

FROM THE GUEST EDITOR

Collaborative Inter-Continental Dialogues: From a Necrocene to a Biocene

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What ideas, concepts or actions can we contribute to achieve a sustainable world for nature and people that takes into account the multiplicity of cultures, ecosystems, institutions and instruments of governance from local to global scales? How do we turn from current biocultural homogenization, which marginalizes, oppresses and eliminates biological and cultural diversity, toward a biocultural conservation that respects this diversity? In short, how do we move from the current Necrocene to a future Biocene?¹

To catalyze inter-regional dialogues addressing these challenges, *Environmental Ethics* has published special issues with works by authors from different continents, cultures, and traditions of thought. This current special issue presents two emblematic cases of thinkers and activists from the northern hemisphere, and the complexities involved in their collaborative work with societies in South America: the French naturalist, Aimé Bonpland, and the American conservationist, Douglas Tompkins. Both cases illustrate the need to overcome the paradigm that exalts the work of individual intellectuals or activists, to more fully embrace the multifaceted nature of collaborations.

U.S. philosopher Andrea Nye critically analyzes how the work of Alexander von Humboldt has been exalted, but the contributions of his colleague Aimé Bonpland have been omitted. Rooted in the places and founded on the relationships with Creole colonists and South American native peoples, Bonpland's work challenges the universality of imperial discourses woven by von Humboldt from post-Kantian idealism, and other European thinkers. Nye argues that Bonpland's writings and his forty years of hands-on work in Argentina and Brazil in botany, ethno-pharmacology, regional development, and conservation offers a better model for an environmental ethic that is collaborative and participatory, such as the one we need today.

Chilean philosopher Hernán Neira examines the process of collaborative U.S.–

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¹ The term *Necrocene* was coined by environmental historian Justin McBrien, "Accumulating Extinction: Planetary Catastrophism in the Necrocene," in Jason W. Moore, ed., *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism* (Oakland, Calif.: Pm Press, 2016), pp. 116–37. Here the term *Biocene* denotes an era where life flourishes in its biological and cultural diversity, in opposition to a *Necrocene*, an era in which death, oppression, and extinction of biological and cultural diversity prevail.

Chilean relationships led by Douglas Tompkins to protect an area of extensive forests, glaciers, and fjords. This case overlaps with my own experience. In 1994, I met Tompkins at a family breakfast in Connecticut during which he described his vision to preserve a refuge of life in southern Chile. In building this vision, he left the companies that he had founded, The North Face and Esprit, and established the Foundation for Deep Ecology in 1990, and The Conservation Land Trust in 1992. His conservation project generated strong controversies, but after twenty-five years of collaborative work, it culminated in the creation of the Pumalín National Park in southwestern South America, which was donated to the Chilean government in 2017. This is the largest donation of private land in the history of Chile, and conserves a key site of one million acres immersed in the largest extension of temperate forests that remains in the Southern Hemisphere. Tompkins tragically passed away in 2015. However, his legacy was fruitful thanks to the collaboration with his partner Kristine McDivitt Tompkins and a great team of Chilean and international collaborators, which integrated the private and public sector, countries of the north and south of the American continent.

These two historical cases are complemented by three philosophical analyses. Douglas Tompkins was inspired by deep ecology, and Luca Valera presents a novel assessment of Arne Naess' "relational ontology." Then, Daniel Loewe addresses the question of intergenerational environmental justice, and Eric Pommier and Catherine Larrère contribute two complementary articles about Hans Jonas' principle of responsibility that demonstrate how it implies not only obligations to future human generations but also to Earth and other living beings.

In this introduction, I add the principle of collaboration. This year, the journal *Environmental Ethics* initiated its fifth decade, and to contribute to implementing this principle, its editorial team is committed to promoting inter-continental, inter-cultural and inter-disciplinary dialogues. This special issue emerged from an international conference,² and the Center for Environmental Philosophy will soon inaugurate an office at the Sub-Antarctic Cape Horn Center in Puerto Williams, Chile. To address global socio-environmental challenges, we need a metamorphosis of academic philosophy to emerge from a current state that prizes individual work toward a future one that promotes collaborations among thinkers from the southern and northern, eastern and western hemispheres. Von Humboldt worked with Bonpland, Tompkins fostered Chilean-American teams, Gandhi gained strength with Mirabehn. The former examples of cooperation and synergies inspire us to continue catalyzing collaborative dialogues to contribute to the metamorphosis from an era dominated by the denial of life, a Necrocene, toward one that affirms it, a Biocene, where a biocultural ethic emerges, guiding respectful ways of co-inhabiting celebrating biological and cultural diversity.

² See Eric Pommier and Luca Valera, "Introduction to this Special Issue," *Environmental Ethics* 41, no. 3 (2019):197–98. Also, interviews of Stephen Gardiner and Ronald Sandler with Ricardo Rozzi, UMAG-TV: <https://youtu.be/rgvaSEpVha0>, and <https://youtu.be/f1te2j2qAaA>.