

January 28, 2020

Hello Louise,

I am writing to you for two reasons. First, to bring our discussion to a conclusion on my own terms. In particular, I want to present my criticism of your refusal to answer my arguments. And second, to request your permission to publish our written interaction for unrestricted distribution and readership by anyone.

You must excuse me for continuing our interaction so long after the fact. It was my intention to follow up at some point after your last email on 5/6/2004, but sad to say just two days later my father died quite suddenly, on 5/8/2004. (So as it turns out I will not be needing to vivisect your own family members after all.) I had to travel to England immediately to be with my mother and make funeral arrangements, then make another more extended trip later in the year to deal with various other matters following his death. So much of my attention in the months following our last communication was taken up with these matters.

Thus my intention to follow up got set aside for the moment, then further postponed, then eventually consigned to the future projects folder, where things can remain for quite some time.

At the start of our interaction I mentioned that I was working on a body of writing, concerning animal rights and moral philosophy in general, with the intention of publishing this at some point. I have continued to add to this at various times, and am now at a point where I want to move forward actively with the publication of this material.

The record of our interaction fits into this very appropriately, so I would like to make use of this in the context of this broader philosophical writing. Your written and verbal statements illustrate many of the points I make in general, philosophical terms. In particular they aptly demonstrate the sort of mentality and intellectual laxity that supports, not just the ugliness of vivisection, but the institutionalized abuse and exploitation of others in *any* context. Your position, and the arguments you've presented in support, can thus be used as the basis for a highly illustrative and revealing case study.

Later in this letter I'll provide an overview description of this philosophical construct, to give you an idea of the general context for my request.

1. REMINDER OF UNRESOLVED DEBATE

As you may remember, some time ago we presented to each other our opposing views regarding toxicological experiments upon animals—you in favour, me against.

Let me remind you of the key facts of our dispute. You stand in support of something monstrous. This friend of yours, whom you admire so much, conducts abhorrent experiments upon living creatures. This places her on common ground with the slave trader, or the sex trafficker, in the following specific respect: all three cause suffering to their victims, and all three do so in order to garner benefits. Like the others she is guilty of Crimes Against Life, and by your frank support, you are an accomplice to this.

If you are inclined to make even the slightest murmur of dissent to these allegations, I have videos of animals undergoing toxicological experiments, or you can readily find them online. I invite you to view these, and see for yourself.

It is an indisputable fact that your friend causes harm to others, and this is sufficient to establish a *prima facie* case of moral criminality; nothing more than this is needed. The burden then shifts to her, and you, to demonstrate that despite initial appearances, her harmful practices are somehow justified. You have both had the opportunity to put forward your best arguments, yet you have conclusively failed to meet this burden. Instead, you have trotted out a string of ill-considered, facile arguments, none of which stands up to proper examination.

Your letter of 11/8/2002, presenting your main arguments, is kind of a mess. There is no clear delineation of individual points, but rather a medley of arguments are scattered and intermingled together. It's as if you dashed this thing off in an hour. Nevertheless, I took the time to plough through it all and do the delineation for you, parsing it out into a series of distinct points, if we may call them that, and addressing each individually.

I have given clear and complete answers to all your arguments, and conclusively refuted all of them. Each has been fully addressed, and shown to be factually incorrect, or logically false, or irrelevant, or just plain nonsense. Every single one of your arguments is fundamentally invalid, ultimately contributing nothing towards your burden of moral justification. They are all weak, bogus arguments, that any thoughtful, intelligent person can see through in a minute.

You have provided no answers to any of this, neither acknowledging forthrightly that your arguments are false, nor offering further support or counterargument. Instead you made no reply at all, then in response to my follow-up enquiries, finally sent a five-word email, refusing to discuss the matter any further. Thus faced with rational opposition, your response is to abandon the discussion altogether.

1.1 What remains at the end

At the end of all this only two solid things remain: your speciesism, and your will to act upon it. After all the bogus argument and irrelevance is stripped away, this is what remains as the true basis for your position.

