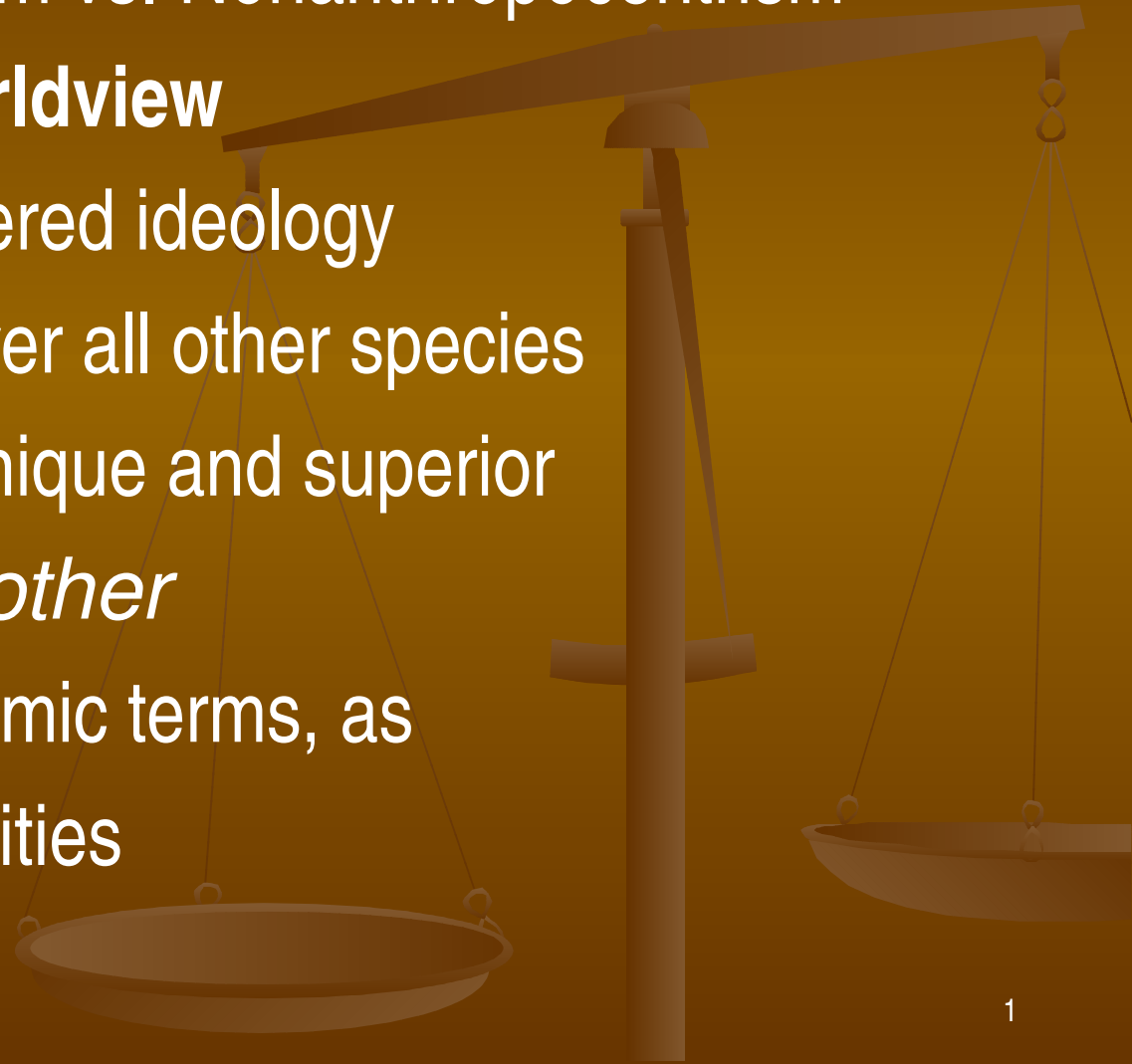


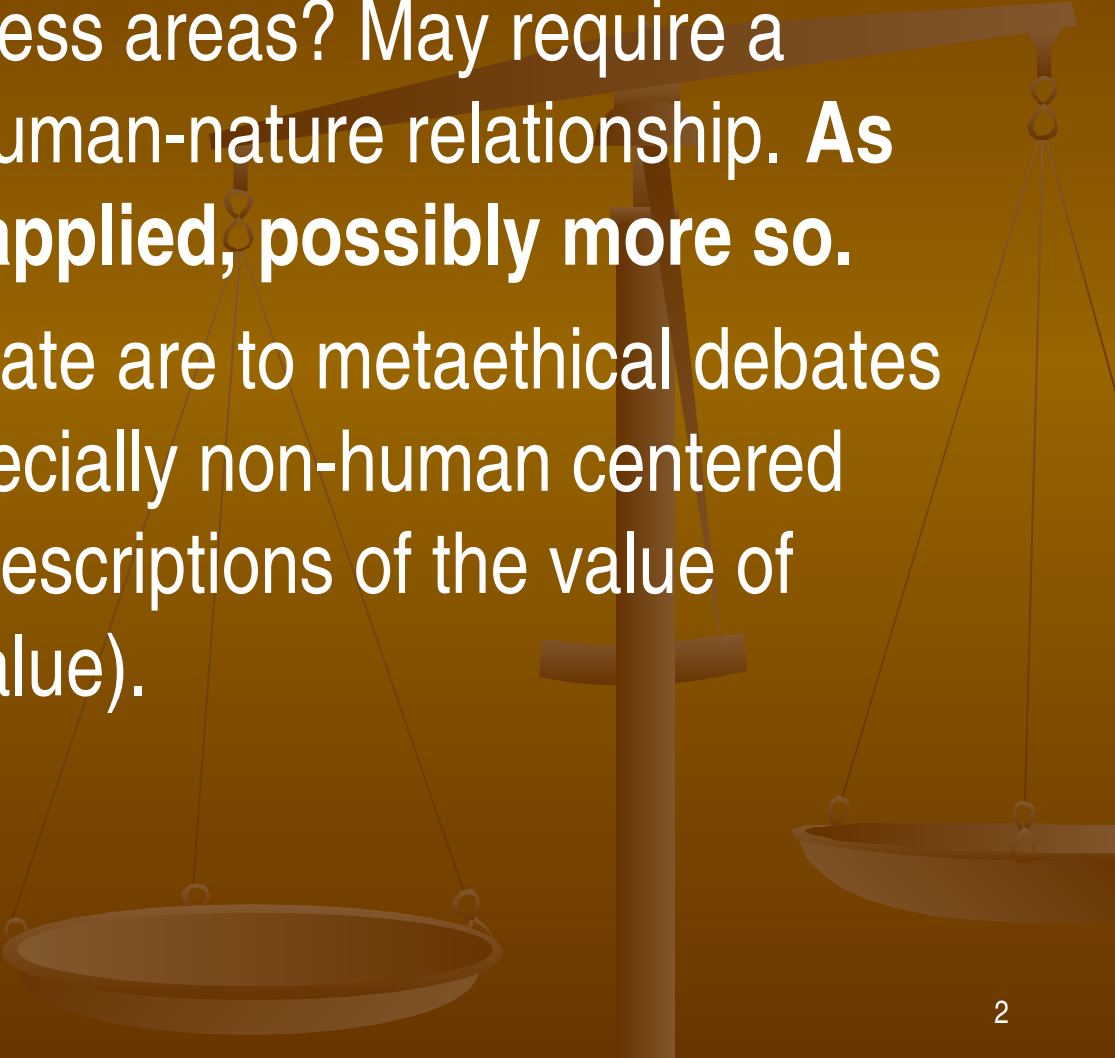
# Environmental Ethics:

