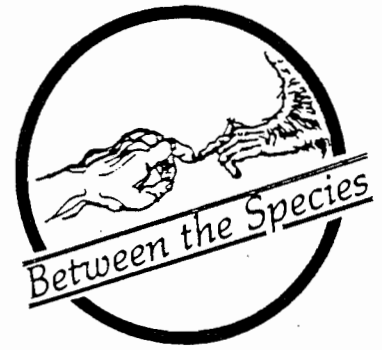


The Joy of Killing

Evelyn B. Pluhar

Pennsylvania State University
Fayette Campus



Editors' Note: The following paper by Professor Pluhar and the response to it by Professor Dombrowski were presented at the Eastern Division meetings of the Society for the Study of Ethics and Animals held in Boston, Massachusetts, December, 1990.



I grew up in rural Appalachia, and now live and teach college in a similar area in Pennsylvania, the state in which sport hunting is the most popular. Thus, I have known many hunters, including family members, and have taught more than a few. The first day of buck season on the Monday after Thanksgiving invariably finds me teaching fewer people than usual. When the hunters have returned, buzzing with excitement about record "racks" (their word for antlers) or full of tales about the ones that got away, I ask them about their reasons for hunting. I hear much about the glories of communing with nature, the camaraderie of the hunt, the excitement of the chase, and the delicious, allegedly pesticide-free meat some have in their freezers. Some of them assure me that they are sparing the killed deer slow, agonizing death by starvation in the coming winter (388,601 deer were "mercy killed" in Pennsylvania in 1989.¹). The brightest ones tell me that they are contributing to the preservation of the ecosystem by keeping the hunted animals from overpopulating and degrading the environment.

None of this holds up terribly well in the ensuing discussion. As Robert Loftin has pointed out, sport hunters use a number of bad arguments in their attempts

to justify what they do.² Various scientific studies show that death at the hand of the hunter is seldom "clean" and frequently prolonged. Crippling cannot be avoided by even the most conscientious of hunters.³ Even if it could be known that the hunted animal would otherwise starve, it is far from clear that the latter fate would be more agonizing. Indeed, the claim that deer would starve if they were not hunted is itself questionable. Associate Professor of Silviculture Bruce Larson from the Yale Forestry School has admitted that "starvation" is the wrong term to use: "undernourishment" is far more accurate.⁴ In view of these facts, it is difficult to see sport hunters as mercy killers.

It is also difficult to see them as saviors of the environment. As Loftin has documented, most hunted species would not overpopulate if left alone.⁵ As others have pointed out, habitats are manipulated by such common practices as clearing brushland and damming streams in order to produce large numbers of hunted animals, much to the detriment of the environment.⁶ Non-"game" animals are of little concern, unless they are predators who "compete," although not for sporting reasons, with sport hunters. For example, Alaskan officials, bending to the will of sport hunters who crave maximum numbers of moose, have been shooting wolves from helicopters.⁷ None of this is surprising. Sport hunters want to hunt certain "favored" species: the ecosystem as a whole is not their primary concern.



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Loftin supports hunting despite his devastating critique of its alleged benefits because sport hunters' contribute financially and politically to the preservation of animal habitats. However, surely there are other, ecologically sounder ways of achieving the same purpose.⁸

I share all this information with my sport-hunting students. They are uneasy but remain resistant. When I ask them if the benefits they cite for themselves (fresh air, pancakes at 4:00 a. m., aerobic exercise, delicious food, and companionship) can only be achieved by hunting, they grudgingly agree that there are other ways. Nevertheless, most of them will continue to hunt despite the collapse of their arguments. Nothing else, they tell me, is quite like it.

My colleague Bernard Rollin of Colorado State University also teaches hunters. He informs me that he is much meaner than I am. He forces the students to admit exactly what so enchants them about hunting for sport: the act of killing. The students are generally horrified by this admission. On one such occasion, a student began to cry. Few of us are heartened by the realization that we, or our fellow human beings, are enthusiastic killers. How can activity based on such a motive be justifiable? How can sport hunters continue to hunt, once they realize why they do it?

Two recent *Environmental Ethics* articles in support of hunting attempt to answer these questions. Each fully admits that sport hunters kill for pleasure, and each holds that this is no cause for shame. The authors hold that activity based on the desire to kill can be morally justified. I will argue that neither of these startlingly honest articles succeeds in making its case.