But note that this is the same for *all* widespread, institutional programmes of depredation; after their bogus arguments are stripped away, this is their residual basis too. To be sure the specifics are different; some wish to victimize another race, or ethnicity, or culture, or gender; to each their own. But in each case *the paradigm is the same*. The key elements of the paradigm are that the perpetrators have an “-ism,” an innate sense of exceptionalism, or privilege, as do you; in your own blandly arrogant words: “I believe that we are more important.” And as corollary to this a belief that the victim constituency is of lesser account, meet to be exploited, to benefit the more privileged constituency. As do you; again in your own words: “quite simply, I see animals as lower than humans in the pecking order.” And they have a firmness of resolve, a will, an appetite to carry out their depredation; once again, as do you: “I know what my choice is going to be every time.”

Of course these are all engrained subjective perspectives, with no objective basis whatever. From slavery to wartime comfort women, and countless other examples of repugnant human exploitation, the simple fact is the perpetrators are in a position to take advantage, and so they do. As do you.

2. CRITICISM OF ABANDONMENT OF DEBATE

I am greatly disappointed that you have declined to bring our debate to a natural conclusion.

2.1 Ability to reach valid conclusions

Such a conclusion is well within our reach. I grant we might not ever come to a complete meeting of the minds, but many specific elements of our disagreement can be resolved—the figurative trees, if not the forest. We have each put forward multiple conflicting arguments; however, none is particularly complex. Our various points and counterpoints are straightforward enough, and readily amenable to clear-minded analysis.

For example a central theme of your argument is that societal decision-making and action, and so by implication societal consensus, clearly supports animal experimentation; your own implication being that this affirms its moral propriety. I say on the contrary that societal consensus provides no assurance of moral

propriety, and have cited multiple counterexamples to demonstrate this. This is not a difficult issue to resolve. If you can somehow show that societal consensus does indeed assure moral correctness, and somehow negate my counterexamples, then you may be right; otherwise your argument is defeated.

Either way, one element of our dispute is now resolved. And furthermore we have a data point; an item of circumstantial evidence about which one of us is thinking with integrity, and which of us isn't really thinking at all.

A central element of my own argument is my assertion that benefits may be big, and benefits may be small, but in the end they remain benefits, and no more. You have flatly contradicted this, indicating that there is some additional consideration, aside from differing magnitudes of benefits, that must be taken into account, though you have not stated what this further consideration might be. Again, this would seem a straightforward matter to deal with. If you can explain this additional consideration then I may have to reconsider my position; otherwise your unsupported contradiction counts for nothing.

And so on. As I review our arguments point-by-point, I see nothing that cannot be clarified, or resolved definitively, by open discussion.

2.2 A broader holistic truth

Though in fact I believe a much broader, holistic truth will emerge from this.

One of us is hopelessly wrong in our analysis of the situation. If my assessment is correct you are morally criminal, advocating cruelty to animals in order to get benefits. If you are correct then I'm seeing things in narrow simplistic terms, just not seeing the big picture.

One of these is the truth; or at least, carries more truth than the other. And the way to establish this, is by means of open discussion. All we need do is answer each other's points fully, and as this dialogue proceeds the essential truth of the matter, I believe, will simply become obvious.

And this, of course, is precisely the problem for you. In anticipation of your dereliction I previously had this to say:

The typical behaviour of human beings in your position is to attempt to subvert the discussion on some pretext or other... Those with a genuine grievance seek publicity, accountability, openness, discourse, clarity. Those at fault would much rather avoid all of those things. What is your preference, Louise?

Well you have certainly made it clear what your preference is. As I have noted, wrongdoers seek to avoid exposure, and true to form, this is exactly what you have done.

