

Introduction to this Special Issue

The starting point of this special issue of *Environmental Ethics* is both a *preoccupation* and a *desire* for current environmental ethics that explores an intercultural dialogue while urging for a practical way forward.

The *preoccupation* deals with the lack of efficiency of the ethical discourse. We feel a deception when we observe the gap between the theoretical results of several decades of environmental philosophy and its practical effects on society. In this sense, an environmental education may constitute possible salvation for the Earth and humanity as well. Following Eugene Hargrove's proposal in "What's Wrong? Who's to Blame?"¹ we still have to strengthen the presence of the environmental concern in academic curricula. In response to that proposal, David Johns considers that philosophers should adapt their discourses to the various audiences they could *move* if they want to impact fruitfully on the real future of society.² Discourses should appeal to emotions and strategically use the beliefs of their audience to be heard. We cannot ignore such means, but we suggest that although educators and intellectuals are essential, we still need to look for the root causes to understand the reasons for the resistance to develop a real "applied environmental philosophy." Such analysis may deal with the problematic nature of collective actions.

Here comes the *desire*. It consists of handing over to Latin American voices and diverse perspectives dealing with the future(s) of our planet as proposed by Ricardo Rozzi.³ Indeed, environmental ethics has seriously evolved since its very beginnings. The current climate crisis demonstrates the dangers are more global than local. Far-reaching contamination compels us to preserve not only an extraordinary nature (*wilderness*), but also more "ordinary nature." The huge (negative) power of our actions on nature shows us the necessity of an ethically regulated collective power. Facing the negative aspects of a materialistic and capitalistic *mundialization*, we realize the need for an effective and urgent *cosmopolitanism*. We do not receive the Universal; just the opposite, we build it thanks to an intercultural dialogue that this special issue would like to shape. A more universal environmental conscience should not imply the abolition of the different cultures: rather the opposite, it should emerge from them. Conversely, it should help create a certain unity that converges towards a common "Earth Stewardship." There are paths for the participation of different cultures through the shaping of an ethics of responsibility focused on the preservation of a common and ordinary nature.

This is why we decided to examine through this special issue different ways that could enhance the effectiveness of ethical proposals. How can we articulate,

¹ Eugene Hargrove "What's Wrong? Who's to Blame?," *Environmental Ethics* 25 (2003): 2–3.

² David Johns, "The Ir/relevance of Environment Ethics," *Environmental Ethics* 25 (2003): 223–24.

³ Ricardo Rozzi, "Catalyzing an Interregional Planetary Dialogue on Environmental Philosophy," *Environmental Ethics* 34 (2012): 341–42.

thus, both the local and the global perspectives? If most ecological catastrophes are due to unintentional actions, then how can we “regulate” the individual behavior to prevent it from being at the same time the victim and the culprit of its action? Environmental ethicists should be able to offer answers to similar questions. The ethical reflection on environment may sound like a failure or like a victory. For those looking for immediate results through a certain direct influence on behaviors, environmental ethics might seem ineffective, while for those believing in a patient and serious reflection on a long-range transformation of social reality, it may be an extraordinarily powerful tool. The latter point of view motivated us to organize the conference “The Power and Impotence of Environmental Ethics,” in November 2016 at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Department of Philosophy. The reader will find in this special issue most of the papers discussed on that occasion.

In this special issue and the next, the reader may find the effort to develop universal categories, such as ecocide (Sandra Baquedano), environmental justice (Daniel Loewe), or the need to overcome taxonomic chauvinism to foster a bio-cultural ethics (Ricardo Rozzi), useful for actively protecting the environment. It is open to discussion whether such categories could have a legal materialization. In this regard, environmental ethics involves political decisions, dealing with the aporias of the classical democratic system. This will allow us to introduce the concept of “environmental democracy” (Eric Pommier and Stephen Gardiner). However, politics and legality may not be the only part of the solution. They may not be the conditions of a good social evolution, but rather the expected consequences of such a possible evolution. If it is true, we have to analyze our socioenvironmental relations to make them the object of an ethical reflection (Luca Valera, Hernán Neira, and Ronald Sandler), to overcome barriers that prevent us from truly engaging in that direction. As we may notice, to avoid the accusation of being only a “beautiful ecological soul,” the philosopher must concentrate on concrete means to give rise to a collective sense of ecological responsibility. Ethicists must engage themselves with both the ideal and the real political, legal, and social structures of the world to make possible a genuine human life on Earth (Catherine Larrère). This special issue is aimed at taking a step forward in this direction.

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