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MacDonald King Aston

Fire Eater! Editor

Man the Machine: A Conversation with Bazz Childress and MacDonald King Aston

Part I: The Henhouse

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Dear Bazz,

Having reread your article, *Upon the Sea Adrift*, on DixieInternet.com, let me congratulate you for its insights, which are many. As you noted in the article, modernity has rejected, in large, the traditional stance toward the transcendent awareness of God. As you put it, "...thoroughly modern humans have ceased to be spiritual creatures." In your previous article, *Accounting For Ourselves*, you located the reason for this cessation in that "...our focus has turned toward the material as opposed to the spiritual." In this assessment, I concur. While not an historian of ideas, being too preoccupied with the actual ideas themselves to mount a genealogical timeline upon the wall of human reason and history, nevertheless I do have some familiarity with the historical reasons for the ascension of materialism or, as it is often called in speculative philosophy, philosophical naturalism.

"Nonetheless, all theories of materialism (naturalism) are, despite the ballyhoo, silly fairy tales told by either the ignorant or the liar, or both."

My understanding of the rise of materialism and the resultant disinclination given to the realm of the spiritual rests upon the Enlightenment thinkers of the 17th and 18th centuries, with their emphasis upon reason as the guiding principle of the age. Reason, of course, requires more than head scratching; it requires a method of applying it. The scientific methodology, more than any other way, leaned western culture toward

materialism in a way no other rationalistic enterprise could. With Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727), not only did western modernity receive wholesale the notions of quantitative mechanics but also Newton's mechanical philosophy as well. This mechanistic philosophy endeavored to explain phenomena by "imagined mechanisms among invisible particles of matter." Newton was merely enlarging on the new "scientific revolution" that previous philosophers had already begun (Copernicus, Kepler, Descartes). From the French philosopher, Pierre Gassendi (1592-1655), Newton got his "atomism," a mechanistic "explanation" of nature. Atomism, of course, stretches back to the ancient Greek thinkers, and Gassendi merely revised Epicurean atomism to make the Christian God the creator of the "atoms."

The tendency, then, toward a materialistic view of phenomena, seems to have been with us for a long time. There are many reasons why people felt, and do feel, compelled to form explanatory theses about the world in terms of the machine metaphor. The important thing to note is that every mechanistic theory of reality is wrong. Perhaps I can delve into why later, but for now it is enough to point out that the world-as-machine metaphor so influenced western culture that science itself is now exclusively identified with that machine metaphor. In fancy terms, science has defined itself as a branch of speculative philosophy, in specific, *philosophical naturalism*, the doctrine that the only valid theories are those that reject anything "beyond" (another metaphor) the

"natural world" (another metaphor).

Philosophical naturalism, or materialism, now controls not only science, but nearly every other discipline as well. As I had mentioned to you previously, we can thank Darwin for the religious fanaticism we now know as "descent with modification," or "evolution." Because of evolutionism, science is in firm control of the terms of discourse by which science itself is defined.

The foxes rule the henhouse, in other words.

Most Americans have little idea about the gross materialism that so dominates their lives, and that is a shame considering the impact materialism has upon the dominant culture. The problem lies in the perceived complexity of materialism as well as the "common-sensist" interpretations of phenomena. Nonetheless, all theories of materialism (naturalism) are, despite the ballyhoo, silly faery tales told by either the ignorant or the liar, or both. As you put it, "Our ancient forbears' stance acknowledged that there is a Life-Source and that a human life is a spiritual quest toward the end of returning properly to that Life-Source." The point I would like to make is that the modern theories of materialism, which have so damaged the psyches of most of us, are easy to refute despite their ubiquity. It all begins with what you called a "Life-Source" and what I would call "Person." Both are traditionalist and both transcend the world of the seen, the world of phenomena.

IN CHRISTO IESU FILIO DEI,

Mac