

Valuing Nature



Ethics: The Environment

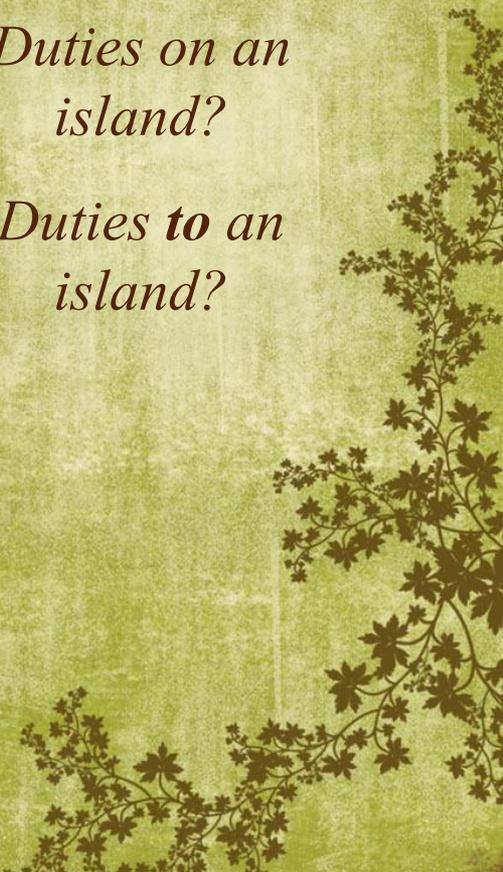
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*Duties on an
island?*

*Duties to an
island?*



Midgley's Position

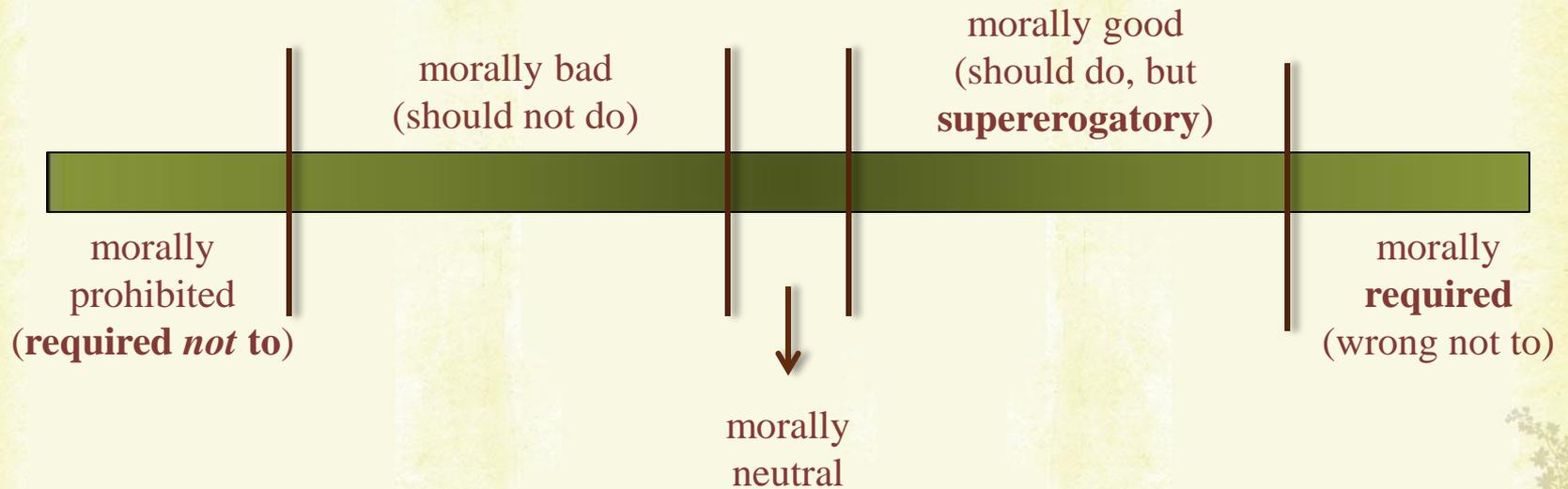
- Should not defined virtues/values/principles anthropocentrically
 - Justice should be expanded to cover vulnerable, weak, inarticulate in all parts of biotic community
- Do *not* need to expand rights language
- Different kinds of duties
 - Not always duty *to* someone (debt model / social contract model inadequate)

