to uncover purpose, joy, and fulfillment. In the natural realm, the Sisyphian existence provides pathways for mindfulness, accomplishment, attention to detail, reflection, and a deeper understanding of life's cyclical patterns. Camus views, “Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that... concludes that all is well” (24). However, Joseph E. Brenner opines, “Ecology or ecological science is an approach to a better understanding of the complex interrelationships between humans and their environment. It is a necessary part of any effort to respond to the resistance and barriers to ecological progress and achieve the goal of a sustainable world” (1). When individuals label themselves as spiritual, it often serves as a shorthand for being spiritual-but-not-religious. In his exploration of Buddhist studies, David Webster (2012) critiques what he perceives as the most detrimental tendencies within the spiritual community. His central argument posits that contemporary spirituality, broadly defined as a loosely organized movement emphasizing personal growth and meaning-making without the commitments of a specific religious tradition, tends to foster characteristics that make adherents appear unintelligent, self-centered, and dissatisfied. It is crucial to clarify that these are provocative assertions, yet not without substance. He takes care to specify that his critique is directed at the general trends within contemporary spirituality, where individuals often carve out their unique paths by amalgamating elements from various religious traditions.

It is important to note that contemporary spirituality is diverse, with significant contrasts. Not all adherents exhibit the traits of being unintelligent, self-centered, and dissatisfied. Webster (2012) concedes that people use the term spirituality with life-enhancing means of existence. The French historian and philosopher Pierre Hadot has revived the essence of conventional philosophy stated it is a matter of “spiritual exercises” (81), and it “is a concrete attitude and determinate lifestyle, which engages the whole of existence. Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim Mary locate with the global problems and perceive, “... individual human decision-maker is further distanced from nature because nature is reduced to measurable entities for profit or use. From this perspective, we humans may be isolated in our perceived uniqueness as something apart from the biological web of life” (3). The philosophical act is not situated merely on the cognitive level, but on that of self and of being ... It is a conversion” (83). In the same ground, Mickey (2016) states that religious syncretism involves the fusion of different religious systems to integrate and establish new human tradition which adopts a multiplicity and syncretism, encouraging adherents to selectively embrace or reject elements from various traditions. Leslie Sponsel (2012) mingles seemingly incompatible aspects, such as incorporating Hindu and Buddhist meditations on the self is *atman* (identity) with the *brahman* (absolute) alongside Buddhist meditations on the absence of *anattā* (self).

Debates over conflicting truth claims that they tend to appeal to emotions which are associated with religious individuals, and inflexible or obsessive ideas to defend their authority. In the realm of spirituality, such intellectual concerns are considered pseudo-problems best left untouched. From this perspective, conflicts between Hindu and Buddhist truth claims may be reconciled by mixing their practices, as long as a deeper truth is found in personal experience, transcending superficial differences. In the realm of environmental history, a crucial query emerges: Can we forge a contemporary equivalent to Aristotle's concept of nature? This updated notion should facilitate the integration of social and natural processes into a cohesive framework, providing practical guidance. The seminal observation of Jonathan Bate in *The Song of the Earth* makes as:

What are poets for? They are not exactly philosophers, though they often try to explain the world and humankind's place within it. They are not exactly moralists, for at least since the nineteenth century their primary concern has rarely been to tell us in homiletic fashion how to live. But they are often exceptionally lucid or provocative in their articulation of the relationship between internal and external worlds, between being and dwelling. (251-52)

As we grapple with the increasing challenges presented by climatic ecology and other environmental issues our capability is to conceive on environmental ecology. Within this outline, the qualities intrinsic to poetry gain significance and fascination. The narratives, including poetry, hold a distinctive capability to encapsulate intricate and contradictory truths. Such narratives act as privileged carriers of truth, adept at accommodating multiplicity and complexity while ensuring memorability at the same time. Susanna Lidström and Sweden Greg Garrard quote the ideas of Timothy Clark's idea on deep ecology as:

...the essential problem is anthropocentrism, the almost all-pervading assumption that it is only in relation to humans that anything else has value. Deep ecologists urge a drastic change in human self-understanding: one should see oneself not as an atomistic individual engaged in the world as a resource for consumption and self-assertion, but as part of a greater living identity. All human actions should be guided by a sense of what is good for the biosphere as a whole. Such a biocentrism would affirm the intrinsic value of all natural life and displace the current preference of even the most trivial human demands over the needs of other species or integrity of place. (38)

