

Sub-Antarctic High Andean “Gardeners”: Cultivating Caring Relationships

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Abstract

This chapter presents a case study of the Field Environmental Philosophy four-step cycle methodology in the sub-Antarctic high Andean zone. First, based on ecological and philosophical research, we problematize the use of the term “Andean Desert” for naming this ecosystem. Second, we propose the metaphor “High Andean sub-Antarctic Gardeners” to transform our mental image from a desert toward a plant world dominated by habits that promote cooperation and care among co-inhabitants in a specific geographical place. Third, we describe a guided activity with an ecological and ethical orientation, “Co-inhabiting as high Andean cushion plants.” Through this experience, we understand that, in nature, just as in human society, there is not only competition but also much collaboration and symbiosis to co-inhabit and flourish. Fourth, we contribute to habilitate areas for in situ conservation in order to protect habitats, species, and their interactions. This case illustrates how to put into practice a pedagogical aesthetic experience that considers bodies, emotions, and minds of the participants while learning about ecological relationships and their ethical implications in a pre-reflexive way. This activity also reminds us about our indissoluble union with the world and its ethical implications. The “gardeners” teach us through their life habits the relevance of cooperation for flourishing together in difficult contexts. In that sense, through our life habits, we can modify habitats in such ways that allow (or not) co-inhabitants to flourish.

Keywords

Aesthetic experience; Collaboration; Ecology; Ethics; Metaphors.