2.3 True reasons for avoidance of debate

Your position is completely indefensible, and I think perhaps you know this. Perhaps not with the same detailed clarity that I do, but what you do know is that you cannot articulate any valid support for your own position, or give any good answers to my own arguments. Either you are unable to formulate coherent answers at all, or to the extent that you are able, you know that the answers are damning. You know that if you provide genuine responses the fundamental truth of the matter will become plainly evident: that you are in principle no different from any other agent of harm, who is willing to impose unmeasured suffering upon unknown others in order to cash in on the benefits.

This is an uncomfortable position to be in, but there is a right way to deal with it. And that is to face up to the situation squarely, provide authentic responses to my arguments, and accept responsibility for your words and actions. But this is not part of your character. Your preference is to take the low road, and avoid the situation altogether.

Genuine debate is problematic to you because it reveals the truth, and this is the last thing you want. And therefore your chosen maneuver is to quash the debate entirely. I must say madam, this is a marked change of tune from how things were at the outset, when you were certainly eager enough to expound your views to me.

There may be good reasons for avoiding debate with someone, but this one is wretchedly bad. Upon receiving your email announcing that you would not be responding, I immediately demanded to know why. But you gave no reason. And the reason you gave no reason is because this would reveal the shabbiness of your motive: it's a craven cover-up. So not only must you obstruct the debate, you must also obstruct any examination of the reason for this. Your refusal to discuss thus has the same rigid, uncompromising totality as any other obstruction of this nature.

2.4 Same as other forms of suppression of discourse

Note that this is no different in principle from any other kind of uncompromising cover-up. Our human affairs, past and present, are dense with examples of the suppression of discourse, carried out essentially for this same reason. The political banning of books and movies, state-controlled censorship, suppression of the press, control of access to the Internet and other media, the imprisonment or murder of dissidents, and of journalists—these, and many other examples, are all situations in which information, or speech, or the free expression of ideas, are rigidly suppressed.

And they all have this in common: somebody, somewhere, would be made extremely uncomfortable by free and open discourse. Some activity, circumstance or status quo is shameful and corrupt, and its shamefulness would be plainly exposed by such discourse. Transparency is a liability to someone, and transparency, therefore, must be prevented.

The right way to deal with our debate is to bring it to a natural conclusion: I address your arguments fully and properly, and you address mine. Instead you stifle the debate, for the sake of cheap personal expedience. How many times have you seen some wretched culprit cornered by a persistent investigative journalist? Faced with damnatory questions they give a terse “no comment” and quickly scurry away. Just as you have done.

Am I wrong in all this? You can prove me so very easily: simply provide authentic responses to my arguments. In the end the fact remains that I am willing to present my arguments forthrightly, and you are not.

2.5 My final assessment

I will tell you I have complete contempt for everything you have presented to me, from beginning to end. Starting with your readiness to countenance the appalling cruelty of toxicological experimentation upon animals in the first place, followed by your crass presumption in phoning me at my place of work and, with self-assured complacency, attempting to impose your repugnant value system upon me. Then in the face of my strong resistance, followed by the string of thoughtless, bogus arguments you trotted out to justify yourself. And finally, faced with well-articulated and reasoned opposition, your smothering of the discussion altogether.

At every turn it seems you make the shabbiest and least intelligent choice possible. Let me ask you, do you consider your conduct virtuous? I say this: claimed virtue is no virtue at all, unless it can prove itself when called upon.

Throughout all this you have transgressed massively against my own value system. Yet when called on this you refuse to accept responsibility and face the consequences. You make a gigantic, blundering mess of things, then when things become problematic, just walk away and leave it all behind. Like the worst possible lowlife tenants, who leave a rental property filthy and trashed, then skip out without paying the rent.

3. BROADER PHILOSOPHICAL CONTEXT

I mentioned that I have been writing a general treatise, concerning animal rights and moral philosophy in general, and would like to publish our exchange in connection with this work. I'll provide an overview description of this broader philosophical writing, to give you an idea of the context for my request.

3.1 Major unresolved issues

As lead-in, let me begin by pointing out some major unresolved issues in our dispute.