Webster states spirituality is "faith-lite" (17). Religion places substantial -perhaps even insurmountable -demands on its practitioners, urging them to align their thoughts, emotions, and actions with the revelations of their tradition. In contrast, spirituality, often regarded as a watered-down version of faith, does not impose such rigorous requirements. Disguised under the guise of personal freedom and choice, spirituality can inadvertently foster attitudes of intellectual lethargy and, at times, outright hostility towards intellectual

pursuits. Compounding this, it can also nurture selfish tendencies. This form of spirituality is unlawful in the social and political structures of capitalism, aptly termed as Ronald Purser (2019) coins it in the context of mindfulness practices. Capitalism assimilates spirituality as spiritual individuals become consumers of capitalism. This commercialized aspect of spirituality is evident in the emergence of spiritual consultants, who integrate spirituality into corporate environments to enhance employees' well-being, where feeling better often translates to psychological placation rather than genuine satisfaction and value in an equitable workplace (Crispin 2020). Spirituality is marketed as a source of happiness, yet this happiness is not inherently authentic -no more genuine than the joy derived from buying a new car or purchasing a book criticizing capitalism.

Webster acknowledges, “If Camus can imagine Sisyphus happy, we too can turn our shoulders to the boulder and get stuck into living” (71). Spirituality, in contrast to grappling with the profound uncertainties of existence, encourages us to turn away from the abyss and pursue personal joy, neglecting social responsibilities to immerse ourselves in the present moment. It urges us to sidestep challenging intellectual inquiries in favor of simplistic unity, immortality, and optimistic world view. If pleasure is derived from the complexities of reality, the plight of countless human and nonhuman existence in our personal sphere becomes consequential and substantial. The concerns of our complicity in a system perpetuating their suffering are conveniently overlooked. In essence, privatized spiritual happiness becomes synonymous with an unjust and miserable way of living -a term for a detrimental delusion. Camus dismissed the conventional belief that various speculative and religious systems provide positive guidance for human existence and primarily ensure the validity of human values. This perspective emerged in contemporary individuals due to their confrontation with the devastations of the two world wars, resulting in an era marked by anxiety, despair, and existential meaninglessness. Camus contends that a parallel between the human condition and that of Sisyphus is interpreted the state of modern humanity as resembling an individual desperately crying within a sealed glass container. The depiction of modern man and his predicament in Camus's viewpoint aligns with the themes explored in *The Myth of Sisyphus* as:

...a world that can be explained even with bad reasons is a familiar world. But, on the other hand, in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of absurdity. (13)

Although Webster (2012) advocates for existential promise as a preferable alternative of becoming spiritual but not religious seems overly human-centric, failing to adequately address the broader-than-human dimensions inherent in spiritual ecology. His departure from humanism neglects to consider environmental interconnectedness of people and decreases religious endeavors to a humanoid development. He claims, if we want to be

rituals, “then we are as capable of inventing them without spirituality and religion as we have been when we invented them as part of religious traditions” (75). Who is this rather capable “we”? ... “Outsourcing mental activities” ... “further from our ability to choose, from our agency” (40). Nevertheless, the distinction exists between delegating mental tasks to external resources and acknowledging the embodied and ecologically extended nature of human agency. This extends beyond human capabilities, involving interactions with the plants and animals, thereby establishes complex systems of multispecies action. His idea of humanism leads him to promote “being atheists today” (76) and with that commitment to atheistic humanism, he fails to make importance of religious phenomena (76).

Webster state that existential humanism falls short in acknowledging the involvement of nonhuman agencies in the challenges of existence. For him, “we [humans] are alone together; just people, with no spirits, angels, collective mind-force, gods or dead ancestors, ... an absence for us to fill ourselves with a world of value and meaning of our choosing” (71). He appears overly certain about the identity of “we,” limiting it to the humans currently alive. Kauffman (1995) envisions that a more scientifically informed perspective would propose the process of meaning-making expansive phenomenon, not confined solely to humans but distributed across the self-organizing dynamics evident in both cosmological and biological evolution. As humans, we are enmeshed in multispecies networks that arise amid the intricate, self-organizing forces of the cosmos. Our individual identities do not conform to a homogenous people; instead, they are fundamentally diverse and manifold. Vivieros de Castro suggests that it is possible for the term human to be exclusively attributed to *Homo sapiens*, while also encompassing everything else, and states, “When everything is human, the human becomes a wholly other thing” (63). By re-conceptualizing the human experience as intricately connected to the broader natural world, an existential understanding of spirituality has the potential to expand into an ecological existentialism.