Duties: Direct and Indirect

- From Immanuel Kant:
 - **Direct:** ought to respect x for x 's own sake (because x has inherent worth)
 - **Indirect:** ought to respect x for y 's sake (and y has inherent worth)



Requirement and Supererogation: Spectrum of "Should"

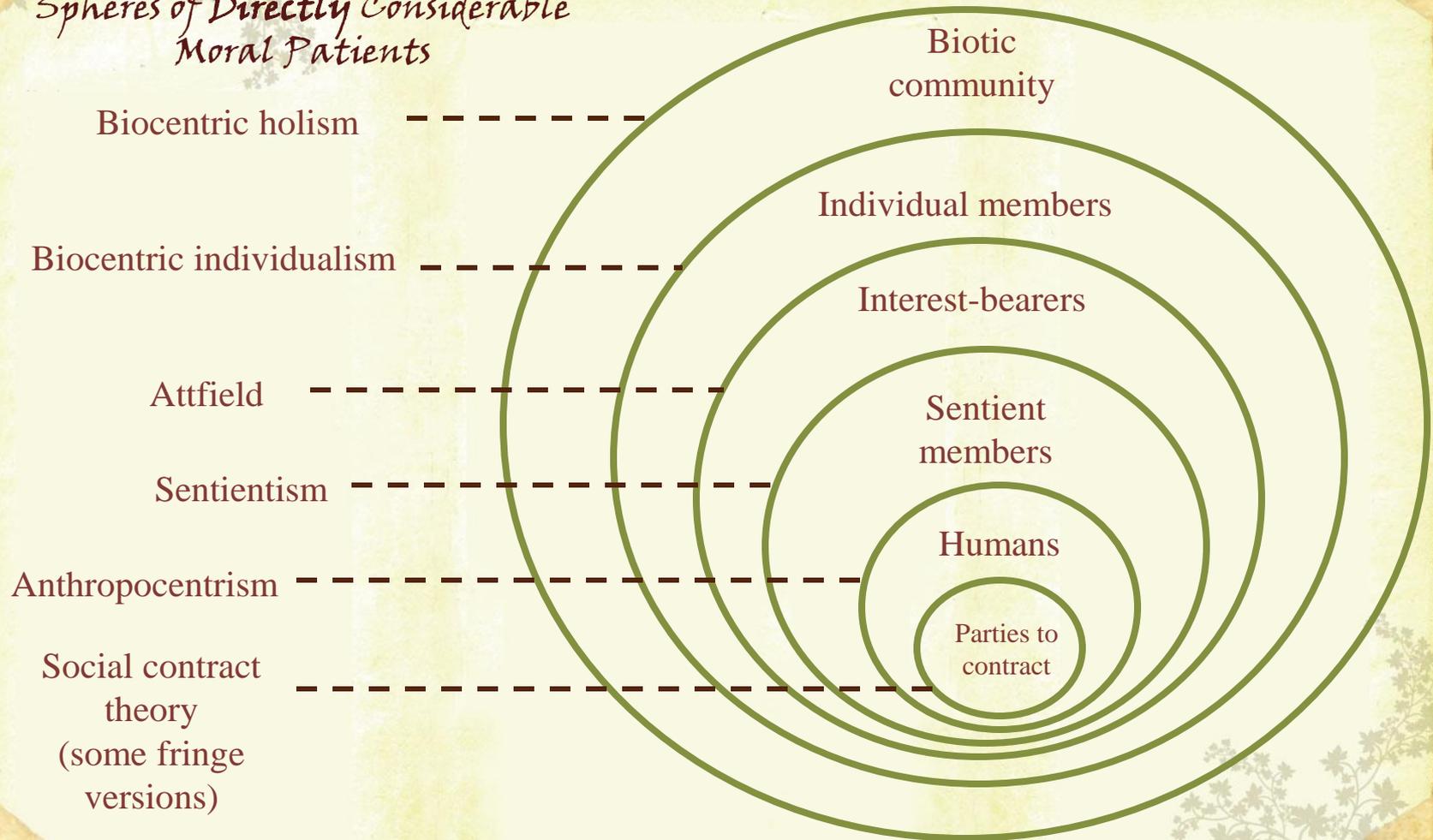




*Ways to value
non-human
entities?*

*Do we therefore
have obligations?
If so, of what
kind?*

*Spheres of Directly Considerable
Moral Patients*



*Directly
morally
considerable*

Biocentric Holism

Biocentric Individualism

humans?



sentient
organisms?



non-sentient
organisms?



species/
biodiversity?



ecosystems?



*Can be
indirectly
morally
considerable*

Attfield: Biocentric Consequentialism

- Equal consideration of equal interests (treat like alike)
 - BUT not all organisms have the same interests
- Acknowledge plurality of values
 - Larger range of moral patients than admitted on some consequentialist views
 - BUT want to maximize total value and minimize disvalue

Attfield: Biocentric Consequentialism

- Problems of defining ‘harm’ or ‘flourishing’ or ‘interest’ too narrowly
 - “good and harm of uncultivated species depend not on any prescriptions, desires, aspirations or wants, but on the **capacities** of their kind” (60)
 - “latent tendencies, direction of growth and natural fulfilment do jointly seem [...] sufficient conditions of having interests” (61)