## Anthropocentrism vs. Nonanthropocentrism

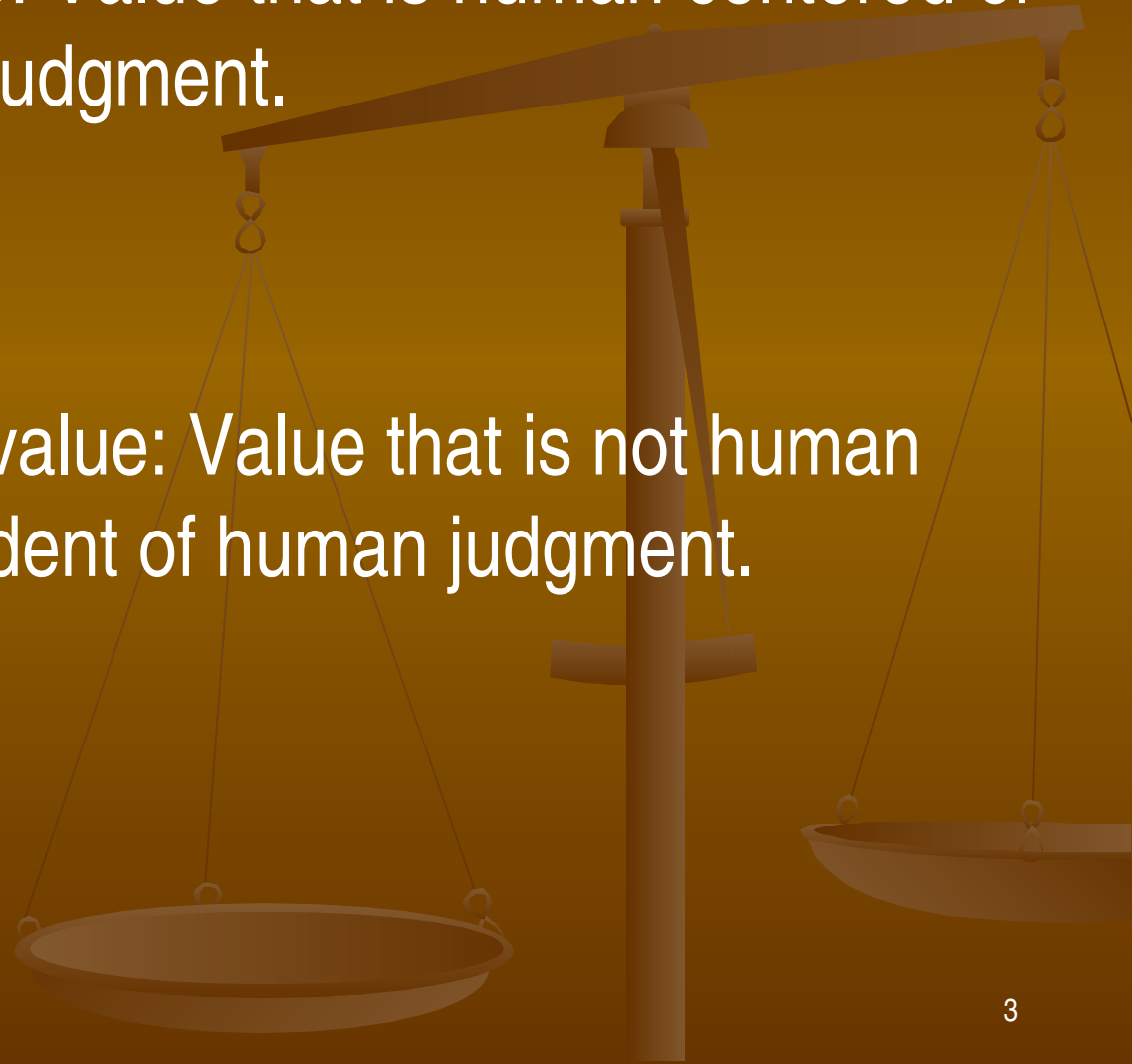
### ➤ Anthropocentric Worldview

- Adopts a human-centered ideology
- Asserts dominance over all other species
- Views humans as a unique and superior
- Constructs nature as *other*
- Views nature in economic terms, as resources and commodities

