



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz  
International Programme for  
a Culture of Peace and Dialogue

# Philosophy Manual

A South-South  
Perspective



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz  
International Programme for  
a Culture of Peace and Dialogue

# Philosophy Manual

# A South-South Perspective

Published under the direction of  
Phinith Chanthalangsy and John Crowley

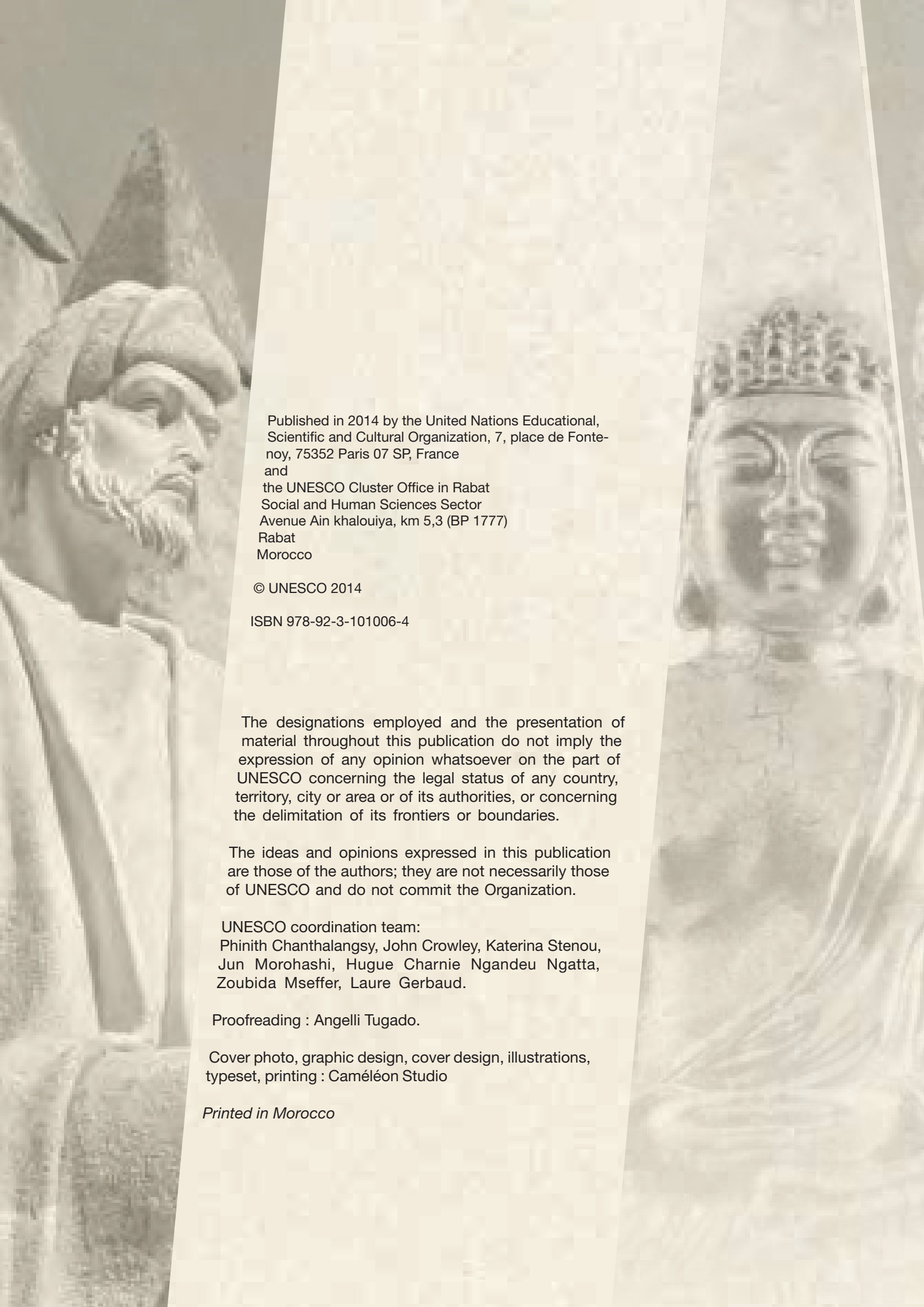
## Coordinators

Ali Benmakhlouf (Morocco)  
Enrique Dussel (Mexico)  
Nkolo Foé (Cameroon)  
Rainier Ibana (Philippines)