Ann Causey, in her very interesting and often sensitive "On the Morality of Hunting,"⁹ dismisses utilitarian and ecologically based arguments for sport hunting, noting that the objectives of maintaining healthy "game" and non-"game" animals, balanced ecosystems, opportunities for wholesome recreation, etc., can be achieved in better ways. However, she notes, the failure of these arguments is *irrelevant* to sport hunters: what counts in their eyes is their pleasure in the hunt and its deadly outcome.¹⁰ This very same pleasure is the particular object of the anti-hunters' scorn and anger. Causey believes that this passionate desire to kill can be both explained and defended.¹¹

The explanation, she believes, is provided by two very different writers: Jose Ortega y Gasset¹² and Roger Caras.¹³ Their suggestion is that the pleasure felt in completing the predatory act is a vestige of our primitive

origins. Causey, a biologist as well as a philosopher, agrees, holding that primitive humans would not have survived if they had not enjoyed killing:

The instinct to kill was necessary for paleolithic man. The pleasure resulting from satisfaction of that urge was also necessary in order to reinforce the urge and to ensure that it was fulfilled.¹⁴

The language here is too teleological for scientific comfort, but it can easily be translated into evolutionary terms. The claim is that those of our ice-age dwelling ancestors who were innately predisposed to take pleasure in killing their prey satisfied their urge whenever possible. The resultant calories, protein, furs, etc., gave them a decided advantage over their nonhunting fellows. This advantage ensured their reproductive success, allowing them to pass on their genetically-based predilection for killing. Modern humans are the result, biologically programmed to seek and enjoy killing even when it is no longer necessary for survival. With Caras, Causey compares the joy of killing to the joy of sex: we want to do it even when it serves no biological purpose.¹⁵ The urge to kill is claimed to be as much a part of our genetic heritage as the urge to have sex, as is the pleasure resulting from satisfaction of that urge. As she puts it, according to this explanation of the sport hunter's motivation, "the urge to kill may be viewed as an original, essential human trait."¹⁶

If the urge to kill is an instinct like the urge to have sex, Causey argues, it is a mistake to morally condemn it. These urges and the pleasures resulting from their satisfaction are beyond our conscious control. Although we can control the ways in which we act to satisfy these urges, and we can even refrain from acting on them altogether, we cannot help desiring to act on them, and we cannot eradicate the pleasure resulting from their successful completion. Hence, it is argued, sport hunters should not be construed as monstrous sadists. Their motivation is essentially *amoral*, not *immoral*.¹⁷

It does not follow from this, as Causey recognizes, that the sport hunter's *actions* can be construed as amoral, let alone as morally justifiable.¹⁸ Hunters, like rapists and child molesters, may indulge their urges in morally reprehensible ways. However, the responsible sport hunter, Causey claims, does engage in "morally enriching" activity.¹⁹ He or she revels in closeness to

and appreciation of nature, is appalled by shooting wolves from helicopters, is very sensitive to the suffering of the hunted animals, and shows respect and admiration for the prey.²⁰ Such a hunter actually feels remorse and sorrow for the victim, even while experiencing the thrill of the kill. (Causey believes that the hunter's negative feelings are due to the intrusion of reason on instinct).²¹ Sport hunters, she holds, have a "spiritual" need to maintain a "nostalgic" link to their distant pasts, a need that endows their activity with "sacramental value."²² Thus, she believes that what they do is morally defensible.

In my view, Causey has neither offered a plausible explanation of the sport-hunter's motivation nor shown that sport hunting can be morally justified. Let us consider the explanation inspired by Ortega y Gasset and Caras first.

The obvious objection to the claim that the urge to hunt and kill is an essential human instinct is the fact that a number of humans lack the urge. Some even have a "counter-urge." Causey herself discusses the view of "anti-hunters," who "believe instinctively that it is morally wrong to kill for pleasure."²³ Short of denying the anti-hunters humanity, it seems that Causey must accept them as counter-examples to her contention.

Causey addresses this objection in a footnote. She holds that those who lack the predatory urge exhibit "anomalous or nonadaptive behaviors."²⁴ That is, they are said to be *atypical*. Just as damaged, nonrational humans do not undercut Aristotle's conception of humanity, anti-hunters, she could claim, are the rule-proving exceptions.²⁵ Causey later remarks that anti-hunters would have as much success in converting the majority to their ranks as they would have in converting them to celibacy.²⁶ The weight of instinct is simply too heavy.