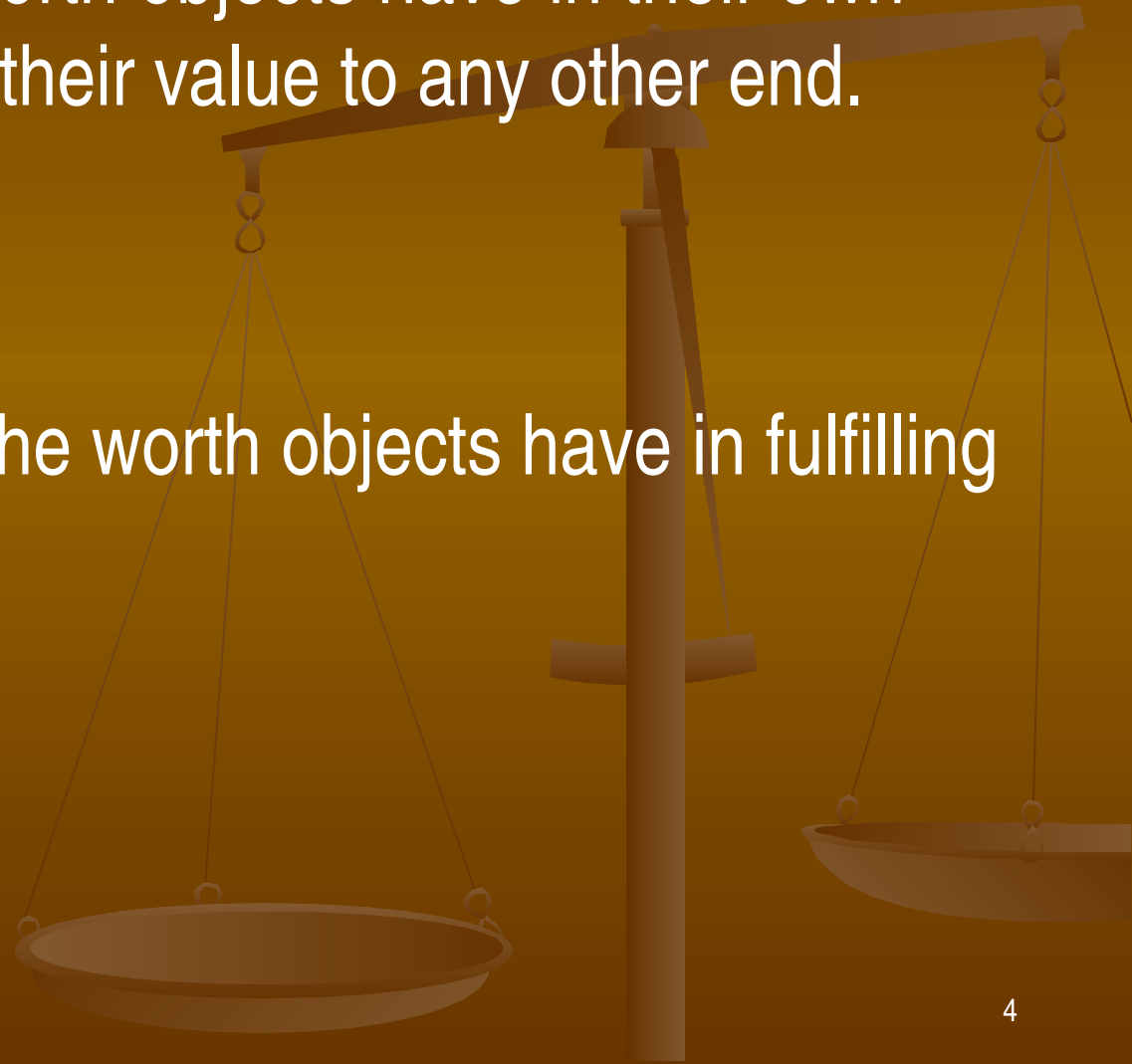


- 
- Unlike other applied ethicists, core idea is that we should extend the sphere of moral obligation beyond humans. Who counts morally and why – endangered species, old growth forests, wilderness areas? May require a reexamination of the human-nature relationship. **As much theoretical as applied, possibly more so.**
  - Most contributions to date are to metaethical debates over value theory, especially non-human centered (nonanthropocentric) descriptions of the value of nature itself (intrinsic value).

- anthropocentric value: Value that is human centered or derived from human judgment.
- non-anthropocentric value: Value that is not human centered, or independent of human judgment.



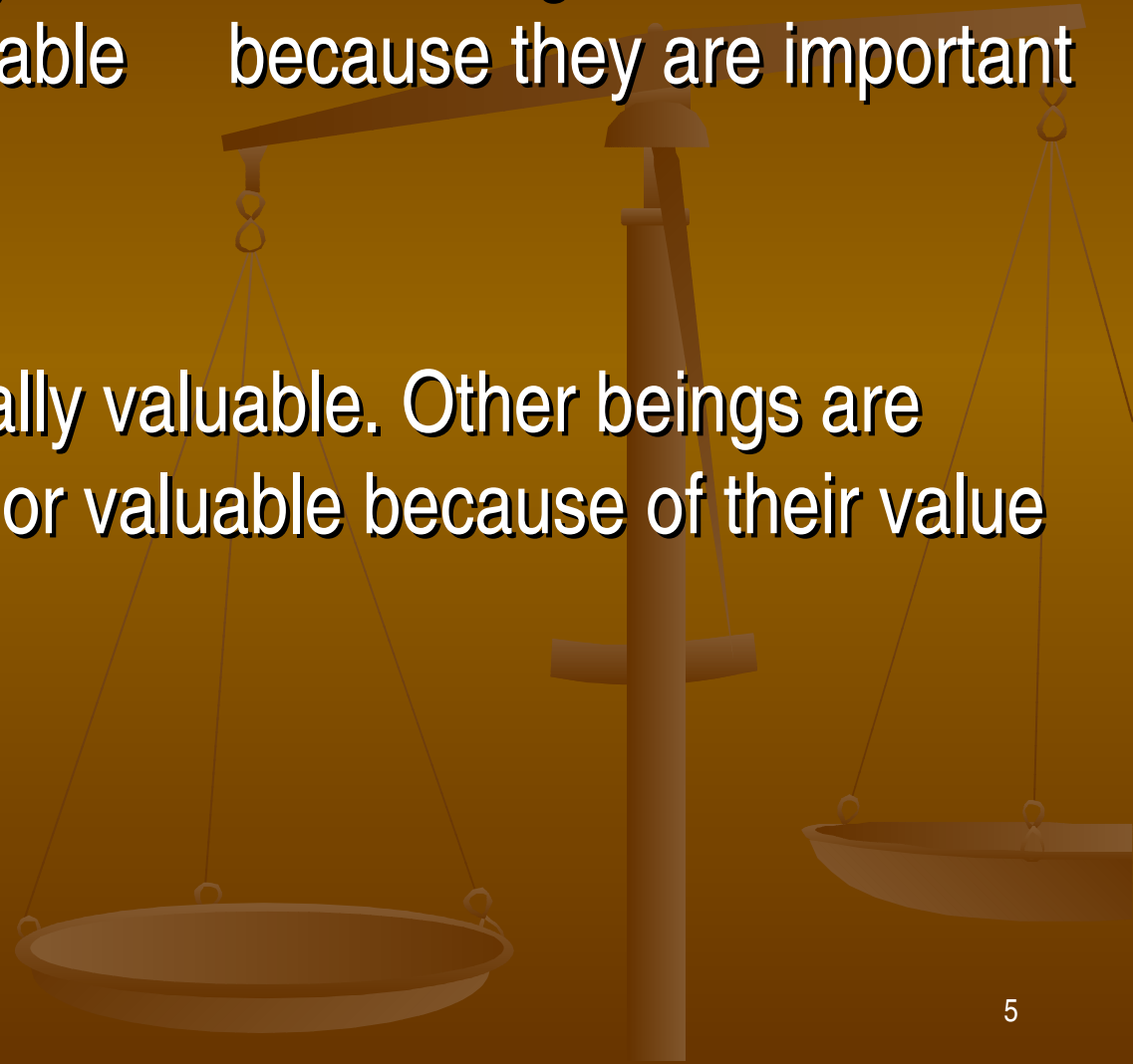
- Intrinsic value: The worth objects have in their own right, independent of their value to any other end.
- Instrumental value: The worth objects have in fulfilling other ends.



