

## Environmental Ethics Exam

November, 2012

This exam is open-note, but closed-book and closed-external-resource (including internet). You should not consult with any other students after you have opened the exam. You may handwrite or type the exam. If you type it, you should print out your answers and staple them to this exam sheet. You have FOUR hours to take the exam. Please write your start time below immediately. Write your end time when you have stapled your finished answers to the exam, and then immediately put it back in the envelope.

Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_

End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

There are three parts of the exam. Throughout, I am more interested in seeing your understanding and engagement with the content and (particularly for the last question) your sophistication of philosophical analysis. The three parts of this exam are not worth the same amount, so you should not spend the same amount of time on each. Use time wisely.

**I. Quotation Analysis. For the quotation analysis, you should choose ONE of the THREE quotations below. Identify the author of the quotation, explain the argument or position in the quotation, and identify the role of that argument or position in the overall philosophy of the author. (20 points)**

1. "What's wrong—what's fundamentally wrong—with the way animals are treated isn't the details that vary from case to case. It's the whole system . . . The fundamental wrong is a system that allows us to view animals as our resources, here for us . . . [A] little straw, more space, and a few companions don't eliminate —don't even touch—the fundamental wrong, the wrong that attaches to our viewing and treating these animals as resources."
2. "So what do we owe to the poor of the world? . . . I think decent rational people feel quite unsure about this question; it is not that they know very well and decline to carry out their moral duty. And this seems to me to be the real state of things in this area: morality delivers no clear-cut answer to the question of how much we should deprive ourselves for the sake of distant others . . . I do not believe there is any simple way to resolve such conflicts. The right course of action is highly sensitive to the details of the case. If I were asked to propose a principle that makes the best of a problematic situation, then I could not do better than this: we should help out the distant poor when and only when their need is desperate and we will not sacrifice anything in our own life that makes it meaningful to us."
3. "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."

**II. Short Answer Question. You should answer TWO of the FOUR short answer questions below. Your answer should be as complete as possible, given the time constraints available. I anticipate most answers being 1-2 pages long. (20 points per question for 40 points total.)**

4. What is a "discount rate"? Under what circumstances (according to Broome) does it make sense to apply the discount rate in evaluating future goods?
5. For Gary Varner, can animal rights activists be environmentalists? Why or why not?
6. In the context of defending a biocentric concern for all life, Holmes Rolston III distinguishes between objective life and subjective life. What is this distinction and what role does it play in his argument?
7. In "Energy Policy and the Further Future: The Identity Problem," Derek Parfit raises an important objection to most ways of taking into account future generations in ethical decision-making. What is the "identity problem"? Is it a more serious problem for consequentialist views (like utilitarianism) or rights-based views? Why?

**III. Essay Question. You should answer ONE of the following THREE questions. Your answer should be as complete as possible, given the time constraints. For your answer, you should be sure to draw from AT LEAST THREE of the readings from the course of the semester. (40 points.)**

8. For whom or what would you be willing to make *very significant* sacrifices in your lifestyle? First, and briefly, lay out the most severe sacrifices you can envision making, and then explain whether you would be willing to make those sacrifices for the sake of humans in poverty, animals, non-sentient living things, ecosystems, or endangered species. Also specify whether you would limit the beneficiaries to those in the present or those in the future, and any other criteria that would be relevant to your decision of whether to take on those very significant sacrifices.
9. Should environmental ethics make a principled distinction between wild and domestic animals? What role would such a distinction play in ethical decision-making? How can you defend making (or not making) such a distinction?
10. Within contemporary ethics, there is a distinction between consequentialist approaches (such as utilitarianism) and rights-based approaches. As we have seen, this distinction cuts across debates about the status of future generations, animals, life, etc. Write an essay in which you either defend one of these two ethical approaches (consequentialism or rights) or argue that both ethical approaches are fundamentally flawed. Your argument should defend the approaches in their own terms (in terms of consonance with intuitions, internal consistency and coherence, etc), but you should also defend them in terms of the implications that they have for animal/environmental ethics.

Once you have finished your exam, please write your end time on this sheet. In addition, please write out and sign the following statement: **“With the exception of notes that I wrote myself, I did not consult any outside sources in completing this exam. I did not talk to anyone about the content of the exam before taking it. I accurately reported my start and end times above. I have not done anything that could be construed as cheating on this exam.”**

Then staple your answers (printed if necessary) to this exam sheet and put them in the envelope. Turn them in on Tuesday.