⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 77.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁵⁴ Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 179. In a different context, Vitali dismisses Taylor's claim by pointing out that animals practice deception, too (p. 74, note 9). However, it does not follow from this that moral agents should do the same, particularly when they do it for pleasure rather than necessity. Causey also discusses Taylor on the deception issue, misinterpreting him by implying that this is his sole reason for rejecting sport hunting. According to Causey, Taylor would have to hold that the bow hunter who cleanly kills an animal after a necessarily deceptive stalk, afterwards making "full, nonfrivolous" use of the body, behaves more morally objectionably than the safari "hunter" who runs down the terrified prey in a Land Rover, shoots it with a semi-automatic weapon, and leaves the body to rot (except for the head). (Causey, *op. cit.*, p. 340.) Taylor is committed to no such implication. His "duty of fidelity" (nondeception) to nature is only one of the duties he believes moral agents have to the wild. The overriding duty we have to wild creatures, he holds, is respectful treatment. Taylor objects to sport hunting on the grounds that it shows a *lack of respect* to that which we ought to respect (Taylor, pp. 274-276), not just on the grounds that it is deceptive. Obviously, the Land Rover hunter who uses heads for interior decoration shows less respect for wild creatures than Causey's highly idealized bow hunter. (Actual bow hunters don't measure up as well. In Texas, only half of all deer hit by arrows are retrieved by bow hunters. The rate of crippling and septic infection among unrecovered deer is high. Deer who are retrieved slowly bleed to death, apparently in great pain. See "The American Hunter Under Fire," *U. S. News and World Report*, *op. cit.*, p. 35, "Bow Hunting: A Most Primitive Sport," *The Animals' Agenda*, May 1990, pp. 15-18, and "Bowhunting Under Attack," *ActionLine*, April/May 1990, pp. 16-18.)

⁵⁵ Vitali, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-75.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁵⁷ Ortega y Gasset, *op. cit.*, p. 46. (Cited by Causey, *op. cit.*, p. 337).

"The Joy of Killing" was written during spring, 1990, when I was freed from teaching duties by my appointment as the 1990 Pennsylvania State University "Helena Rubinstein Endowed Fellow in the Humanities."

Response

A Defense of Pluhar

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Integral to the defenses of hunting offered by Causey and Vitali is the claim that human beings are instinctive killers. Pluhar rightly disputes this claim on two grounds.

- (1) It is by no means clear that human beings have a basic urge to hunt and kill or that killing animals is an essential human trait, in that a number of human beings, indeed a majority, lack the urge. And as she correctly points out, the paleolithic humans who doubtless took pleasure in cooking and eating animals they had hunted may well have done so because they were hungry; there is no compelling reason to assume that their pleasure came from the act of killing itself. Further, ex-hunters generally do not claim that they have learned to control a tremendous urge to hunt, whereas previously they were victims of *akrasia*, but rather that they have had a gut-level transformation such that they no longer even have the urge to hunt.
- (2) It is by no means clear that even if there were a basic human atavistic urge that it would automatically be permissible to hunt animals; likewise, the basic sexual urge in human beings, assuming for the moment that such an urge is basic, does not give a *carte blanche* to the rapist or child molester.

The purpose of my response to Pluhar's paper is to reinforce these two criticisms of Causey and Vitali, a

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procedure which will force me to leave aside much in these two articles which deserves criticism, as in Causey's canard that animal rightists usually defend their case by an appeal to emotion rather than to reason (as if Regan, Singer, Clark, Sapontzis, Jamieson, *et al.*, never existed), or as in Vitali's assumption that by showing (if, in fact, he can show this) that *only* human beings are rational he can avoid the argument "from marginal cases" without also showing that *all* human beings are rational. My attempt to reinforce Pluhar's criticisms will rely explicitly on certain sociobiological considerations which, it seems, are implicit in Pluhar's paper. That is, I intend my remarks to be friendly amendments to Pluhar's paper. My hope is that this brief, hence inadequate, foray into sociobiology will both combat the standard right-wing appropriation of sociobiology (an appropriation which is often used to defend hunting) and avoid the standard left-wing fear that by taking sociobiology seriously we are admitting the nonmalleability of human nature and society.