➤ **Anthropocentrism:**

Humans are intrinsically valuable (members of the moral community). Other things in the environment are valuable because they are important to humans.

➤ Humans are intrinsically valuable. Other beings are extrinsically valuable or valuable because of their value to humans.



## ➤ Some Anthropocentric Theories of Ethics

- Natural Rights: Human beings have inherent rights. Human rights must be protected (by law, etc.) Other things do not have “rights.”
- Kantianism: Human beings have inherent worth (because they are rational). Other animals and plants do not have inherent worth, since they are not rational.

- **(Anthropocentric) Utilitarianism:** The morally right policies maximize the amount of (human) happiness in the world.
- **(Anthropocentric) Religious ethics:** God made humans in his images, and everything else is made for humans. (That is, everything else is valuable if it is valuable to humans, otherwise not.)
- **Discussion:** But why should humans have value, rights, etc., that other things do not? What makes animals, trees, and ecosystems valuable?

# Singer argues that:

- There is no logical reason to regard human life as more valuable than any other form of sentient life.
- He insists that animal life, the earth and the environment have intrinsic worth, and not just instrumental worth as Kant assumes.
- He calls the view that human life is intrinsically more valuable than everything else “speciesism”.
- He says that “speciesism” is simply prejudice and discrimination and is therefore unethical as a basis for environmental ethics.



- Animals surely deserve to live their lives free from suffering and exploitation.
  
- Animals are not ours to:
  - eat
  - wear
  - experiment on
  - use for entertainment
  - abuse

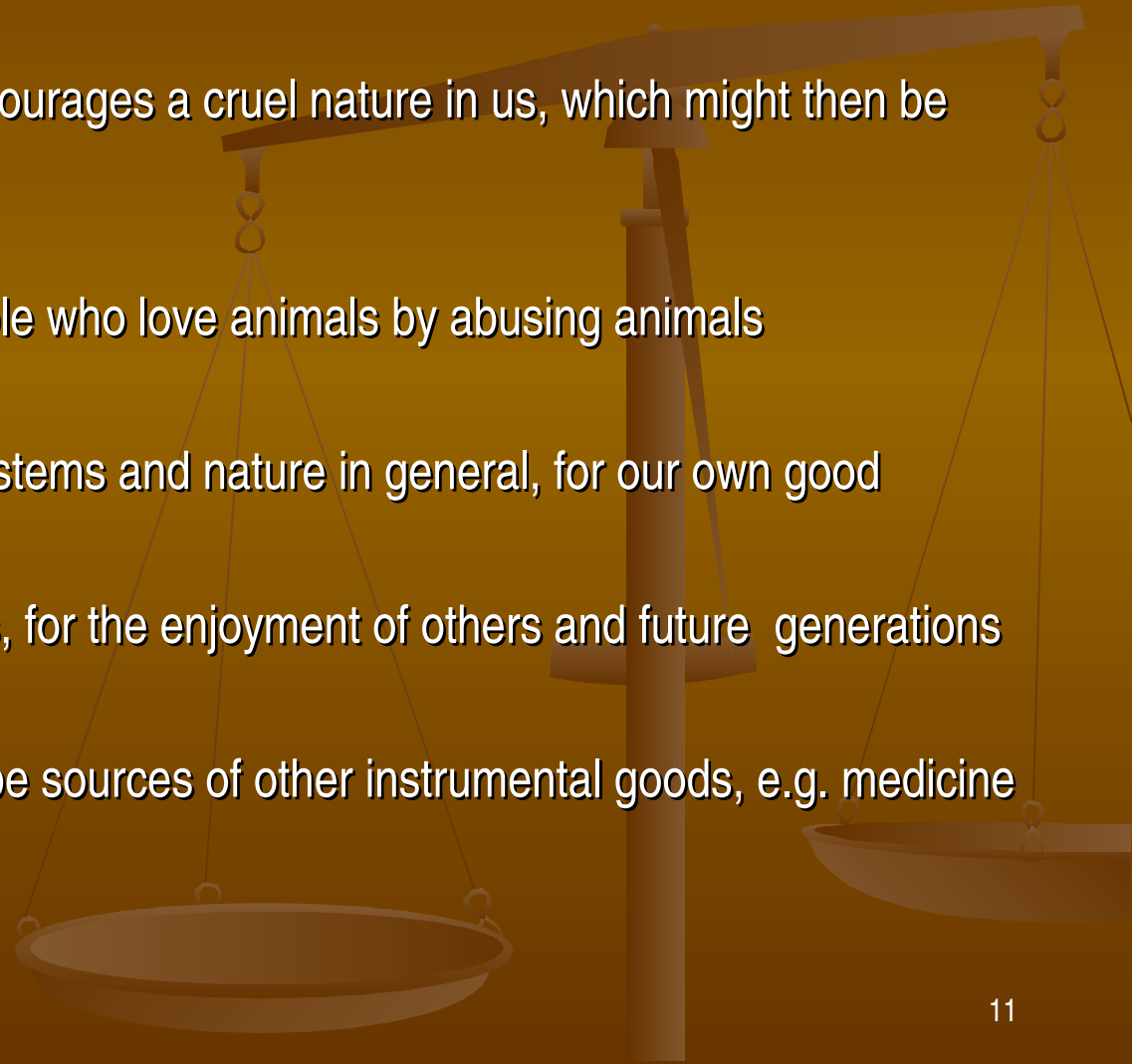


# Direct vs. Indirect duties towards animals

- Direct duties: duties owed to the animals themselves (treating animals welfare as an ***intrinsic good***)
- Indirect duties: duties to act in certain ways towards animals for the sake of ourselves, others or society (treating animal welfare as an ***instrumental good***)

