

## Essay Question for Final Examination

Suppose the earth is being invaded by a species of very powerful aliens. Their primary purpose in invading this planet has to do with food. They plan to cultivate and farm the earth's planetary fauna, which has a galaxy-wide reputation as being of excellent nutritional value. In particular, at the top of their list of desirable food species is the human race. Human flesh is regarded as one of the tastiest in this part of the galaxy. In fact, the plan of the aliens is to engage in *human husbandry*: they plan to raise, kill, and eat us.

The intelligence of the aliens is vastly superior to ours. They regard us in much the same way as we regard other higher mammals. They think of us in much the same way as we think of dogs and cats, pigs and cows, sheep and poultry. And let us suppose that they are largely correct in this estimation of our relative intelligence. That is, the difference in intelligence between us and, say, dogs is roughly the same as the difference in intelligence between the aliens and us. Because of this difference in intelligence the aliens have a vastly superior technology; and this allows them to subdue us quite easily.

Moreover, although they take great pleasure in eating meat, especially human meat, they do not require meat in order to survive. They can survive, indeed flourish, on a pure vegetable diet. Their roving the galaxy in search of fresh supplies of meat stems only from the fact that meat eating is their traditional diet, adopted by their parents and their parents before them, etc.

In the interactions between themselves, the aliens adhere to a strict moral code. In fact, they have evolved a democratic culture and society in many ways similar to our own. The conceptual centrepiece of their democratic culture is a *principle of equality*. Like us, alien philosophers have worked out different moral theories that incorporate and justify such a principle in specific ways. Consequently, alien moral philosophers teach and defend consequentialist, deontological, virtue and social-contract theories of morality. A small number of alien philosophers also lean toward some version of moral skepticism or moral non-cognitivism, and defend various forms of ethical emotivism, relativism and egoism. Their adherence to a moral code means that the aliens are not morally blind. To the contrary, because of their superior intelligence they are especially adept in recognizing moral considerations and moral arguments when they see them.

The alien invasion of earth is proceeding apace. More and more humans are finding themselves confined to what are essentially factory farms or feed lots. President Obama is unable to stop the alien invasion, even with the help of all the other military forces in the world. It is also the case that there are no practical and/or political solutions available. The

aliens do not want or desire anything from us other than our flesh. Consequently, there are no trade-offs available to us; the aliens are simply too advanced.

It would seem that the only way out is to appeal to the aliens as moral agents. What this means is that the fate of humanity lies in the hands of a few philosophers, like yourselves, who have hitherto escaped capture. No doubt, philosophers who have not yet been harvested and who are not yet confined to those terrible feed lots, will be heartened by the fact that the aliens recognize moral considerations and that they can be swayed by moral arguments. You therefore collectively decide to try and convince the aliens that what they are doing to the human species is morally wrong. It is agreed that each of you will write a concise and compelling philosophical brief that will persuade the aliens that the practise of *human husbandry* is *morally* wrong.