Planetary Ethic and Existentialism

As humans becomes increasingly evident that what we encounter is profoundly uncertain -marked by ambiguity, unpredictability, and a sense of profound strangeness. This heightened uncertainty is reflected in scientific revelations about the intricate, non-linear, and unpredictable dynamics inherent in substantial and biological structures. This uncertainty emanates from the surge in impulsive events caused by widely circulated entities, and Morton refers to these entities as “hyperobjects” (2013a, 1) due to global warming, capitalism, and the current mass extinction event. Whitney Bauman promotes this viewpoint on planetary ethics, positioned at the intersection of religion and ecology. In his exploration of the intersection of religion and ecology, there is no omnipotent god or overarching nature. He develops the planetary ethic through Top of Form

Hethethe articulation of “viable agnostic meaning-making practices” (74). A comprehensive exploration of spiritual ecology is acceptable to critique spiritualities

displaying traits of anti-intellectualism, individualism, and consumerism. He agrees that as an integral aspect of planetary ethics, and spiritual ecology, in its quest for peace, justice, and adaptable human-earth connections across various perspectives and cultures, demands intellectual and interpersonal endeavors frequently disregarded by these spiritual beliefs.

Ecological incorporation between ethics and knowledge entails a focus on the intricate connections between humans and the various inhabitants and environments of planet. In terms of knowledge, inclusivity involves embracing and coordinating multiple ways of understanding, alongside an acceptance of uncertainty. Additionally, inclusive knowledge commits to diverse culturalism and religious understanding. To outline the characteristics of broad approach to planetary ecosystem within the framework of spiritual existentialism, I delve into three dimensions i.e. ecology, ethic and knowledge. It is beneficial to consider to the environmental aspects and planetary existentialism. Maximilian Lakitsch discusses the coexistence between humans, biosphere, and planet to acquire a particular form of normativity driven by an increasing ethical demand from the public's standpoint in order to preserve the earth's ecology. He states, "Humankind's existential crisis first and foremost relates to human-induced climate change. ...humankind has become a geological force..." (2). This statement of close predicament and complicated variance resounds with the ideas of Morton's proposal as "an ethical attitude we might call 'coexistentialism,'" which links with "prominent recent theorists of 'coexistentialism'" (47). "We need a term like 'coexistentialism,'" as Morton puts it, "to describe what it feels like to be a swarming colony: we contain multitudes" (2014, 301). It fosters a profound connection with entities in their entirety, exploring their nuances, from intricately detailed facets to their most extraordinary and captivating features.

Spiritual aspect of ecological existentialism aligns with animism and carries historical connotations linked to anthropological discussions tainted to restore its meaningful essence. Harvey affirms its utility to describe a worldview present in human cultures, "Animism is neither monist nor dualist, it is only just beginning when you get beyond counting one, two... At its best it is thoroughly, gloriously, unashamedly, rampantly pluralist" (2012, 3). Animists avoid the unnecessary incorporation of additional layers of subjectivity or meaning within or atop things by engaging in eco-poetic performances that transcend the constraints of academic treatises and manifestos. These performances center on honoring individuals, emphasizing that they are neither descriptive nor prescriptive. Instead, they serve as expressions of reverence for the diversity of individuals. These acts do not describe identities or dictate ethical norms. Rose describes country using a term from Levinas, "'nourishing terrain': Country is a place that gives and receives life. Not just imaged or represented, it is lived in and lived with. ... country is home, and peace; nourishment for body, mind, and spirit; heart's ease" (1996, 7). Eduardo Kohn studies of the Runa people in the Upper Amazon of Ecuador, portrays a comparable understanding of animism as a sensitivity to both continuity and difference as:

Runa animism is pragmatically oriented. The challenge for the Runa, as people who engage intimately with the beings of the forest in order, in large part, to eat them, is to find ways to enter this vast ecology of selves to harness some of its plenty. This requires being attuned to the unexpected affinities we share with other selves while at the same time recognizing the differences that distinguish the many kinds of selves that people the forest. (95)

The animistic connection with close alterities expands ethical responsibility towards the multitude of coexistence, confronting the challenges inherent in living and dying within a multispecies context. The spirituality within Rose's multispecies ethnography aligns with Morton's coexistentialism. In their perspectives, this ecologically infused form of existentialism serves as an ethical orientation, emphasizing reverence for the compelling alterity present in both humans and nonhumans.

