

Darwinism and the Demise of Man

With the culture wars escalating in the United States, there is no more foundational or controversial issue than the topic of origins. On one end of the philosophical spectrum is intelligent design, a broader version of its theologically conservative first cousin, Biblical creationism, and then naturalistic Darwinism. This essay addresses Darwinism and asserts its intellectual bankruptcy as a worldview because it eradicates, if consistently argued, both the mind of man and his volitional freedom in the process. In doing so, this essay will outline how it leads to the reduction of man in ways that may never have been intended. It will address the import of origins in relation to the demise of man, how one's view of origins affects one's view of other contingent realities, like the human mind, and finally, how the reduction of the mind decimates one of the most revered of human qualities, volitional freedom. While conventional wisdom regards human beings as inherently and substantially superior to the rest of nature, Darwinism discounts the substantive uniqueness of human beings in relation to other creatures, and reduces the human race to a product, even a by-product, of purely natural processes.

The demise of man begins with the reduction of ultimate reality to a purely natural and material one that now dominates both scientific and academic circles via an evolutionary curriculum. In fact, Darwinists not only assert a purely naturalistic reality, but seem bent on defining the concept in non-dualistic terms. It is not enough to state the nature of the universe in positive materialistic terms, so the tendency toward the forthright denial of dualism, because of its idea crushing implications, has become

philosophically kosher. According to Daniel Dennett, for example, dualism must be avoided at all costs (*Consciousness Explained* 37). While Dennett confirms his personal disdain for dualism, the European atheist, Michael Onfray, reflects the same a priori rejection of dualism by driving the wedge between Darwinism and dualism even deeper. Confirming the unbridgeable gap that exists between the two realities, he has this to say, “First of all, belief in the existence of matter, to the exclusion of every other reality, leads logically to the assertion of the existence of a material God. And thus to a denial of his spiritual, timeless, and immaterial qualities” (86). In other words, according to Onfray, materialism ipso facto eliminates dualism and any vestiges of supernaturalism that may logically be associated with it. God, then, in whatever form he is perceived, is the product of the same natural processes that dictate in a Darwinistic world.

Richard Dawkins also denounces dualism. “Like most scientists, I am not a dualist,” he boasts, because dualists “acknowledge a fundamental distinction between matter and mind. A monist,” he more definitively notes, “believes that mind is a manifestation of matter – material in a brain or perhaps a computer – and cannot exist apart from matter” (Dawkins 179). Here Dawkins asserts his monistic worldview by discounting the immateriality of the mind and emphatically denying the existence of anything other than matter. So prevalent is this idea, that it has become the ultimate interpretive paradigm from which all other disciplines are now studied. Modern academia, for example, bombards young science and history enthusiasts from middle into graduate school with the same view of origins and human history to which Darwinists subscribe. Simply put, Darwinism serves as the academic platform and

justification for a materialistic worldview, and while there are varying degrees within its ranks, the denial of a dualistic reality, including God, is the most basic premise of them all.

Beginning with the topic of origins is foundational to the idea that Darwinism logically results in the demise of man, and it is foundational because it lays the parameters within which all subsequent information and issues must be addressed, including anthropology. Logically, as Bruce Little, professor at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, notes, "You can never go beyond what you start with" (Little 35). In other words, a Darwinistic view of reality is all-encompassing in its scope, and as a result, sets the qualitative interpretive boundaries within which all other contingent realities must be interpreted. Hence, naturalistic Darwinism is bound by its own philosophical mindset with the universal setting the boundaries by which the particulars must be confined, defined, and discussed.

While the argument may seem irrelevant at this point in relation to the demise of man, it must be reiterated that one's view of ultimate reality logically confines all other contingent particulars of which human beings are a part. If ultimate reality is only physical, for example, then no particular within the universal can supersede the essence of the ultimate. Hence, positing a purely natural world drags human beings down the same ontological path in tow. This philosophical step leads us to the next issue in the downward spiral of human essence, the reduction of the mind.