This reply certainly will not do. According to available evidence, the percentage of humans opposed to or uninterested in hunting for pleasure far exceeds the percentage who are sport hunters. U. S. Department of the Interior figures indicate that roughly 7% of the population hunts.²⁷ Factoring out very young children and others who lack hunting opportunities would not much increase the percentage of hunters in the U. S. population. In Pennsylvania, where there is ample opportunity to hunt and interest in doing so is the highest in the nation, only 9% of the population hunts.²⁸ Moreover, the percentage of *anti*-hunters among the nonhunters is appreciable. According to studies done

by Professor Stephen Kellert of Yale University, 60% of Americans do not approve of killing purely for sport, and 29% of the population object so strongly to sport hunting that they believe it should be banned.²⁹ Surely even the smaller percentage is already far higher than the percentage of humans willing to devote themselves to permanent celibacy! In the circumstances, the urge to stalk and kill can hardly be "an essential human trait."

Causey never considers alternatives to her highly speculative genetic account. Ice-age hunters would have been favored by natural selection whether or not they had an instinctive urge to kill and a reflexive pleasure response to the killing. Causey claims that the automatic pleasure response was necessary for the hunting to take place, but this is not the case. The avoidance of starvation would have been a sufficient initial incentive. Paleolithic humans could and doubtless did take pleasure in the cooking and eating of the slain animal, and the warmth of the resulting hides and furs. There is no need to assume that they must have been genetically programmed to feel thrilled by the act of killing itself. Of course, many might then have come to attach pleasure to the act itself, but this could well have been a culturally conditioned response. Certainly, no genetic explanation is necessary to account for the perpetuation of the hunting tradition by generations of humans.

It is notoriously difficult to tease apart the genetic and environmental components of behavior, as Causey surely knows. In Pennsylvania, fathers typically teach their children, usually their sons, to hunt at an early age. Everything from fatherly approval and attention to having one's picture in the paper with proof of the kill works in favor of a pro-hunting attitude. Even the current President of the U. S. lends status to the occupation by hunting quail in Texas every year. All these positive feelings are aided by the attitude that the prey are "just animals," and as such are of little moral consequence. It would not be surprising if an activity perceived to have so much instrumental value came to be valued for its own sake by young hunters.

Even so, many children resist, as the low percentage of hunters indicates. One of my colleagues, an avid hunter, once told me in exasperation that his 13-year-old son had just ruined his chance to "get" his first buck. Although the child was in a perfect position to shoot the deer, he did not pull the trigger. "I couldn't do it, Dad," the boy explained: "he was looking right into my eyes!" Such children do not appear to be genetically

programmed to kill. Nor do former hunters who have become revolted by what they used to do. The ones I have known do not say that they still have a tremendous urge to hunt, but that now their consciences will not permit it: they appear to have undergone a "gut-level" transformation. None of this fits Causey's purported explanation of sport hunting.

Even if Causey had succeeded in establishing her explanation, however, it would not have helped her to establish her *defense* of sport hunting, contrary to her claim. The alleged instinct to kill, termed "amoral" when Causey is trying to exempt it from moral condemnation, is, as we saw, later redescribed as a "spiritual" need and even a "sacramental value" whose realization should be "embraced."³⁰ (George Reiger, enthusiastic hunter and editor of *Field and Stream*, uses the same sort of language, writing that "the ritual and traditions, and the emphasis on ethical behavior, liken this sport more to religion than the sciences we rely on to help perpetuate wildlife.")³¹ She wants to have it both ways, and it is far from clear that she can. Being "a nostalgic reminder of our precultural past"³² is not enough to legitimize the move from "amoral" to "sacramental." If it were, bashing other human beings in the skull, at least those who don't belong to the contemporary equivalent of our "tribe," would be a holy rite that we should all "embrace!"³³