- Individual animals and plants can flourish **according to their kind** – regardless of *our* interests



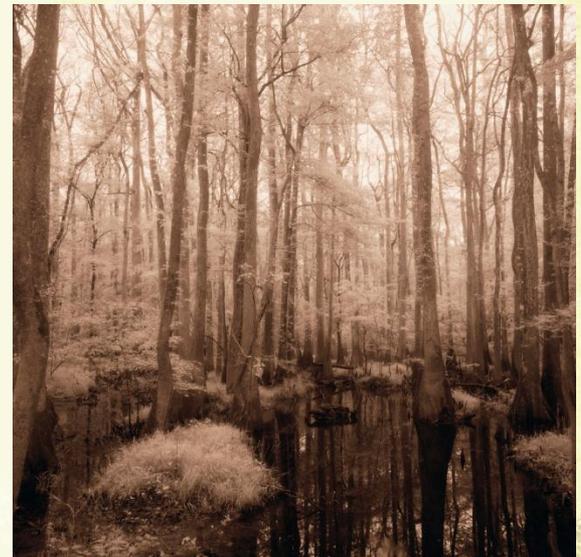
Attfield: Conclusions

- NOT intrinsically valuable
 - Diversity
 - Ecosystems
 - Life
- Intrinsically valuable
 - Everything that can flourish has morally relevant interests
 - “Trees, like humans and squirrels, have capacities for nutrition and growth, for respiration and for self-protection; and it is capacities and propensities such as these which determine their interests”
(67)



Attfield: Conclusions

- Some entities can have more intrinsic value than others
 - Depends on capacities, ways in which it can flourish, types of interests
- If x has intrinsic value, we should not wantonly kill x
- If x has rights, then it has interests (and *vice versa*)
 - So trees have rights, but they are defeasible.





*Are the
interests of
trees morally
compelling?*

*What if you
were the last
person and
could destroy
in the Earth's
final moments?*

Lingering Problems?

- How egalitarian should an environmental ethic be?
 - Reasons for rejecting or accepting inegalitarian conclusions?
 - Contrast Taylor and Attfield
 - Can we hierarchically order capacities without falling into anthropocentrism?
- How should we weigh different values?
 - Justice vs. autonomy vs. beneficence...
- What's appealing about using the framework of moral rights?



Questions? Comments?