# Examples of indirect duties towards animals:

- Duty to respect private property (animals that belong to someone)
- Duty to avoid cruelty because it encourages a cruel nature in us, which might then be expressed towards other people
- Duty not to hurt the feelings of people who love animals by abusing animals
- Duty to maintain the health of biosystems and nature in general, for our own good
- Duty to preserve beautiful creatures, for the enjoyment of others and future generations
- Duty to preserve species that may be sources of other instrumental goods, e.g. medicine



# Ethical status for animals

Animal welfare as an intrinsic good

Kantian and utilitarian ethics traditionally extended to all people, but only people

Kant: all rational beings are ends in themselves

**assumption:** only humans are rational (or maybe humans, angels and extraterrestrials)

Utilitarianism: the pleasures and pains of all conscious beings are of equal importance

**assumption (?)**: only humans are conscious/have pleasure and pain

Singer sees ethics as evolving.

In the past, slaves, women and people of other races were often not treated as persons, and their interests were not given consideration.

Now we recognize all people as persons and extend equal consideration to all people.

Now we should extend equal ethical consideration to animals as well.

Borderline cases: babies, the severely mentally retarded, psychopaths

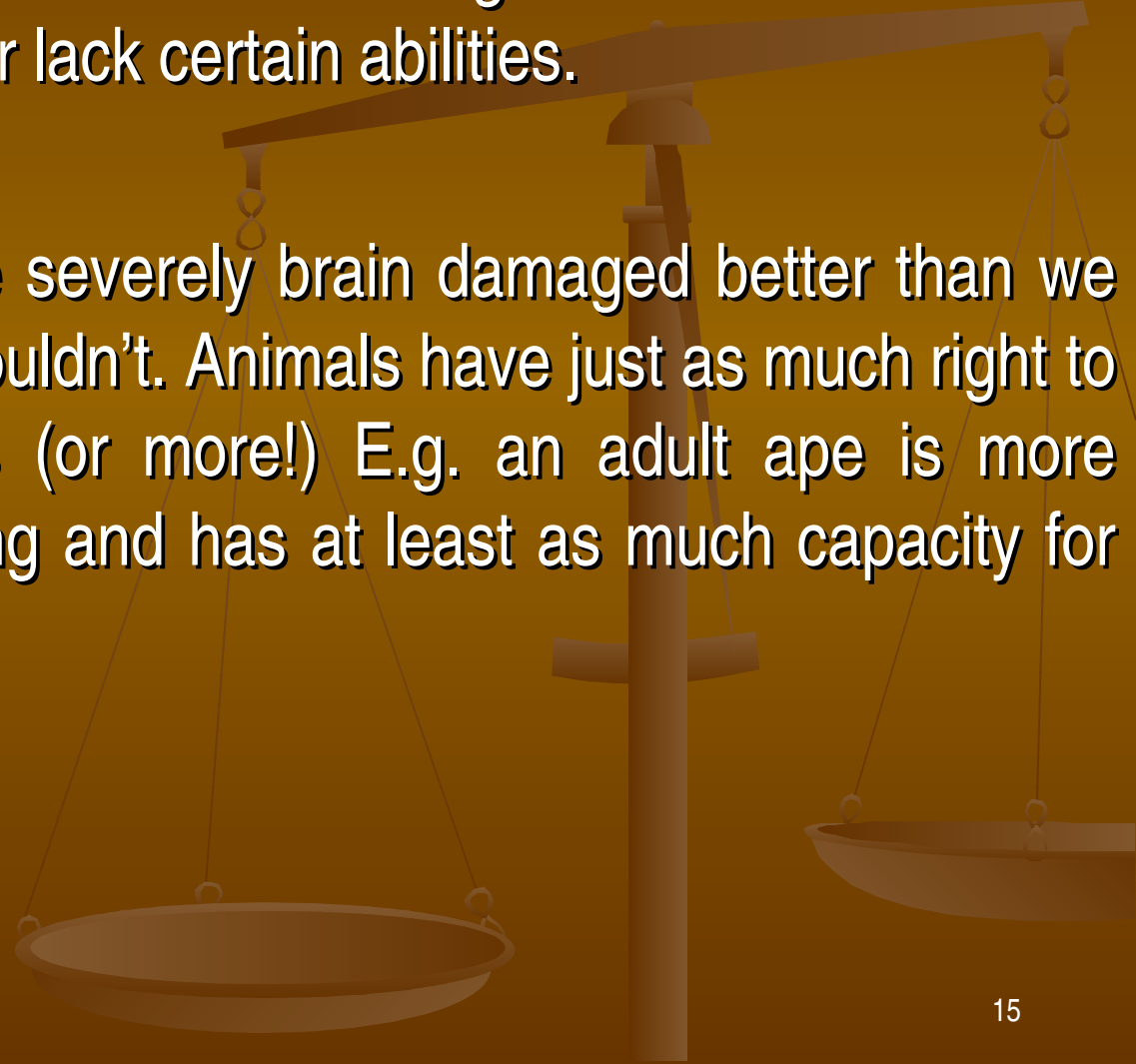
Argument from analogy: borderline cases are similar to (some) animals (in terms of abilities, sentience, capacity for pleasure and pain), so animals should be treated similarly

We routinely grant importance to the interests to human borderline cases – not full rights (e.g. the right to vote), but the right to have their preferences treated as morally important and the right not to be mistreated

Animals are not equal to normal adults, and therefore cannot have truly equal rights, but their preferences (e.g. the desire to avoid pain) should be given equal consideration

# Equal consideration, not equal rights

- We don't discriminate between people on the basis of intelligence or ability. So we should not discriminate against animals because they are less intelligent or lack certain abilities.
- We treat babies and the severely brain damaged better than we treat animals, but we shouldn't. Animals have just as much right to consideration as babies (or more!) E.g. an adult ape is more aware, more self-directing and has at least as much capacity for suffering as a baby.