First, do human beings have a basic urge to kill? It is worth noting that gorillas and chimpanzees are, for the most part, plant-eaters, although chimpanzees will also eat small animals. Causey's and Vitali's fantasies about "The Human Hunter" should be corrected not only by the evidence from our primate ancestors but also by the reminder that even modern *human* hunter-gatherers get almost all of their food from plants (although eggs and small animals may also be gathered) and certainly eat nothing like the amount of flesh consumed in the West. We know very little about what our hominid ancestors ate, but the best guess is that as good a case can be made for their being grain-eaters as that they were predators. It is convenient, to say the least, for Causey and Vitali to see a brutal vitality just below the skin of (male) human beings, but there is no evidence provided in their articles to move the anti-hunter away from his view of human beings as calmer, more companionable, and less committed to a grossly predatory way of life than that which the hunter defends.¹

Ethological evidence regarding violence among conspecifics can help to point out Causey's and Vitali's hyperbole. A fight between two wolves can end abruptly if the loser submits; the victor will snarl above the exposed neck of the other, but he will not bite, since his desire to seize the other is "inhibited." This is the type of example which readily suggests itself as an analogue for moral conscience. By way of contrast, doves react to defeat by fleeing; if the loser cannot flee, the victor is not inhibited

from pecking him to death. In Causey's and Vitali's positions human beings inhabit the worst of two worlds: they are, like the doves, not inhibited from killing (in the human case, from killing members of other species), and their capabilities to kill have been vastly increased through weaponry. Although it is not impossible for a human being to kill a conspecific with his bare hands (and this not because we have sharp teeth or claws, but because human beings have bodies that are somewhat vulnerable), it is very difficult to do so; murder most likely began with the invention of clubs. And it is even more difficult to kill game animals with one's bare hands than it is to kill our conspecifics.²

More fruitful than the effort to trace hunting back to the seething, paleolithic "beast" within us is the effort to understand it as part of a culture which has a fetish for guns, a fetish the continued existence of which is assured by frankly reactionary organizations like the NRA. Hence there is something disingenuous in Causey's and Vitali's indignation at the close association some see in the terms "hunter" and "redneck." Animals are generally more inhibited about killing conspecifics than about killing outside their species, but even when this fact is considered it only becomes likely that nonhuman animals will be hunted by human beings if human beings stipulate a *right* to own guns in order to do so.

It is incumbent on the anti-hunter who denies a basic urge to kill to explain the continued appeal of hunting, albeit to a minority of the population. I am proposing two reasons: first, in America, at least, there is a strong historical and cultural fascination with weapons, a fascination which is a historical and cultural contingency rather than a biological necessity; and second, there is a noticeable ease with which human beings can objectify those who are not familiar. People generally, I suggest, do not wish to hunt or kill their fellows. Look around the room. But our normal humanity can be turned off if we are convinced we are dealing with heretics or savages or gooks or, in the present case, with nonrational beasts. This is where Causey's and Vitali's avoidance of, or refusal to deal with, the argument from marginal cases is a bit too convenient. When this argument is considered carefully it becomes much harder not to notice our familiarity with our fellow animals. I have said that people "generally" do not want to hunt or kill their fellows, which leaves open the possibility that there are some sociopathological cases which do, in fact,

fit Causey's and Vitali's description, just as the Harlows' motherless, raped monkeys treated their infants as they would have treated rats. The sadness is that otherwise moral people like Causey and Vitali (by the way, I have known and liked Vitali for 15 years) have unwittingly delivered an *apologia* for these monstrous mammals reared without love.³

Ethological suggestions that "aggression" has an instinctual root have been given a bad press by interpreters like Causey and Vitali. Ethologists have been interpreted as saying (and some of them may think that they are saying) that war or murder or hunting are unavoidable and that it would be unnatural (and perhaps dangerous) to outlaw hunting. But in ethological jargon "aggression" refers to any display or threat or carefully inhibited contest. The aggressive impulse is very often no more than the impulse to "make a good show before one's fellows" or to "try one's weight." These contests do not, for the most part, employ the animal's most dangerous skills. The point of these displays—from the musical displays of birds to the squabbles among tom cats to match the preferences of females—is not so much to maim, much less to kill, one's rival as to establish the details of one's own life within a social context. A predator hunting to survive is another matter,

but neither Causey nor Vitali are trying to defend subsistence hunting.