Causey would probably reply that sport hunting and human skull bashing are not to be compared in moral terms because humans deserve more consideration than nonhumans. However, her conviction in this regard is not well-based. Those who morally object to hunting can argue from a rights basis or from the rejection of speciesist views that sanction the hunting of nonhumans only. These approaches, which are not mutually exclusive, are rejected by Causey as "largely emotional"³⁴ and "philosophically unsophisticated."³⁵ Causey does not justify these blanket rejections, which appear to confuse the careful arguments of Tom Regan and Peter Singer (both cited in her article) with Walt Disney movies and literature from the Doris Day Animal League.³⁶ Although she cites a chapter from Paul Taylor's *Respect for Nature* in further support of her rejection of a rights position for nonhumans,³⁷ that work actually goes against her view. (Taylor argues that according to the *traditional* view, only moral agents (persons) can have moral rights; but that under a modified conception, nonhumans (and humans!) who fail to be persons can be said to have rights. He argues

that moral agents owe such beings nonmaleficence, noninterference, fidelity, and restitutive justice. Although he does believe that it would be less confusing to restrict the *language* of rights to moral agents, he holds that the treatment wild beings are due from moral agents is the same they should receive if we were to attribute rights to them.³⁸ This plainly puts sport hunting beyond the moral pale.)

However, even if Causey had made a case for restricting moral rights to humans, it would not follow that the nostalgic pleasure experienced by sport hunters in search of their roots morally outweighs the resulting fear, pain, and destruction of animal lives. Causey clearly believes that the hunted animals are morally considerable, although she denies that they have rights. She repeatedly writes with very genuine-sounding outrage about the excesses of insensitive hunters, whom she refuses to call "genuine" sport hunters, since they lack all respect and concern for their targets.³⁹ Even "sensitive" sport hunting exacts its toll, however, and Causey gives us no reason for thinking that this toll is justified by the sport hunter's joy. After all, there are a number of less destructive ways to seek one's roots and celebrate one's connection to nature. Therefore, Causey has neither plausibly explained nor successfully defended the stalking and killing of animals for sport.

It is Theodore Vitali who, in "Sport Hunting: Moral or Immoral?,"⁴⁰ an independent recent article, tries to supply the needed defense for sport hunting. Unlike Causey, he is not concerned to explain the origin of the sport hunter's motivation: he concentrates on trying to show it morally justifiable.

Vitali has a personal interest in supplying a defense. As an "embattled" sport hunter, as he describes himself, he is tired of being regarded as a bloodthirsty redneck.⁴¹ It is interesting that Causey herself might be reluctant to call him a "sport hunter," given her idealized conception of such a person as one who respects and admires the animals hunted, feeling a pang of regret mixed with joy on each occasion of killing. Vitali shows no signs of regret, and writes less than respectfully about "taking of the game,"⁴² "prime game" vs. "poor quality" game,⁴³ "racks," and "culling."⁴⁴ He also defends "trophy" hunting, so long as species or ecosystems are not damaged by it.⁴⁵ Causey herself appears to be repelled by trophy hunting, no doubt because it is difficult to find any sign of respect in the hanging of severed heads on living-room walls. In any case, however, Vitali does provide a better defense of sport

hunting than Causey. Nevertheless, as I shall argue, he too is unsuccessful.

Vitali writes that basic moral principles enjoin us (1) not to “will evil as such” and (2) to create “a greater proportion of good over evil” by our actions.⁴⁶ Let us accept this for the sake of argument. He also holds that pleasure as such is “a natural good” (by which he means “a nonmoral good”), as is life itself, whereas pain and death is “a natural evil” (or “nonmoral evil”).⁴⁷ Again, let us grant this. Vitali argues that a sport hunter who acts with the intention of causing death, a natural evil, and experiences pleasure as a result, would indeed behave immorally, for the hunter would be willing evil “as such,” and the resulting pleasure would be insufficient to outweigh this evil.⁴⁸ But this is *not* what generally motivates the sport hunter, according to Vitali: “the joy of hunting,” he says, “seems to lie in the exercise of hunting skills, not in the death of the animal.”⁴⁹ The skills used in the “stalking and taking of game,” as he puts it, are said to involve highly virtuous human traits such as intelligence, reason, emotional acuity, patience, physical coordination, and the like. It is this high degree of excellence, Vitali holds, that morally justifies the hunter’s pleasure and outweighs the loss of life:

Such exercise of human excellence, because it is humanly virtuous, is a sufficiently proportionate good to compensate for the loss of life engendered by the act of killing that completes the entire predational event.⁵⁰

This defense of hunting is superior to Causey’s because Vitali at least tries to analyze the source of sport hunting’s alleged value and to weigh that apparent value against the disvalue created. However, it is Vitali himself who raises an obvious objection to his defense.⁵¹ Wouldn’t far more good result if one exercised the skills used by the hunter for a nondestructive purpose instead, like nature photography? All the allegedly “inherently human skills”⁵² he lauds would still be practiced, but without any attendant loss of life.