## ➤ Questioning the Anthropocentric Approach to Value in Nature

Key questions:

- Are humans the only things in the world that are valuable in themselves?
- Is everything else only valuable because it is valuable to humans?
- Why should humans be placed inside the circle and other beings on the outside?
- What would we call it if we placed only people of one race inside the circle just because of their race?
- Is it any different if we place only beings in one species inside the circle just because of their species?
- Is there a relevant different between humans and nonhumans that makes the former intrinsically valuable and the latter not?



# Non-Anthropocentric Approaches to Ethics

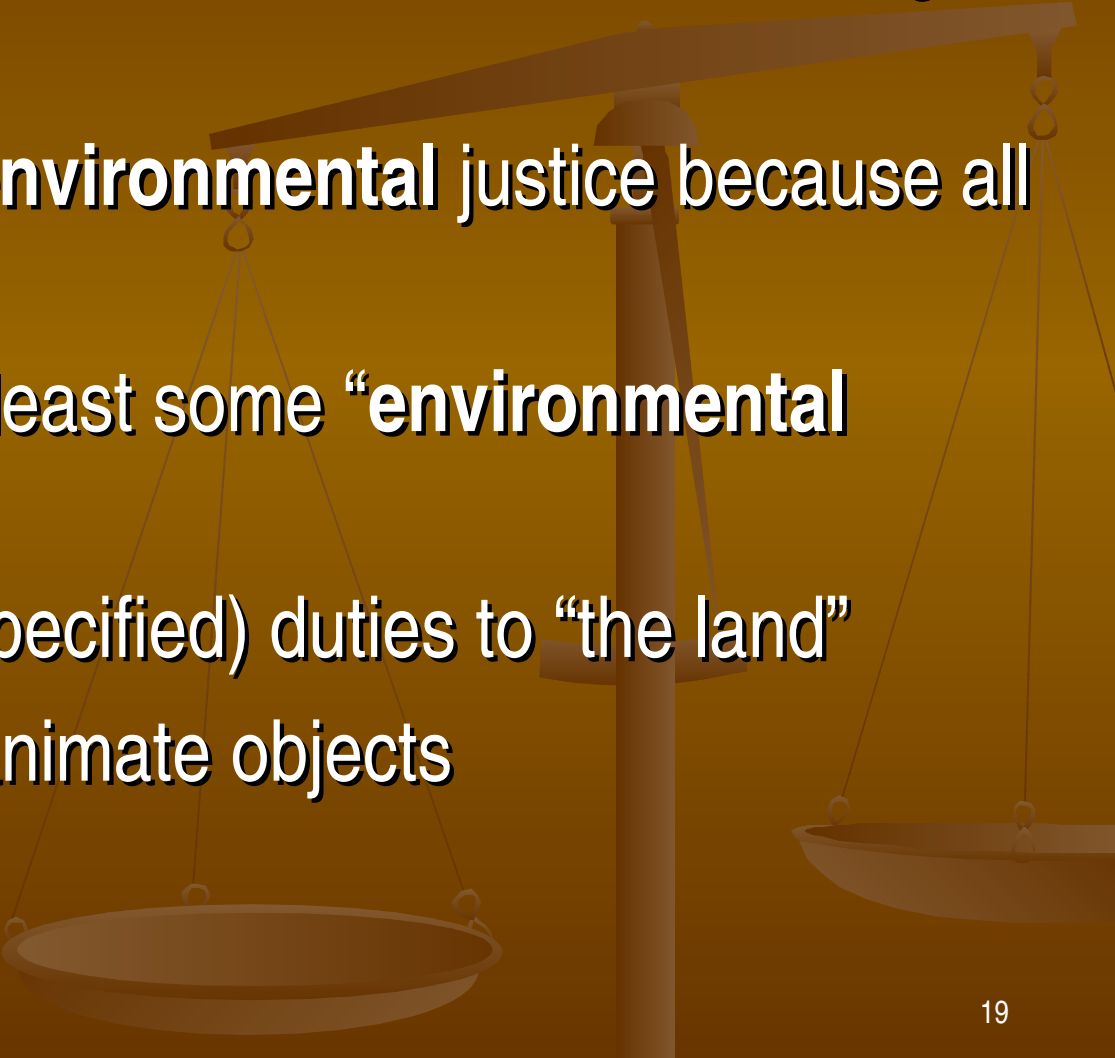
- Nature includes:
  - Animals
  - Plants
  - Ecosystems
  - Species
  - Humans?

The Issue: Why are these things valuable?  
Why should we care about them?



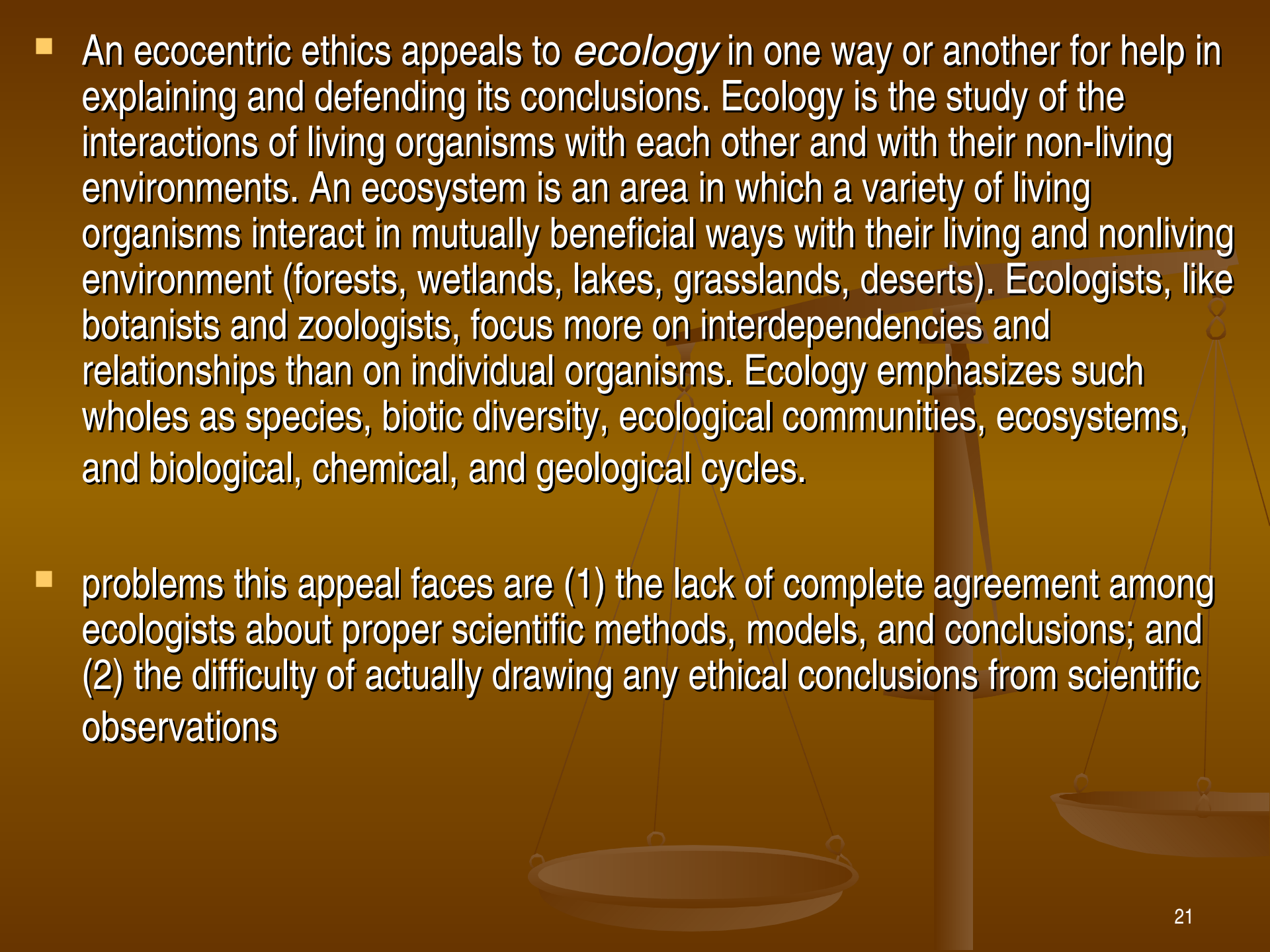
## ➤ **Non-Anthropocentric Approaches to Ethics**

