

Assessment in relation to an application for a position as Associate Professor in Human Security 22. Sep. 2014

Publication # 4: 2003. Toward a systemic Ethic

This co-authored article (with Erik Steen Kristensen, who is listed as second author) in the journal *Environmental Ethics* aims to develop a conceptual framework that on one hand transcends distinctions between non-consequentialist and consequentialist ethics, while also resolving conceptual ambiguities that result from a continuum of definitions of a number of other concepts (including “nature” and “sustainability” ) that are increasingly invoked in the organization and conduct of debates about how agents should treat, live, act in, and interact with the environment. Roughly the first quarter of the article involves a careful review of the contested meanings of these concepts and competing approaches to ethics, as a prelude to a deeper discussion of two different ways for conceptualizing the forms of self-extension that are argued to be the grounds for recognizing the boundaries of moral community (and thus the limits of ethics) in roughly the second quarter of the piece. The third quarter of the article builds upon the conclusions reached in the prior conceptual reviews to develop a more complex four dimensional model that recasts the concept of ethical extension as simultaneous related to agents, the objects of their action, their intentions, and the consequences of their actions—and coins the term “systemic ethics” to refer to this model. The last quarter of the article seeks to illustrate how this framework helps us think about and analyse different forms of centrism that compete for pride of place in the definition of propriety in environmental ethics. Arguably this framework does more to help understand how competing environmental ethics position themselves in relation to the multiple poles along which notions of the moral have been conceived than it necessarily does to actually transcend them. The density of this piece stems from its enormous ambitions to simultaneously review and theoretically corral multiple concepts, each both highly contested and in many ways claiming foundational status, and then relate their own syntheses to each other in a new framework. In this undertaking they demonstrate strong knowledge of the history and range of debates of a wide range of key concepts in both the fields of environmental studies and ethics, and an admirable theoretical dexterity in thinking about new possible interrelations and extensions.