## Scientific Committee

Abubaker A. Baqader (Saudi Arabia)  
Ayoub Abu-Dayyeh (Jordan)  
Souleymane Bachir Diagne (Senegal)  
Ali Benmakhlouf (Morocco)  
Betül Çotuksöken (Turkey)  
Enrique Dussel (Mexico)  
Nkolo Foé (Cameroon)  
Raúl Fornet-Betancourt (Cuba)  
Jinli He (China)  
Rainier Ibana (Philippines)  
Rozena Maart (South Africa)  
Magali Mendes de Menezes (Brazil)  
Suwanna Satha-Anand (Thailand)

With the support of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Programme  
for a Culture of Peace and Dialogue



Published in 2014 by the United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural Organization, 7, place de Fontenoy,  
75352 Paris 07 SP, France  
and  
the UNESCO Cluster Office in Rabat  
Social and Human Sciences Sector  
Avenue Ain khalouiya, km 5,3 (BP 1777)  
Rabat  
Morocco

© UNESCO 2014

ISBN 978-92-3-101006-4

The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

The ideas and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors; they are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization.

UNESCO coordination team:  
Phinith Chanthalangsy, John Crowley, Katerina Stenou,  
Jun Morohashi, Hugue Charnie Ngandeu Ngatta,  
Zoubida Mseffer, Laure Gerbaud.

Proofreading : Angelli Tugado.

Cover photo, graphic design, cover design, illustrations,  
typeset, printing : Caméléon Studio

*Printed in Morocco*

**Kammarna Raman.** Associate professor in the Department of Civics and Politics, University of Mumbai (India). Her teaching and research interest includes human rights, political theory and gender and political representation. She is presently working on the use of social media by political parties.  
Contribution to the manual: pp. 155-157.

**María Luisa Rivara de Tuesta.** Emeritus professor at Universidad Nacional Mayor San Marcos (Peru) where she studied. She has a degree in history and philosophy (1963), teaches secondary education specializing in philosophy and social sciences (1964), and has a doctorate in education (1966). She studied philosophy in higher education at the Sorbonne University (Paris) (1966–1967).  
Contribution to the manual: pp. 186-190.

**Mario Ruiz Sotelo.** Full-time lecturer and researcher in the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. He is also a lecturer on a permanent basis in the Faculty of Political Sciences of UNAM. His main areas of interest are the study of Latin American political philosophy and research into the critical thinking of the colonial period of Latin America.  
Contribution to the manual: pp. 211-213.

**Ricardo Rozzi.** Professor at the University of North Texas (UNT, USA) and the University of Magallanes (UMAG, Chile). He is a Chilean ecologist and philosopher who blends the two disciplines as biocultural ethics in a methodological framework that he terms “field environmental philosophy”. His publications include “Integrating Ecological Sciences and Environmental Ethics into Biocultural Conservation in South American Temperate Sub-Antarctic Ecosystems”,<sup>160</sup> and “Biocultural Ethics: From Biocultural Homogenization toward Biocultural Conservation”.<sup>161</sup>  
Contribution to the manual: pp. 230-233.

**Valeria López Vela.** Member of the National System of Researchers and Coordinator of the Anáhuac México Sur Human Rights Centre (agreement to promote respect for human rights).  
Contribution to the manual: pp. 201-203.

**Robin R. Wang.** Daum Professor at Bellarmine College of Liberal Arts, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles (USA) where she also is professor of philosophy, and director of Asian Pacific Studies. She is the author of *Yinyang: The Way of Heaven and Earth in Chinese Thought and Culture*<sup>162</sup> and the editor of *Chinese Philosophy in an Era of Globalization*.<sup>163</sup> She has published articles and essays and regularly given presentations in North America, Europe, and Asia. She has also been a consultant for the media, law firms, museums, K-12 educators, and health care professionals.  
Contribution to the manual: pp. 158-161.

<sup>160</sup> Ricardo Rozzi, Juan J. Armesto, and Robert Frodeman, “Integrating ecological sciences and environmental ethics into biocultural conservation in South American temperate sub-Antarctic ecosystems” in *Environmental Ethics*, Vol. 30, 2008.

<sup>161</sup> Ricardo Rozzi, “Biocultural Ethics : From biocultural homogenization toward biocultural conservation” in *Linking Ecology and Ethics for a Changing World : Values, Philosophy, and Action*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2014.

<sup>162</sup> Robin Wang, *Yinyang : The Way of Heaven and Earth in Chinese Thought and Culture*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012

<sup>163</sup> Robin Wang (ed.), *Chinese Philosophy in an Era of Globalization*, New York, SUNY Press, 2012.