- **Sentientism:** All beings that have the capacity to feel pleasure and pain /the ability to experience life as a subject are intrinsically valuable, and must be considered for their own good, not just human good. Thus higher animals have moral considerability/ inherent worth.
- Natural human affinity towards other animals.

- 
- We have duties to all animals, and their interests are (nearly) always equal to those of Humans
  - Biocentric egalitarianism: we have duties to all living things
  - We ought to pursue **environmental** justice because all species are equal
  - We have duties to at least some “**environmental objects**”
  - We have (largely unspecified) duties to “the land”
  - We have duties to inanimate objects

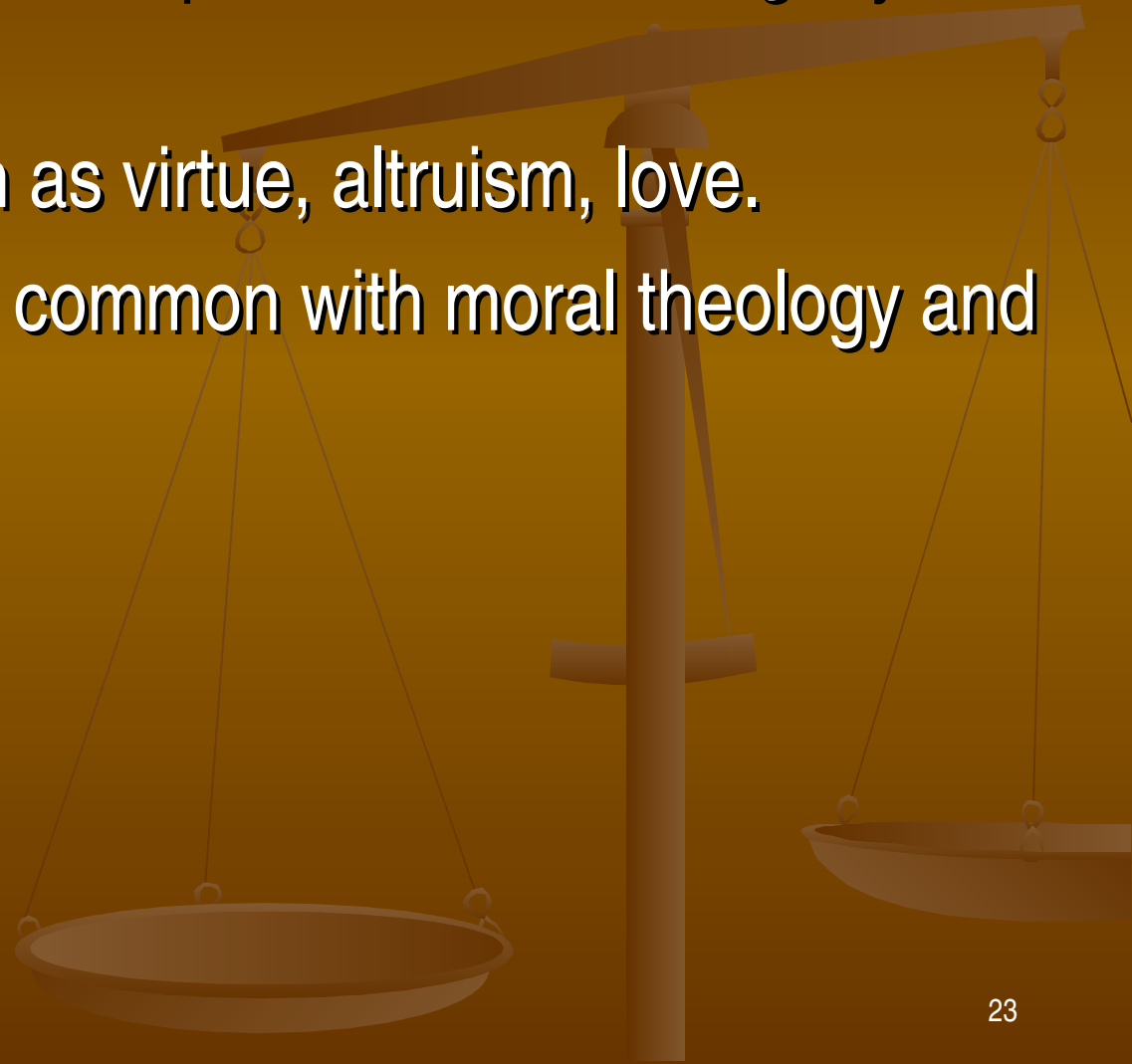
## ➤ Ecocentric Ethics

- Any ethics or philosophy that places an emphasis on ecological wholes and moves away from individual plants and animals; value is placed on these ecological systems as wholes
- Early version of ecocentric ethics is Aldo Leopold's "Land Ethic"
- Ecocentric ethics and philosophies are ***holistic*** ethics, rather than individualistic. The holism can be "metaphysical"-the whole exists, apart from or as really as its parts Or "epistemological"—the whole is the chief way to understand the parts. Then there is moral holism—the system should be considered morally, independently of the individuals in that system.

