

Materialism Pt. 1 of 4

Most of my email is positive (alas, due to time constraints I am often unable to answer most of it). When I get something critical, I spend time reading it. I am not perfect. Sometimes readers catch errors or have worthwhile suggestions. Among my favorites is an email from one Terry Hayfield, sent back in 2004 in response to my initial “The Real Matrix” series. I still have the printout. It presented itself not as a criticism but as an “offer to share research.” His results differed from mine, and he argued that there was a false premise in my reasoning. He did not launch a personal attack, or attack NewsWithViews.com. He argued a rational case in a way that got my attention and led to a correspondence that continued for several years.

I contrast this with an email from someone I’ll call RB (his initials; I’ll not use his name to save him embarrassment), received the day Part 3 of “Materialism” appeared. He labeled himself: “a secular, agnostic, non-observant liberal Jew.” This after an opening sentence not offering to share research but describing my article as “typical of NewsWithViews; utter poppycock, drivel, hogwash, bunk, tripe etc.”

Great way to win friends and influence people, dude!

But I’ve learned that debates over what is very fundamental to our thinking and our moral lives – over worldviews, that is – will sometimes invoke hostility instead of constructive dialogue. RB’s email, having begun on a bad note, went downhill from there. I wondered if he’d really read what I’d written or just scrolled up and down, saw a few words and lines he didn’t like, then took to his keyboard to bang out a long paragraph of hysterics against what he assumed I’d said.

RB “[found] it highly offensive that Christians like yourself arrogantly claim to have a monopoly on morality and virtue,

and fatuously pretend that you can only be a good person if you are a believing Christian ...”

Hold the bus. Did I say Christians were good people because they were Christians? Now admittedly Part 4 was still a week or so away and so unavailable, but somehow I doubt RB’s having the whole thing in front of him would have made a difference. I never said that Christians were “good people.” In Part 4 I was explicit about their being prone to the same weaknesses and temptations as non-Christians. Even prior to that material, I had not said we have a “monopoly on morality and virtue,” whatever that is.

My argument vis-à-vis morality was that given the failure of every secular ethical theory, Christian accounts of morality are surely no worse off!

RB then went on an extended rant about sex / sexual misconduct and promiscuity / abortion / contraceptives (which I never mentioned). The sexual revolution he called “nothing but a myth” which would astonish those who lived through it, especially parents who lost communication with their children over it. But what sketchy details RB offers about sexual peccadillos and misadventures prior to the 1960s actually lend strong support to my thesis, that we are a fallen species who cannot save ourselves. For again I’d not stated that “no one engaged in sexual misconduct and promiscuity [or that] there were no abortions or hardly any ...” What I’d noted was that now we had ethical theories in which these were all very much at home. RB continues: “Sexual promiscuity has existed all over the world for thousands of years and abortion has also been common all over the world for thousands of years. However, Christianity has also fostered an extremely harmful prudishness, puritanism and sexual repression for 2,000 years ...”

Very Freudian sounding, Freud having been a leading “secular, agnostic, liberal Jew.” It’s the height of political

incorrectness to say it, but “secular, agnostic, liberal Jews” have an obsession with sex I’ve long found puzzling. Conversations I’ve had with them (mostly academics, admittedly) tend to veer in that direction sooner or later. Since most “gentiles” do not share this fascination, at least not as a core part of their worldview, I suppose we’re “repressed.” Another feature of the “secular, agnostic, liberal Jew” is their assumption they’ve gotten inside others’ minds and psyches, divining their supposed neuroses. We’re the arrogant ones? What do they propose as the cure? A sexually “liberated” culture – which is pretty much what we have in the twenty-first century, with (e.g.) Miley Cyrus performing nearly naked, is it not?

That aside, one could just offer the obvious *reductio ad absurdum* that murder has “also been common all over the world for thousands of years.” Maybe we should get rid of all laws and traditions and worldviews that “repress” our hidden desires to slaughter one another in cold blood! Yeah, that’ll work!

RB’s next few lines are about poverty, perhaps unsurprisingly. As I noted – again it had to wait for Part 4 – Christians have been remiss in this area and are vulnerable to criticism. I stated specifically that Jesus did not command us to care for the poor, or offer health care, only if we can make a profit doing so.

