

FROM THE GUEST EDITOR

## Catalyzing an Interregional Planetary Dialogue on Environmental Philosophy

South America plays a critical role in the context of global climate change, and more broadly of global environmental change. The new Earth Summit, Rio+20, held in June 2012 in Brazil, showed again the great need for an environmental ethics to integrate the technical-scientific description of this dramatic global change with a holistic normative framework, centered on an ethic of life rather than solely on economy and particular facets of the ecosocial global problems.<sup>1</sup> This deficit of environmental ethics in Rio+20 is symptomatic of three broader phenomena:

(1) This ethical discipline is still at an incipient stage in the academy and in public discourse in South America and other regions of the planet. (2) The global discourse does not adequately include the diversity of languages, with their ontologies, metaphysics, epistemologies, and ethics rooted in the heterogeneous biocultural mosaic of planetary regions, due in part to the limited inter-linguistic and intercultural dialogue among philosophers and other thinkers in environmental ethics that reside in different regions of the world. (3) South American environmental ethics raises two critical challenges to the free market system because (a) it proposes limits of action to the prevailing neo-liberal policy (the essence of which has been to free itself from restrictions for entrepreneurship and economic growth) and (b) it extends the moral community beyond those who govern and benefit from the market (to include the majority, marginalized, and oppressed populations), and beyond the human species (to include all beings with whom we cohabit in the biosphere).

This special issue of *Environmental Ethics* with contributions from environmental philosophers working in South America, seeks to help overcome these three problems. Its origin was in August 1998 during the Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy held in Boston, when we recognized the importance of global scale and interregional dialogue and decided to create regional sections within the International Society for Environmental Ethics (ISEE). Teresa Kwiatkowska became the representative for Mexico and Central America, and I started coordinating the South American section. With her edited books published in Spanish, Teresa had previously done a valuable work that introduced the work of Anglo-Saxon environmental philosophers into Latin America. On my part, to help strengthen environmental ethics in the South American academia and stimulate an interregional dialogue, I invited South American thinkers to write short essays on environmental philosophy in their countries. With colleagues and graduate students associated with the Sub-Antarctic Biocultural Conservation Program at the universities of Magallanes (Chile) and

---

<sup>1</sup> Eduardo Viola and Antonio Carlos Lessa, eds., "Global Climate Governance and Transition to a Low-Carbon Economy," Special Issue, *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional* 55 (2012):1–189.

North Texas (U.S.A.), we translated these essays from Spanish into English, and with Mark Woods and Charmayne Palomba inaugurated a bilingual series on South American Environmental Philosophy published in the *ISEE Newsletter* between 2007 and 2010. These essays provided the starting point for this special issue of *Environmental Ethics* that results from academic exchanges that have attempted to integrate philosophical theory and practice to address the current complex eco-social challenges at regional and planetary scales.

At an interregional level, we hope that this volume will catalyze the development of other special issues on environmental philosophy in Africa, Australia, and Asia in order to cultivate an intercontinental dialogue. What is happening today in the Amazon depends partly on environmental policies in Asia and other continents; what happens to the climate in Asia and other continents depends in part on the conservation of the forests in the Amazon. Therefore, today a planetary interregional environmental ethics is imperative.

At a South American regional level, this volume is the second bilingual special issue edited by the Sub-Antarctic Biocultural Conservation Program and the Center for Environmental Philosophy (CEP).<sup>2</sup> This special issue cannot and does not aim to exhaust the South American perspectives on environmental philosophy; it rather expresses the particular outcome of the collaborations that the authors have maintained for half a decade to build this regional heterogeneous synthesis. It is indispensable to continuing and broadening this forum to include the realities of other countries and other South American schools of thought, which have recently emerged in the areas of political ecology, complex thinking, intercultural philosophy, and bioethics, among others. This special issue has been made possible thanks to the continued support of Eugene Hargrove and Alexandria Poole, CEP's director and associate director, the editorial work coordinated by Francisca Massardo at Universidad de Magallanes, the continuous exchange with each of the authors, the valuable discussions and suggestions by Roy May, Ignacio Ayestarán, and J. Baird Callicott, and the translation work conducted with colleagues and graduate students, especially Kelli Moses and Tamara Contador. This issue will provide a thematic basis for the Fifth Latin American Environmental Philosophy Conference to be held at the Universidad de Magallanes in Puerto Natales and Omora Park, Chile, in March 2013. The continued support for this interdisciplinary work provided by Juan Armesto, Director of the Institute of Ecology and Biodiversity, and Andrés Mansilla, Director of Graduate Studies and Research at the University of Magallanes, has made it possible to develop research, education, and policy work that seeks to better integrate environmental ethics promoting the sustainability of life, human and other-than-human, in the heterogeneous regions of the planet.

Ricardo Rozzi

---

<sup>2</sup> See Ricardo Rozzi, Juan J. Armesto, and Robert Frodeman, eds., "Integrating Ecological Sciences and Environmental Ethics into Biocultural Conservation in South American Temperate Sub-Antarctic Ecosystems," *Environmental Ethics* 30, no. 3 (2008).