

A New Perspective on Environmental Bioethics

The manner in which someone defines nature and its constitutive parts drastically affects how moral obligations towards them appear. Historically, nature has been defined both emphasizing our alienation from it and in ways that allow us inclusion as members. Related to how one conceives nature as a whole involves what is seen as a moral unit. For instance, should we view an individual bee or a hive as the subject of inquiry? A tree or a forest? Of what importance is it that a human body is made of more bacterial than human cells

Following a discussion of the role models play in understanding the units of evolution offered by biologist Richard Dawkins, this presentation will look at some of the ways we create models of nature and of what parts of it deserve moral consideration. The model of nature offered by Humboldt will be a main focus here. This session will directly address how this question could be approached in a bioethics curriculum.

Finally, the presentation will look at a recent suggestion by Korsgaard on how to extend Kantian notions of moral rights to non-human animals. This final thought will be the basis of the discussion to follow will involve the question Aristotle puts to Plato's *Republic*: wouldn't the emotions needed to inspire moral behavior towards "nature" or "a forest" be too abstract to move us to action, be as he calls them, "water emotions?" Ultimately the topic here will be about the ways we model and define nature objects affect how we act towards them.

BIO**Stephen Kekoa Miller**

Stephen Kekoa Miller teaches Philosophy and Religious Studies and is Humanities Department Chair at Oakwood Friends School and is an Adjunct Professor of Philosophy at Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York for 19 years. Stephen is the Treasurer and member of the Board of Directors of PLATO (Philosophy Learning and Teaching Organization). Stephen is also the President of the United Nations Association Mid-Hudson Valley chapter. Stephen speaks and publishes in the areas of philosophy for children, philosophy of emotions, ethics education and virtue ethics. Stephen recently served on the Teachers Advisory Council of the National Humanities Center.