To Morton and Rose, the ways of existing in the world is seen as forms of animism, and Morton describes, "...an upgraded form of animism" (2010, 110) finely agreed to the unique challenges posed by the current ecological crisis. It is important to emphasize that this animism does not assume a division between life and death, or between the animate and the inanimate. He contemplates the idea that it might be preferable to use a term that does not reduce "life to nonlife (mechanism) or nonlife to life (vitalism) -perhaps a term like undead" (2013b, 101).

Despite this perception, R. Bahro offers an optimistic interpretation of ecological consciousness, "The ecological crisis is a unique occasion to develop a new mode of consciousness to save humanity from destruction. We must widen and perfect our self-awareness in order to free ourselves of the conditioning of our birth and socialization" (219). To caution against interpreting this animism as a belief system that pits the living against the nonliving existence. It conveys various ways of aligning with the intimate alterities of beings. Harvey's concept of intimate alterities aligns with Morton's "strange strangers," interconnected in a complex web of interdependence -the "mesh" (2010, 15). The planetary existence harmonizes with the demands of the coexistence of biosphere. Entering the realm of connectivity signifies entering the mesh, an intimate intertwining of humans with each other and the myriad inhabitants of earth.

Steering clear of both anti-intellectualism and dogmatic assertions in science and religion, Bauman advocates for a pragmatic, and epistemological approach. It entails pushing meaning-making practices to the boundaries of certainty and coherence, fostering spaces where caring and loving relationships can evolve between humans and the varied landscapes of the earth. We, as humans, do not possess a definitive understanding of the best way to participate in coexistence might be the most effective approach post-god and nature.

Bauman's practical agnostic methodology serves as a compelling illustration of a coexistentialist approach to spiritual ecology. However, one might argue that a coexistentialist stance is deeply entrenched in paradox and ambiguity, making it hesitant to fully embrace agnosticism. While Bauman's agnosticism holds advantages over Webster's atheism due to its openness to uncertainty, ecological orientation, and receptivity to diverse meaning-making practices, it falls short of the requisite ambiguity, weirdness, and paradoxical nature associated with ecological coexistentialism.

Gaia Theory and Ecology

Ecognosis, Morton uses it refers to Gaia theory and hypothesis, resembles knowing but is more akin to allowing things to be known. He includes its hypothesis and suggests that earth functions as a self-regulating, intricate system to include the biosphere, atmosphere, hydrosphere, and pedosphere. James Lovelock (2009) states these components are closely interconnected, forming an evolving system known as Gaia. It collectively strives to maintain a physical and chemical environment that is optimal for current life forms. It is also an adaptation to a strangeness which does not diminish through familiarity. Ecognosis is like a knowing that is self-aware -a loop of knowing, a peculiar and enigmatic form of knowledge. Morton perceives ecognosis, "Ecognosis is like knowing, but more like letting be known. It is something like coexisting. ... Ecognosis is like a knowing that knows itself. Knowing in a loop -a weird knowing" (2016, 5). Bauman's agnosticism, despite its merit, appears too certain about the issues surrounding certainty, demonstrating a nuanced understanding of the potential in unknowing. It seems Morton's concept of ecognosis -an interpretive form of knowing without complete knowledge, bridges the realm of knowing and unknowingness. Sponsel quotes the views of Nomalungelo and opines about ecology and people, "Although indigenous peoples around the world vary widely in their customs, traditions, rituals, languages, and so on, land is considered by all as the center of their universe, a parent, a giver of life, the core of our cultures, rituals, and traditions" (12).