Thus far I have attempted to support Pluhar's position that Causey and Vitali do not have sufficient evidence to claim that human beings have a natural desire to kill. I would also like to support her claim that the mere existence of the desire to kill would not in itself establish the case for the morality of hunting. All morality involves some ascetical principle, not in the pejorative sense of self-denial, but in the original sense of *askesis* as the (athletic) training of desire. In virtue-based ethics the exercise of the desire to kill, if such a desire existed, would have to compete with other desires in the attainment of *eudaimonia*; in utilitarianism it would have to be demonstrated that the exercise of such a desire was conducive to the maximization of pleasure and the minimization of pain for sentient beings in general in that some desires must give way to others in order to do justice to the utilitarian calculus; and in deontology one may act on a desire only if one does not infringe on the rights of others. Causey says nothing very convincing here, apparently because she thinks that the mere existence of the desire to kill is self-authenticating. Vitali, as Pluhar notes, does try morally to justify hunting, but his section on the denial of animal "rights," the weakest section in his article, does not show sufficient familiarity with the details of the arguments of animal-rightists who are philosophers.

Causey, at least, if not Vitali, seems to be led to the assumption that the existence of an urge to kill in humans guarantees the morality of hunting because of the supposed pragmatic necessity of the urge: without it human beings would not have survived. But the matter is a bit more complicated than this. Even if one accepts the position of the sociobiologists that human morality is at least somewhat connected with those biological predispositions which are conducive to survival, it is not necessarily the case that the defenders of hunting have a lock on this position. Moral concern for other species can be traced back to natural sentiments, as in the fact that people who cared for their domesticated animals tended to leave more descendants than those who used them carelessly,⁴ just as among nonhuman animals the dominant members of the species were most often those who allowed their subordinates lives of their own, and who sometimes even assisted them, because to press home one's attack often causes "the courage of despair" in one's victim which causes

the dominant member to pay a greater price than he would want to pay or could pay.⁵

I would like to conclude by making it clear that in this response I have not tried to defend in general the use of sociobiological principles to solve philosophical problems, a task which would require a great deal more effort than I have expended. Rather, I have tried to show that *if* it is legitimate to introduce sociobiological considerations into philosophical disputes, in this case into the dispute regarding the morality of hunting,⁶ then we should not assume that such considerations necessarily support the hunter's case. That is, anti-hunters should resist the claim that justice and mercy are free-floating cultural artifacts which are not rooted in natural inclination.

Notes

¹ See Stephen R. L. Clark, "The Rights of Wild Things," *Inquiry* 22, p. 181, and C. J. Jolly, "The Seed-Eaters: A New Model of Hominid Differentiation Based on a Baboon Analogy," *Man* 5 (1970). Even E. O. Wilson sees human beings as more pacific than Causey and Vitali. See *Sociobiology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 568.

² In this and the following paragraphs see Stephen R. L. Clark, *The Nature of the Beast* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 34, 42, 61ff, 82ff, 110.

³ See H. P. and M. K. Harlow, "The Affectional Systems," in *Non-Human Primates*, ed. by Schrier, Harlow, and Stoltz (N. Y.: Academic Press, 1965). Further, Washoe, the earliest of the Ameslan apes, on being introduced to chimpanzees who had not learned American Sign Language, referred to them with hostility as "black bugs." Xenophobia, it seems, we do inherit from the primates. Also see I. Eibl-Eibesfeldt, *The Biology of Peace and War* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), pp. 35, 50, 88, 110, and E. Linden, *Apes, Men and Language* (N. Y.: Dutton, 1975), pp. 25, 46, 110.

⁴ See Robert Elliot's review of Stephen R. L. Clark's *The Nature of the Beast* in *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 61 (1983), pp. 454-456.

⁵ See Stephen R. L. Clark, "Hume, Animals, and the Objectivity of Morals," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 35 (1985), p. 125.

⁶ It should be noted that Causey explicitly relies on the notion of a basic urge to kill in her article, whereas Vitali uses it implicitly. Nonetheless we can see Vitali refer to "human predators," to the "joy and thrill" of hunting, to the "pleasure" of killing, to killing as "a primal act," etc.

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