3.1.1 Fundamental conflict: large benefits versus large costs

First there is the immediately obvious issue that we are putting forward different sets of considerations that are in total conflict. On the one hand there are tremendous benefits to be gained from vivisection, as you have correctly pointed out. On the other hand the costs paid by the victims are horrendous, in terms of the vast scale of suffering imposed upon them. This is the fundamental conflict at the heart of our dispute, and any complete analysis must fully address and resolve this conflict.

3.1.2 Undefinedness of terms

Second, note that some of the essential terms of our argument are undefined. Throughout your own presentation you have used phrases such as “moral and ethical beings,” and “moral community.” But note that these terms are completely undefined. What exactly is a “moral being”? And what on Earth is a “moral community”? I doubt very much that you can provide any sort of coherent definition for these terms. Here you are again, simply stringing words together without troubling to consider what they mean, or if they even mean anything.

On my side I have used terms such as “moral criminality” and “moral justification”; again without providing any definition. An academic philosopher could look at our argument and say, Well they're both idiots. They are having this argument without defining the most essential and fundamental terms of the argument. (Though I can tell you that on my side I know exactly what I mean when I use these terms.)

A complete analysis must address this issue too; must provide a clear definition of terms, not leave them up in the air and subject to unknown interpretation.

3.1.3 Lack of basis

More broadly, neither of us has presented a formal *basis* for our position—that is to say, an explicit set of principles as foundation for our position. Our exchange thus far has been largely fragmentary: you make a series of *ad hoc* points; I pick them off one by one and make a series of points of my own. This is all quite interesting, and we can certainly look at this and see which of these individual points are valid and which are not.

But neither of us has presented a consistent set of principles to establish when it is, or is not, justifiable to victimize others. Is it always, because there are benefits to be gained by the perpetrators? Or is it never, because of the suffering caused to the victims? Or is it sometimes, based on the merits of each particular case? And if it is sometimes, then what are the principles that govern whether any particular case of exploitation is permissible, or impermissible? What are the rules, so to speak, to discriminate in a logical, defensible way between forms of deliberate cruelty we consider acceptable, and those we do not?

3.2 A general philosophical theory

What is needed, and thus far absent, is some kind of general philosophical theory to resolve these various issues. The body of writing I have been working on represents just such a theory.

I have formulated a general philosophical theory that I believe is quite original, providing a new lens through which to look at moral questions. Among other elements this comprises a uniform theoretical framework for looking at moralities in general, the derivation of a canonical moral formula based on formal reason and logic, and a rational analysis of human moral functioning.

The overall construct is complete, wholly self-consistent, accounts for all relevant empirical facts, and leaves behind no puzzle or paradox. This provides the benefits of all generalized theories, providing a uniform way of looking at a multiplicity of disparate situations under the same set of principles. I make the assertion that this construct can, in principle, be used to analyze and resolve any moral dilemma.

In particular, this construct addresses and resolves every aspect of our own argument, including all the above mentioned issues. It provides an unambiguous definition of terms, including that of the central, and elusive, notion of “morality.” It addresses everything either of us has said, and provides a rational resolution to our various points of contention. This construct also presents the basis for my own position; that is, the explicit principles that form the logical foundation for my position.

I am presenting this work in the form of a series of essays, each presenting a specific conceptual component. Each essay can be read and understood individually, and together they form a complete and coherent philosophical treatise. Initially I am web publishing these for unrestricted readership by anyone. On completion of the constituent essays I also expect to publish the complete set in the form of a self-published book.

If nothing else, I believe others may find this interesting. Beyond that, others may find this a useful framework in thinking about their own moral choices. And possibly this may eventually affect society at large, influencing our decisions about the sorts of actions we take collectively.