Vitali responds that no sport hunter could be satisfied with such an “ersatz” activity:

The success or failure of these skills, and thus the joy or sorrow that results, depends ultimately, and in fact solely, upon the completion of the predatory event ... The act

of predation is the act of killing, and, for the human predator, it is the intended and decisive act of killing.⁵³

In other words, contrary to what Vitali earlier claimed, the sport hunter *does* have the primary intention of bringing about the death of the animal, and cannot be satisfied with anything less. The dilemma he earlier posed between taking pleasure in exercising skills and taking pleasure in the death of an animal is now exposed as a false one. The sport hunter does not so much crave the joy of killing as he or she craves the joy of *skilled* killing!

I fail to see how adding the adjective above morally justifies sport hunting. Presumably, Vitali could argue that the sport hunter does not will natural evil *alone*, even though it is his or her primary intention to destroy life: the insistence that it be done skillfully means that good is also intended to result as part of the act. But it does not follow from this that the activity is moral. Even if one grants Vitali’s highly dubious contentions that the skills involved are “inherently human”—if animal predators did not also possess some of these skills (physical coordination, patience, ability to plan), they would have long since been extinct—and exhibit a high degree of human virtue—Paul Taylor has pointed out that *deception* is a key element in sport hunting, and this is not known as a human virtue⁵⁴—he has failed to make his case. We are given no argument for his claim that the exercise of “humanly virtuous” activity is *sufficient* to outweigh the toll exacted on the hunted animal.

It would not help Vitali at this point to claim, as he in fact believes,⁵⁵ that animals have no moral rights for the sport hunter to violate. His argument focuses upon the creation and destruction of *nonmoral* good. He himself has claimed that animal life and well-being is good in this sense, as well as the pleasure and skillful activity of the hunter. Although the possession of moral rights by the animal would be sufficient to make the sport hunter’s actions wrong, the animal’s alleged lack of rights has no bearing on the balancing of nonmoral goods against nonmoral bads. We still are not told why the animal’s fear, pain, and loss of life weighs so little compared to the sport hunter’s thrill in skilled killing.

If Vitali genuinely believes that the exercise of predational skills and the resulting pleasure of the successful sport hunter is sufficient to outweigh the suffering and death of a being allegedly lacking in moral

rights, it is not just animal hunting that would be justified on his terms. Like Causey, he uncritically accepts the traditional view that only those who are capable of a high degree of intelligence and autonomy can have moral rights. Accordingly, he draws the nonspeciesist conclusion that "any being" who has never and can never meet this standard would have no moral rights.⁵⁶ It follows that a sport hunter whose chosen "game" is feral permanently retarded human children would be morally justified in stalking and killing them, so long as great skill is exercised and much joy results! The hunter would even be entitled to mount their little heads on the wall, although he or she might then have to be careful about whom to invite over for dinner. Those who accept Vitali's defense of sport hunting might want to reconsider at this point.

In short, Vitali, as well as Causey, has not made a case for the moral justifiability of hunting for pleasure. Whatever the origin may be of the joy some take in killing, acting in pursuit of it remains highly questionable. It seems that hunter Ortega y Gasset was after all correct when he mused that "Reason can be described more appropriately as the greatest danger to the existence of hunting."⁵⁷



Notes

¹ "1989 Deer Harvest Sets New Record," *The Herald-Standard*, Uniontown, Pa., April 1, 1990, p. C5. (Note the absence of any reference to mercy killing in the title.) Licensed U. S. hunters killed 200 million animals of all kinds in the 1988-1989 season ("The American Hunter Under Fire," *U. S. News and World Report*, February 5, 1990, p. 33.) This figure does not include animals killed by poachers, or captive animals killed by "hunters" using shooting preserves.

² Robert Loftin, "The Morality of Hunting," *Environmental Ethics* 6 (3), Fall 1984, p. 243.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 245-246.