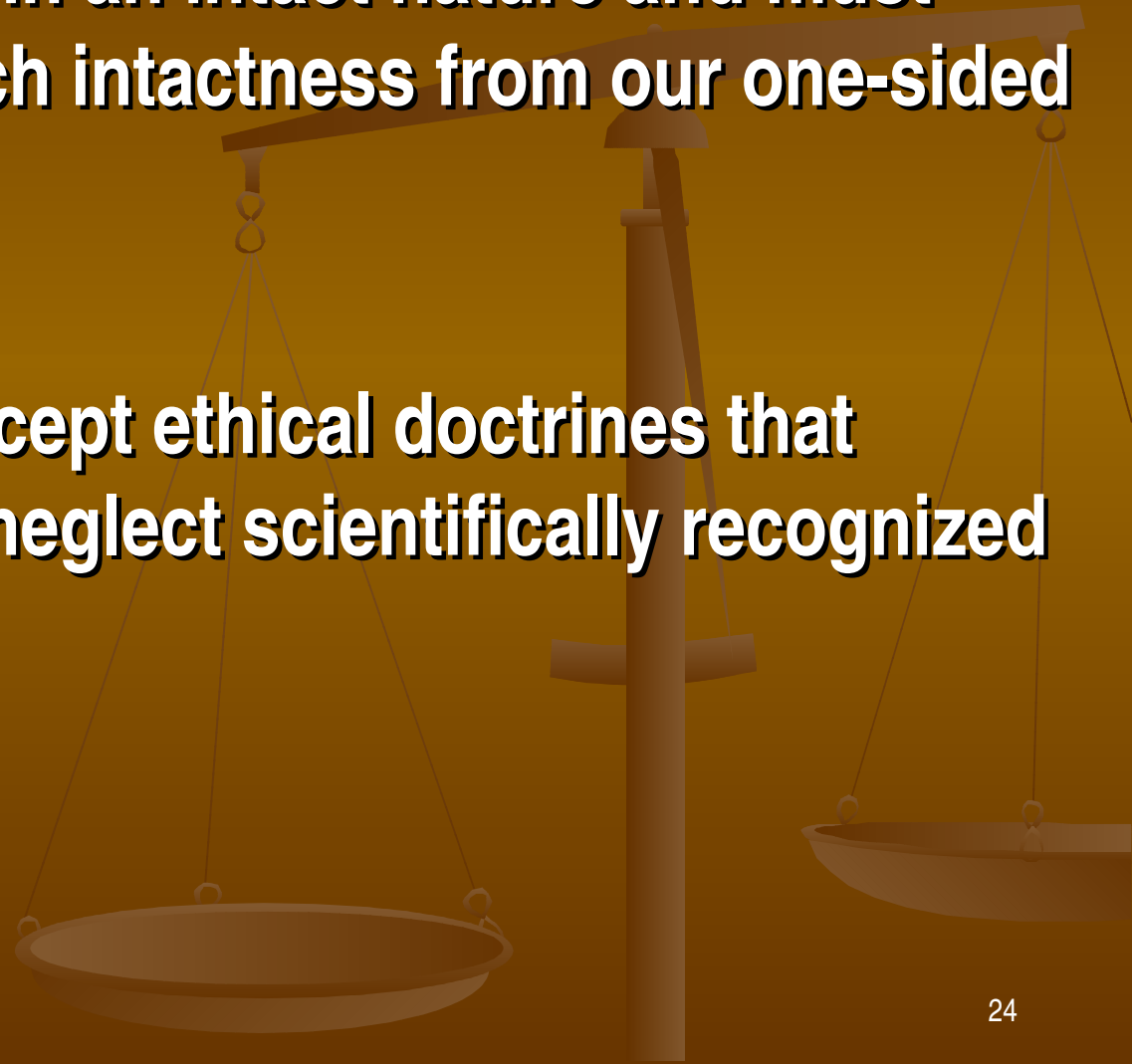
- 
- An ecocentric ethics appeals to *ecology* in one way or another for help in explaining and defending its conclusions. Ecology is the study of the interactions of living organisms with each other and with their non-living environments. An ecosystem is an area in which a variety of living organisms interact in mutually beneficial ways with their living and nonliving environment (forests, wetlands, lakes, grasslands, deserts). Ecologists, like botanists and zoologists, focus more on interdependencies and relationships than on individual organisms. Ecology emphasizes such wholes as species, biotic diversity, ecological communities, ecosystems, and biological, chemical, and geological cycles.
  - problems this appeal faces are (1) the lack of complete agreement among ecologists about proper scientific methods, models, and conclusions; and (2) the difficulty of actually drawing any ethical conclusions from scientific observations

- **Environmental protection**, as presently practiced, is a potentially misleading and dangerous concept. Why? Because it seeks primarily to protect the environment of nature's worst enemy. This results in additional support for the already towering human dominance. We need a new concept of environmental protection. It must also strive to protect the environments of our fellow creatures. They cannot speak out for themselves. We must act on their behalf according to the best of our knowledge. Our societies and educational systems have to take this into account. They must obtain and teach ecological knowledge and ecological thinking. And they must insist on accepting human responsibility for other ecosystem components.

- to develop and to enforce new values, such as self-restriction, modesty, responsibility, honesty;
- to formulate aims, such as peace, freedom, dignity, justice, human rights;
- to further ideals, such as virtue, altruism, love.
- Here extends ground common with moral theology and moral philosophy.



- **We can survive only in an intact nature and must therefore protect such intactness from our one-sided egoism.**
- **We can no longer accept ethical doctrines that continue to deny or neglect scientifically recognized realities.**





## ➤ **What are the consequences for ecological ethics?**

- **Replace as much as possible linear resource degradation by cyclic resource re-utilization.**
- **Learn more about the working principles of ecosystems and use the insight gained for reconstructing our economies and societies.**
- **Re-harmonize the human world with the world around us and reduce our detrimental impacts on nature.**
- **Adjust the number of people on earth and their per capita use of energy and matter in accordance with the carrying capacities of ecosystems.**