3.3 Pointers to more information

If you would like to know more, a brief overview is available at:
<http://andrew.l.hammoude.byname.net/MoralPhilosophy>

In addition the first essay to be published, titled, *Moral Philosophy: An Abstract Approach*, is available for review at: <http://andrew.l.hammoude.byname.net/PLPC/150020>

This essay presents one of the basic conceptual building blocks: an abstract modelling of human moral functioning. If you are interested this will give you an idea of the general style of this work, and how I begin to create a generalized framework for thinking about and analyzing moral questions.

A much more comprehensive description is available in another document, a formal project outline I have written, which I am using to solicit endorsement and support for this work. This provides a detailed description of the major conceptual components of this construct, and how they fit together into a coherent whole. This is a private document and not available online, but I can provide you a copy if you wish. If you are interested this will give you a clear picture of the overall composition of this construct and its various component pieces. I think you will also see how this relates to our own debate, and why I am interested in using it as source material. Please let me know if you would like me to provide this additional document.

4. PUBLICATION

Our written exchange provides a good example of the sorts of arguments typically presented in support of vivisection, and how they are answered by those in opposition. I would like to publish the complete record of our interaction for readership by anyone, so that any interested person can review our respective arguments and draw their own conclusions. Aside from the objective arguments I believe our exchange also provides some insight into the mentality and character of people on both sides; again, readers are free to make their own judgement.

4.1 Format & distribution

I propose to present the totality of our written exchange, both the emails and letters, including this concluding one. I will present things in chronological order as a single narrative thread, with annotations and formatting cues so the reader can readily understand the sequence and progress of our interaction. I will also provide each individual item in verbatim source form, so anyone can verify the integrity of the narrative format.

Our exchange represents a minuscule addition to a much larger debate; nevertheless, my intention is for it to be readily available and referenceable by any interested person or organization. To this end I propose to distribute notice of the publication widely on social media, and will also submit notice to various relevant organizations, either for republishing on their own website, or to be linked to as an external resource. My intention is to encourage open readership of our debate, and for anyone researching either of us to find it easily among the search results.

4.2 Supplementary analysis essay

To a large extent our exchange speaks for itself. However I also propose to supplement this with an explicit analysis of our debate, in the form of a separate essay.

This will not be part of the treatise proper, which is wholly general in nature, but rather one of a series of follow-on or adjunct essays I anticipate writing. Note that with the general theory in place, this sets the stage for examining any number of specific examples, and I think your written statements and my responses make an illustrative case study.

4.2.1 Objective analysis

As noted, our written exchange as it stands is fragmentary in nature, comprising your somewhat disconnected collection of points followed by my answers, but with none of this connected to any underlying basis. The essay will remedy this by providing a systematic analysis of our various objective arguments, in the context of my own theoretical basis principles. I believe this will dispose definitively of the objective elements of our dispute.

4.2.2 Subjective analysis

In addition to the objective component the essay will also include a comprehensive *ad hominem* analysis, though I am using this term without its usual antagonistic meaning—I simply mean a rational analysis of the individual characteristics that give rise to our differing viewpoints.

In my mind this is an essential component of the broader debate. We may ask, why do you and I, looking at the same facts and circumstances, maintain these radically different viewpoints? Clearly, something is amiss somewhere. A complete analysis must provide a clear accounting for this discrepancy, and the accounting resides in the differing moral and intellectual characteristics of the participants. In the briefest of nutshells: in moral terms, one of us is speciesist while the other is not; and in intellectual terms, one of us is functioning on the basis of thought, while the other is functioning on the basis of non-thought.

As mentioned, my general philosophical writing includes my own critical analysis of human moral functioning. I believe that your own personal characteristics are systemic throughout humanity—as a species we are innately speciesist, and as a species we have a natural propensity to formulate glib self-justifications on the basis of non-thought. And since these characteristics are systemic, reflected back at everyone by everyone, they go largely unrecognized and unexamined.

I make the case that the endless tyranny, depredation, injustice, and cruelty pervasive throughout our human affairs is a consequence of a set of very basic human characteristics, and in my general analysis I identify these explicitly. Some of these are quite obvious; others I believe are more subtle and not well

appreciated. These include a general willingness to cause harm to others in the pursuit of self-interest; a general insensitivity and indifference to the full measure of costs imposed on victims; a psychopathic lack of empathy for those considered of lesser account; and a systemic intellectual negligence in failing to conceptualize these factors explicitly.