⁴ *The Animals' Agenda*, March 1987, p. 25.

⁵ Loftin, *op. cit.*, pp. 244-245.

⁶ "The American Hunter Under Fire," *op. cit.*, p. 34.

⁷ Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature* (Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1986), p. 185.

⁸ Loftin, *op. cit.*, pp. 248-249. In any case, the amount of support hunters provide for the preservation of habitats appears to be greatly exaggerated. According to *E Magazine*, most of the money generated for this purpose comes from taxpayers in general. ("The Fall of the Wild," *E Magazine*, May/June 1990, p.64.)

⁹ Ann Causey, "On the Morality of Hunting," *Environmental Ethics* 11 (4), 1989, pp. 327-343.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 335-336.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 336.

¹² Jose Ortega y Gasset, *Meditations on Hunting* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), pp. 11-12.

¹³ Roger Caras, *Death as a Way of Life* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970), pp. 44-45.

¹⁴ Causey, *op. cit.*, p. 337.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* Caras observes that perfecting the technique of making test-tube babies would not alter human delight in fornication, even though the act would no longer have any evolutionary point.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 338.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 343.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 332-333. Causey makes it a matter of definition, distinguishing the "sport hunter" from the "shooter." Shooters don't care as much about the sport of hunting as they care about killing, regardless of the method and the numbers slaughtered. She blames shooters for the excesses of violence and "non-sporting" behavior that is so often seen. It is interesting that she claims in a footnote that most of the hunting done in modern times is done by shooters. (p. 333, note 22).

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 343.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 336.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 338, note 38.

²⁵ *Ibid.* Causey uses a different analogy, comparing the allegedly "anomalous, nonadaptive" behavior of the anti-hunters to that of homosexuals. I find this analogy distressing. According to gay people, many of whom have children, the major "nonadaptive" feature in their lives is due to the necessity of living among a bigoted majority.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 339.

²⁷ Wayne Pacelle, "When the Nonhunting Majority Speaks, Government Agencies Don't Listen," *The Animals' Agenda*, January/February 1990, p. 57.

²⁸ David Guenther, "The Hunting Debate," *The Pittsburgh Press*, Pittsburgh, Pa., November 27, 1988, p. H1.

²⁹ "The American Hunter Under Fire," *U. S. News and World Report*, *op. cit.*, p. 34. Kellert's original study was done for the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. See Stephen Kellert, *Policy Implications of a National Study of American Attitudes and Behavioral Relations to Animals* (Department of the Interior, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1978), pp. 19-24. This study is further discussed in David Macauley's "Political Animals," *Between the Species* 3 (4), 1987, p. 188.

³⁰ Causey, *op. cit.*, p. 343.

³¹ "The American Hunter Under Fire," *U. S. News and World Report*, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

³² Causey, *loc. cit.*

³³ Unfortunately, it is sometimes regarded as holy by numbers of religious fanatics. Fundamentalist Moslems who regard it as their religious duty and honor to carry out the late Ayatollah Khomeini's death sentence on the "impious" Salman Rushdie come to mind as examples. However, one is not obliged to "embrace" their views and deeds.

³⁴ Causey, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 339.

³⁶ See Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1983), and Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York: Avon Books, 1975). Random House brought out a second edition of *Animal Liberation* in 1990. If anyone sounds "philosophically unsophisticated" in talking about rights, it is Causey, who says "there is no evidence that nature has assigned rights to any creatures and plenty of logical, biological, and evolutionary evidence that she has not" (p. 335).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 335.

³⁸ Paul Taylor, *op. cit.*, chapter five. (Also see my note 54 below.) See p. 225 for the reference to human nonpersons.

³⁹ See, e.g., p. 333 and p. 343.

⁴⁰ Theodore Vitali, "Sport Hunting: Moral or Immoral?," *Environmental Ethics* 12 (1), 1990, pp. 69-82.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77. This language is compatible with Causey's use of the term "amoral" in her description of the sport hunter's pleasure.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 78. Vitali also offers an argument in favor of sport hunting based on ecology (79-81). However, this argument is faulty, for the reasons given earlier. Since the ecology argument is entirely independent of Vitali's main argument, its failure has no bearing on that main argument.

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

Daniel Dombrowski
Seattle University

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



DISCUSSION