But having conceded that much, I’d like to see what “secular, agnostic, liberal Jews” are doing about poverty. Those I’ve known tend to support the status quo, which means mindlessly supporting the leviathan banks and the bought-and-paid-for political classes whose policies bear primary responsibility for widening inequality and worsening poverty in our time. Pot, meet kettle. I wonder how many donations RB or his buddies have made, or fundraisers conducted, to alleviate poverty in places like, e.g., Haiti. (I have, incidentally.) My response: put your money where your mouth is, or shut up!

There was more to make me wonder if English is this guy's native language: "The notion that if you are an atheist, you think there is no such thing as right and wrong and that everything should be considered permissible is abject poppycock." Did I say atheists as a group believe there is no such thing as right and wrong? I did not. Indeed, the bulk of Part 2 takes up secular efforts to elucidate right versus wrong in a material universe – efforts which make no sense if they think there is no right or wrong. My argument is that these efforts fail, often giving breathtakingly bad advice in the process. That's hugely different from saying those making them don't believe in right or wrong. (Maybe RB did not read Part 2. Not my problem.)

Finally there is that now-familiar canard about a "Christian Taliban" trying to take over the U.S., an "extremely dangerous" conspiracy that "must be stopped before they get power in America" and "some of its members are contributors to News With Views" [sic].

I am sure my fellow NewsWithViews.com contributors will be surprised to hear of their cultural influence! By the way, I often see this Taliban reference in atheist-leftist rants. Perhaps RB can point to Christians who practice some equivalent of Sharia law, kill apostates, mutilate women's genitals, burn villages, etc. I've never seen them. Am I blind or is he hallucinating? I don't think it's the former.

There is no Christian Taliban! The idea is absurd! As I noted in my very brief private reply to RB, there are no Christian groups with the resources, even if they had the will. Most have been effectively marginalized in the present culture of materialism, hedonism, and multiculturalism. No Christian I know of has the deep pockets of, e.g., a George Soros (another "secular, agnostic, liberal Jew") who has been bankrolling leftist causes for decades, or of those running the leviathan banks, other corporations, the political class, or the Hollywood culture where "secular, agnostic, liberal Jews"

predominate whether anyone cares to admit it or not.

No doubt RB and perhaps others will interpret such remarks as “anti-semitic.” This, too, has gotten to be a tiresome canard, made by some Jews in response to someone outside their orbit noting their economic and cultural power. It usually comes prior to their honoring Godwin’s Law and invoking the specter of Adolf Hitler who, in RB’s words, “was NOT an atheist and never renounced his Catholic faith.” Take that, Catholics! By the way, do Catholics or any other Christian denominations have special organizations such as B’nai B’rith or the Anti-Defamation League to function as attack dogs to destroy the reputations of their critics? The late Joe Sobran once said, “An anti-semite used to be someone who hated Jews. Now it’s someone Jews hate.”

Why bother with a “Postscript” such as this? Because it offers an interesting case study. Most of the issues raised are only indirectly related to my central claim, which is that materialism as a worldview (its premises and reasoning laid out in Part 1) does not offer a viable account of the way reality is put together, nor a moral backbone to support a large civilization.

The past hundred years show this conclusively. We’ve illuminated the ties between materialism and leftism, ties going back at least 250 years. Both reject original sin and instead follow, e.g., Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1778), arguably the founding father of modern progressivist leftism, holding that our institutions are to blame for moral turpitude and modern corruption (Rousseau singled out private property, the family, and unsurprisingly, the church). Both believe that the right kind of technocratic and sexual tinkering can save us and build a global, hedonist Utopia. Responses to critics of materialism and leftism tend to be either as incompetent as RB’s, intellectually dishonest, or both. Leftists especially are threatened by the avalanche of evidence against their dearest assumptions – to the point where some of their number

will set out with efficiency and enthusiasm to destroy the careers of scientists who offer detailed exemplars of said evidence. Thus perhaps it should be unsurprising that leftist keyboard commandos, Jewish or not, go into attack mode when some of us take aim at their false premises and absurd canards.

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