In essence, Morton's concept of ecognosis appears peculiar and spiritual. It involves recognizing one's intimate intertwining with others through the process of magnetizing and being magnetized, tuning in and being tuned. This concept bears resemblance to Tibetan Buddhists describing how individuals are influenced by "the winds of karma," (2013b, 179) which draws insights from Buddhism, and Rose integrates with indigenous traditions of people, it is evident that ecognostic perspectives forge connections across cultural and spiritual diversities. It fosters pluralistic interactions and inclusive collaborations. It holds the potential to nurture a democratic politics of care for all beings interwoven within the fabric of ecological coexistence. The sense of belonging and in-betweenness facilitates transcending boundaries, uncovering shared ground in and as coexistence. This coexistence embodies solidarity among humans and nonhumans, and ecognosis fosters an ambiance reminiscent of a hospitable environment, where solidarity becomes the inherent affective state of the Earth's surface. As the end of twentieth century, modern environmental ethics

proposed that a living earth should be approached with bio-centric or holistic ethical considerations, particularly concerning the land. Stephan Harding incorporates the same notion as:

It is at least not impossible to regard the earth's parts -soil, mountains, rivers, atmosphere etc.,-as organs or parts of organs of a coordinated whole, each part with its definite function. And if we could see this whole, as a whole, through a great period of time, we might perceive not only organs with coordinated functions, but possibly also that process of consumption as replacement which in biology we call metabolism, or growth. In such case we would have all the visible attributes of a living thing, which we do not realize to be such because it is too big, and its life processes too slow. (44)

The global magnitude of present-day ecological challenges necessitates multicultural collaboration. It is essential to move fluidly between various traditions to effectively coordinate collective responses to the global environmental crisis. Moreover, this inclusive approach extends beyond religious boundaries, reaching toward ecological and cosmic consciousness.

This capacious inclusivity opens up with the concept of Roland Faber, “a new transcendental horizon, as humanity evolves such a universal, cosmic, ecological, connective, cosmopolitan consciousness” (437). He imagines the trans-religious humanity is “a profoundly ecological symbol, naming the deeper reality of the living together of humanity and all creatures in the Truth of their interrelatedness” (11). “Religious peace,” as Faber views, “can only be trans-religious, but, in this world of becoming, it must also unfold its implicit ecological complexity, captured by the eco-conscious image of the garden of all realities as their access to, and realization of, Reality” (12). The various expressions of spiritual ecology are least effective when used as a pretext to evade the intellectual, interpersonal, and material responsibilities involved in nurturing the garden of coexistence. Conversely, they excel when empowering individuals to collectively and consciously tend to this garden in solidarity.

Conclusion

The paper endeavors to enhance the conceptual grasp of ecological existence by incorporating insights from scholars, particularly Leslie Sponsel. It aims to amalgamate different viewpoints on spiritual ecology and ecological existentialism, and underscores the necessity of transcending anti-intellectual, individualistic, and consumerist trends within spirituality. It is heuristic, seeking to uncover how spiritual ecology can either bolster or impede the welfare of both humanity and the natural environment. In recent years, the core of spiritual ecology cannot be merely imported from distant sources. Instead, individuals must engage in introspection and growth to initiate a path of environmental dedication

and ecological harmony. Through this journey of self-discovery, people not only protect the biosphere but also adopt life-sustaining principles, nurturing a thriving ecological community. The spiritual-oriented ecological criticism has delved into the intellectual and literary aspects of modernity. However, ecocritics have largely overlooked existentialist thought. Unlike approaches centered on systematic and global issues, existentialism starts with individual human consciousness and subjective anxieties, making it an unconventional yet potentially valuable resource for contemplating our ecological future. This study illustrates that existentialism can offer valuable insights into an existentially-oriented ecology.

In the realm of environmental degradation, it delves into the underlying consciousness and the intrinsic connection to nature. This perspective resonates with optimistic perspective on how humanity can address ecological crisis. It underscores the crucial need for an elevated consciousness, recognizing its difficulty for asserting its unavoidable importance. The collective efforts in achieving enduring progress, emphasizing the urgency for a shift in consciousness, commitment, and a renewed appreciation for the privilege of confronting face this challenge. Moving beyond the politically problematic influence on deep ecology, it has explored various facets of existentialism linking it with environment and existence of biosphere. This exploration encompasses reflections on earthly experience and its connection to human embodiment, the concept of ambiguity and its ethical implications in the idea of ontological mystery. The objective is not only to reaffirm the relevance of existentialism in an era dominated by ecological concerns but also to tap into the broader resources of existentialist thinking -often overlooked in this context -to reimagine our existence ecologically.

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