Perhaps nothing reveals the reduction of man more than the way in which Darwinists define the human mind. While the traditional Western view of the human mind has been dualistic, generally, and theistic, particularly, the Darwinistic view of said mind is physicalistic, and, as a result, necessarily subjugates all of human nature, including the mind, to the same laws of physics as any other physical reality. It enslaves humanity to an existence subservient to the same laws of cause and effect as any other mere physical and mindless entity. Consistent Darwinists, then, make the mind and brain synonymous. Asserting this fact is the evolutionist, Paul Churchland, as quoted by J. P. Moreland.

The important point about the standard evolutionary story” he says, “is that the human species and all of its features are the wholly physical outcome of a purely physical process.... If this is the correct account of our origins then there seems neither need, nor room, to find any nonphysical substances or properties into our theoretical account of ourselves. We are creatures of matter. And we should learn to live with that fact. (50)

What Churchland says is simple. Man is the product of purely natural processes, and therefore, wholly and only physical. This “reality,” according to him, renders the need to make anything else of our being, including our minds, unnecessary. Simply put, everything is physical and the consistent Darwinist must resign the mind of man, now synonymous with the brain, to the same laws of physics as the rest of the physical world.

In keeping with the “wholly physical” concept, John Searle also reminds his readers of “something that we have known all along: namely, mental states are biological phenomena. Consciousness, intentionality, subjectivity and mental causation

are all a part of our biological life history, along with growth, reproduction, the secretion of bile and digestion” (92). With poignancy, Searle leaves no room for interpretation, but insists, rather, on the purely physical nature of man and those contingent realities, like consciousness and mind, traditionally thought to be immaterial. In fact, equating mental states with the “secretion of bile and digestion,” says it all.

The reduction of the mind to a mere two spherical fleshy organ known as the brain, leads to the final step in man’s demise. With that ontological downgrade, came the next domino in the diminution of the species, because when the mind vanished via the Darwinian worldview, so did the freedom to choose. Soberingly, nothing escapes the materialistic boundaries from which Darwinism emerged, and volitional freedom is no exception. In other words, in the kind of world posited by naturalistic Darwinists, man is reduced from a freethinking self-willed creature to one determined by the same physical laws and forces that dictate all other physical realities.

While this conclusion is a difficult one to accept, it logically follows the anti-dualism that permeates modern Darwinistic thinking, and the renowned physicist, Stephen Hawking, encapsulates the problem very well in *Black Holes and Baby Universes*. According to him, determinism is unavoidable in a purely naturalistic universe, and as a result, volitional freedom is both a philosophical and psychological farce. In fact, he notes, that even those who think themselves free are merely determined to think so (28). Dan Barker, evangelical preacher turned atheist, concurs. “I am a determinist,” he boasts. “We have the illusion of free will, which to me is what ‘free will’ actually means.” In other words, there is nothing actual about human free will,

because, at best, it is nothing more than an illusion. Notice, however, how Barker still tries to give credence to this illusion. “To me,” he continues, “acting as if we have it while openly admitting that we don’t is a good strategy for getting through life and making moral judgments...” (128). To Hawking and Barker’s dismay, however, the logical conclusions of their own Darwinistic worldviews are unavoidable. They exist in an “either/or” world, a world in which mind either exists or it does not, and if it does not, then a physically determined universe is inevitable. It leaves us with a purely physical world, with purely physical causes, and purely physical effects. There is no logical middle ground in the Darwinian scheme of things.

While much more could be said regarding the demise of man under the Darwinian banner, this essay reveals the most obvious collateral damage of the worldview. The reduction of ultimate reality to purely physical processes dragged all other contingent realities down in tow and eradicated the traditional dualistic human qualities in its wake. This philosophical demolition project eradicated both the mind of man as well as his legitimate ability to choose. The demise of man is now complete.

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