# V ENVIRONMENT AND NATURE

## ECO-PHILOSOPHY OF LIBERATION, ACCORDING TO LEONARDO BOFF

### INTRODUCTION

Leonardo Boff was born in Concordia, southern Brazil on 14 December 1938. He was a liberation theologian and philosopher and a key figure in the development of Latin American environmental thinking (thanks to his original Franciscan concepts and his hard work to disseminate environmental issues and proposals to resolve them). His work was based on three sources that are weaved throughout his thinking and life, and that have pedagogical value for our modern society. First, his life experiences in Brazil were as a member of a family of Italian immigrants, with parents who taught him to live with members of indigenous, mulatto and black communities (who were often marginalized by other European immigrants). Boff clearly remembers the virtue of accepting differences and sitting together at school and around the table. This source teaches us the value of non-discrimination and openness to the other. Boff's second source was entering the seminary at the age of 11, where his education was strongly influenced by the Franciscan spirit of fraternity, love of nature, sensitivity towards the poor, and simplicity. Boff's perspective reconnected the religious experience (and more generally the experience of everyday life) with nature. Feeling the trees, birds, water and roots where we live shows us how to overcome the duality between human beings and other beings with whom we share the planet. The third source was his interdisciplinary training integrating the theory and practice of philosophy, theology and science. During his theology doctorate in Munich, he attended classes by Werner Heisenberg, who was one of the founders of quantum physics. At the same time, he was one of the creators of Liberation Theology with Latin American and Spanish priests in 1968. This type of integration makes it possible to link the human with nature and the transcendental, beauty with the pain of hunger and poverty that we face in the global crisis that is bio-cultural as well as environmental. Boff's book *Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm* (English version published in 1995) is a reference point for a holistic and eco-social approach to environmental ethics.



## TEXT *ECOLOGY AND LIBERATION: A NEW PARADIGM,* LEONARDO BOFF

““

All modern societies across the world are structured on the axis of economy. But economy in its modern sense has lost its original significance: the administration of the fair and modest means necessary for life and well-being. Rational application of scant income is the central activity of most households in the Third World. That is economy in the true sense of the term. But that is not the kind of economics practiced by the institutional economists, who serve a very different. ... At the end of each year the country has to show that there has been growth over the previous year. This imperative has given rise to the notion of unlimited growth that, like some incubus, has come to dominate society as a whole for some five hundred years. ... We lack a fundamental critique of a model of society that would promote a sustainable kind of ecological development.” (p. 19)

“It is also necessary to plan and introduce an ecologically sustainable form of development adapted to regional ecosystems (for example, the natural resource policy of Chico Mendes, which was appropriate to the Amazonian ecosystem). We do indeed find the ruling metaphor of ‘sustainable development’ in official documents (sustainable development was defined by the UN Brundtland Commission in 1987 as ‘that development which takes into account present needs without compromising the possibility of future generations satisfying their own needs’). In the last analysis, however, it is always development itself that counts, even at the cost of ecological disorder. When a conflict arises between development and ecology, the decision is usually taken in favor of development at the costs of ecology. It would seem that capitalist greed is incompatible with the conservation of nature. ... The pharaonic projects of Henry Ford for rubber exploitation in Amazonia in 1927, and, fifty years later, those of Daniel Ludwig for cellulose and timber in Jari, and, finally, the Volkswagen projects of the 1970s, resulted in vast failures, because they did not take any account whatsoever of the ecological question. All this has been at the expense of two million hectares of forest, in the case of the Jari project; and 144,000 hectares destroyed in the case of Volkswagen in order to feed forty-six thousand head of cattle (an incredible thirty thousand square meters devoted to each head). The gigantic nature of such projects reveals the irrationality of the development model being followed and the need to replace it with a more holistic vision that also takes the ecological aspect into account.” (p. 22)

“A poet of long ago who experienced this mysticism of the ubiquitous Spirit put it very well when he wrote that the Spirit sleeps in stone, dreams in flowers, awakens in animals, knows he is awake in men, and feels awake in women. This is a sympathetic intuition of the cosmic ubiquity of the Spirit, as testified to by so many mystics of various cultures, such as the Sioux Indians of North America, the Bororos of Brazil, and a number of Eastern Zen masters. The Fathers of the Latin and Greek Church of the fourth and fifth centuries, especially Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa, St. Basil and St. Peter Damian, express in various ways the Spiritus ubique diffuses (the universally diffused Spirit). (p. 50)

””





