

Ethics and the environment: Cultural metaphysics and cross-cultural dialogue

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Our environment is saturated in the English language and “western” culture due to globalisation. However, the accompanying western philosophical concepts can be contested, even resisted, in different cultural contexts. The philosophical ideas associated with the Anglosphere are rooted in the cultural, economic, religious and social traditions of broader Anglo-European, or western culture and are decontested ideologically within that culture. The contestation of western ideology is beneficial for global culture, but this aspect of cross-cultural dialogue is often neglected in South Asia where English language learning and other development strategies result in the internalisation of Anglo-European culture and norms. This study contrasts the philosophical underpinnings of ethics and relations to the environment in South Asia and the west. The frameworks underlying these systems of thought are more profound than cultural hegemony or even philosophical world view, instead consisting of entirely different cultural metaphysics. These profound differences can result in conceptual misunderstandings that can only be resolved by dialogue, both internal and external. The aim of this study is to examine ethical and environmental theories from both perspectives and show how this cross-cultural dialogue can allow for uniquely South Asian solutions to environmental problems.

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