I believe all these things are clearly on display throughout your written statements. Indeed, had you deliberately set out to present yourself in an unfavourable light, I believe you could scarcely have achieved a finer success. Essentially you state your self-interest and lack of empathy quite explicitly, and the intellectual negligence is apparent to any attentive reader.

4.3 Result: a complete holistic understanding

I think you can see how all this fits together. My philosophical theory provides a general framework for thinking about moral issues; our interaction represents a fitting case in point; and the accompanying essay ties these together, placing our interaction in a general context. At the end of this we have a complete understanding of every aspect of our disagreement, both objective and subjective. Objectively, we can see plainly enough that your various arguments are dialectically false. And subjectively, we understand the underlying mindset that causes you to maintain your position with such firm commitment, despite lack of any valid logical support.

In particular, we understand our disagreement as proceeding from two radically different mental frameworks. Yours, comprising a set of unexamined organic predilections married to self-interest; and mine, based on clear principles and analysis. Within the confines of your speciesism you perceive your own form of exploitation in purely intuitive terms, and you perceive it in isolation, with no connection to all those other instances of unspeakable human atrocity. But in the context of our general theory we look at things analytically, and here we see your exploitation as just one particular instance of a general pattern of human depravity, different in the specifics, but conforming to the same underlying paradigm. It goes from something unique and privileged as under your viewpoint, to something generic as under mine, and ultimately driven by precisely the same elements of mindless, psychopathic human self-interest.

4.3.1 Influence on thinking of others

This reasoned analysis may go some way towards influencing the thinking of others. For those who abhor animal experimentation but are outnumbered and outvoiced by the majority, this will provide some solid, clear-minded validation of their position. For the many more who share your own biological prejudices, but who also respect rational argument, this may perhaps induce them to take a step beyond the limits of their own innate speciesism.

4.4 Request for consent to publish

The supplementary analysis essay is not yet ready for publication. However, publication of our interaction record can be accomplished very expeditiously, so I'd like to proceed with this immediately, then follow with the essay some time later.

May I have your consent to publish our written communication as I have described? Of course, I don't seriously expect any sort of response from you, and truly, I'd prefer it that way. But I wanted to give you the opportunity to respond if you wish, and thus forestall any complaint you might make, that I published our exchange without allowing you an opportunity to voice any objections.

Since our debate took place freely and with no confidentiality attached, I believe there is nothing improper in making it public. And therefore this is to advise you that absent any objection from you I will proceed with the publication in two weeks from the date of this letter.

Note that the Internet is permanent, and once it's out there it's out there for good. After you and I are gone this will remain as part of the record of our time on this Earth, so if you do wish to comment, now is the time.

4.4.1 Additional materials

I can provide some additional materials if these would be helpful. I have already mentioned the detailed project outline for my general philosophical treatise. In addition I can provide our interaction record in the annotated narrative form I intend to present it, and also my draft notes for the accompanying essay. Please let me know if you would like me to provide any of these items.

4.5 Personal information & biography

Regarding our personal information, identifying and contact information for myself is available on my website. As for yourself I will provide your name, but no contact information.

However I would also like to include a brief biography by way of background. I have written a draft biography, included for your review. But this is based on my own very limited information, and may well be out of date or inaccurate, so please make corrections or edits as necessary. In particular it would be helpful for you to correct or expand on your education and professional work, where I have scant information.

Again, I don't seriously expect any follow up from you, and my realistic purpose is only to present the opportunity, for you to act upon or not as you wish. So absent any corrections from you, I will just go with what I have.

4.5.1 End of correspondence

This now brings our interaction to a conclusion, from my point of view as well as yours, and I expect no further communication between us.

Andrew Hammoude