## COMMENTARY

As shown in the passage from *Ecology and Liberation*, Leonardo Boff felt that environmental thought was part of an eco-philosophy of liberation with a twofold task. The first part of the task would be a *de-constructive movement to be free of the myth of unlimited development*, in which society must be structured around economic growth. This myth involves oppression of most human beings and an extermination of most beings with whom we share the planet. It also implies a lower standard of living by reducing human existence to a one-dimensional economic phenomenon. Being free of this myth enables a *re-constructive movement to recover the diversity of human and ecological existence* and the original sense of economy. Boff underlines that economics is not the unlimited accumulation of capital, but rather the sensible administration of scant resources. This meaning is closer to the origins of modern ecological sciences, metaphorically called “the economy of nature” by Carlos Linneo in the seventeenth century. Furthermore, eco-nomy and eco-logy share the same Greek root *oikos* (meaning home). One refers to laws (*nomos*) regulating administration, while the other refers to the study (*logia*) of the *oikos* (or home). In the twenty-first century, the planet is our shared home. Boff links together economics and ecology for sensible management.

Boff does not simply use abstract philosophy to interweave economics and ecology on a purely conceptual level, but rather does so mainly through the practice of solidarity, resistance and the protection of the poor and marginalized. For instance, he refers to Francisco Alves “Chico” Mendes, who in 1985 created and implemented the concept of extractive reserves to protect the Amazon rainforest and the rights of rubber-collecting communities to practise sustainable use. Under the leadership of Chico Mendes, Amazonian rubber collectors organized themselves as the Union of Rural Workers of Xapuri to fight against deforestation caused by “pharaonic” projects. The most infamous result of the movement was the murder of Mendes in 1988. In recognition of the value of his life and ideas, in 2007 when Boff was an adviser to Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva’s Brazilian Government, the country’s Ministry for the Environment created the Chico Mendes Institute for the Conservation of Biodiversity (which now manages areas protected by the federal government). Boff supported many grassroots movements associated with churches, professional associations and international organizations demanding a fairer distribution of land ownership and economically and environmentally sustainable practices. Examples include the “Landless Rural Workers’ Movement” (MST) in southern Brazil and “Patagonia without Dams” in southern Chile.

Although the selected examples are from South America, there are similar cases in other world regions, as the development model underlying them has been globalized. In this context, Boff’s eco-philosophy of liberation is relevant to twenty-first century philosophical thinking for at least two reasons. First, it re-establishes the philosophical unity of theoretical and practical knowledge to tackle the global scale from and towards local histories and reality. Second, it places environmental issues at the heart of our century’s challenges, while also maintaining a transcendent sense of the natural world that precedes and succeeds the human species.



We human beings belong to the environment. The environment does not belong to us, but rather we live in community with the other beings sharing life (as stated in the third selected text). Boff's proposed spirituality is rooted in the biophysical world, which is understood and valued by current and ancestral Amerindian, Zen Buddhist and other forms of knowledge. Boff therefore calls for ethics not to be anthropocentric (as is the case in modern society), but rather for it to consider the diversity of all life forms. At the same time, Boff calls for ecological ethics that are not Eurocentric, but rather multi- and inter-cultural. For the young generations of the twenty-first century, this invitation is an opportunity to cultivate ethics in favour of life in all its biological and cultural diversity, as well as a responsibility to forge a fairer society that avoids oppression for most life (human and non-human) forms and encourages a bio-culturally diverse planet.

## QUESTIONS

1

*What is the meaning of the link between economy and ecology proposed by Boff? What links between economy and ecology are you aware of in your region's ancestral cultures?*

2

*Do you think that teaching on the environment in your region and other regions includes enough about the diversity of world views and ecological values? Explain your answer using at least three examples.*

3

*According to Boff's texts, who are the causes of the environmental crisis and who are the main victims? Do you think that Boff's analysis of the cases in the Amazon (in the selections) is relevant for your region? Would you expect to reach similar or different conclusions? Base your reply on an example that details the agents and processes that caused a socio-ecological problem underway in a place or region of your continent and the main (human and non-human) victims.*

4

*What is the meaning of the notion of spirit for Leonardo Boff?*

## PEDAGOGICAL ACTIVITIES

1

*As a team, design and implement research about the ecological world views of several of your region's sociocultural groups. Produce a presentation on these ancestral and modern world views, as well as each one's implications for ecological ethics.*

2

*Together with your classmates, supplement the above research by preparing a photographic presentation on: (a) the links between habitats (within and outside cities) and the lifestyles associated with these habitats, and (b) the socio-ecological problems faced by these groups today, including the main causes and victims of the problems. Analyse the implications of: (a) the links between habitats and lifestyle for ecological ethics, and (b) the identification of the causes and victims of socio-ecological problems for social and environmental justice.*