

## THE MATERIALIST HAS A PROBLEM WITH TIME

“What might have been and what has been  
Point to one end, which is always present...”

T S Eliot<sup>1</sup>

Because he denies that there is any cause but matter, the materialist has to find catalysts to assist it and to fill the void left by the absence of those influences common sense would otherwise require. These ‘catalysts’ are chance and time. *Chance* names an accidental, if fortuitous, convergence of events. *Time*, marking the succession of present moments, is the measure of change. We conceive of time as a continuum, but it is not so in reality. This is a contrivance of the mind.

We mortal men are only too conscious of the fact that our existence *now* provides no guarantee that we will exist *hereafter*. We admit the fact, but fail to grasp the principle of which it is a corollary: *no material living thing exists except in the present moment*. Material things do not enjoy existence all at once (*tota simul*); rather, existence is meted out to them moment by moment.

The materialist argues that the demonstrable first appearance of life in the distant past ensures its repetition in the present—

“Contrary to the creationist position, the whole argument [we present] is critically dependent on the presumption of the unbroken continuity of the organic world—that is, on the reality of organic evolution and on the presumption that all living organisms on earth are natural forms in the profoundest sense of the word, no less natural than salt crystals, atoms, waterfalls, or galaxies.”<sup>2</sup>

Implicit in this assertion is the idea that time is a material continuum connecting us to the past, somewhat as the rail line connects the train traveller just arrived in Darwin with Adelaide which he left some 72 hours earlier. But that something be living here and now owes nothing to the past, save *per accidens*; as the traveller owes nothing of his living here and now to the place he has left or the journey he has taken, save *per accidens*. Insofar as time can be said to have any part in the business at all, he owes his being only to the present moment.

Those who deny religious belief think that religious philosophers rely, similarly, on a continuum of time in their endeavours to prove God’s existence—

*Your father had a father, and he a father, and he a father before him, and so on backwards in time, generation before generation. There must have been a first. And he must have been created. Ergo, there is a God.*

Such an argument is ineffectual for the same reason. It relies on a series of causes subordinated not *per se*, but *per accidens*. You cannot prove the existence of a creator

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<sup>1</sup> *Four Quartets*, Burnt Norton I

<sup>2</sup> Dr Michael Denton in his *Nature’s Destiny*, (The Free Press, New York, 1998); Introduction (*Note to the Reader*), p. xviii. For a detailed criticism of the shortcomings of Dr Denton’s argument on the reasonableness of the materialist position see the author’s paper *Shaking the Darwinian Foundations* at [http://www.superflumina.org/PDF\\_files/shaking\\_darwin.pdf](http://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/shaking_darwin.pdf)

by going backwards. You prove it by showing that the act of creation is occurring now, *in the present moment*.

### One and Many: Fixity and Change

Why are there *many* horses, but only one *horse*—i.e., only one ‘horsey’ nature in which they all share? Why is it that this individual, Melbourne Cup winner *Makybe Diva*, can be conceived, be born from her mother, mature and grow so vigorously as to be among the greatest of race winners, then languish and die—while the reality she exemplifies so well, *horse*, will continue inevitably in other, and perhaps greater, race winners?

There are two principles that govern her being, principles which govern the being of every material thing—a *principle of change*, and a *principle of fixity*. The principle of fixity determines that, regardless of the exigencies that may befall her, *Makybe Diva* remains a horse. The principle of change ensures that she will suffer the ailments horses are heir to, and that her days will be numbered. The principle of fixity (whose reality the materialist is so quick to deny) is called *form*—in *Makybe Diva’s* case, the form of *horse*. The principle of change is *matter*. What provides the certainty in our material world is *form*—in the almost infinite variety of its manifestations. What provides the *uncertainty* is *matter*. The materialist has backed the wrong horse.

Even more fundamental for the horse than the issue of *what* it is, is the issue *that* it is, i.e., its existence. The materialist confuses the two—rolls them into one. If he applies his mind to the issue at all it is to assume that the horse exists of itself. But this is impossible.<sup>3</sup>

There are, then, three principles, three realities that determine the present being of the horse, as they determine the present being of every material thing. The first two go to the horse’s *essence*. The horse did not choose its *essence*; this is something it received, both as to matter and to form. It did not give itself *existence*; this also is something it received. Aristotle noted a great truth in a simple phrase—*for living things to live is the same as to be*. What follows? Whatever influence it was that, at the moment of her conception, gave *life* to the filly *Makybe Diva*, also gave her *existence* (be). But to bring something from non-existence to existence (from non-be to be) is creation!<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Which may be demonstrated in any number of ways. Here are two. 1. If the horse was its own reason for existence there is no reason why it would ever die. 2. The Principle of Indeterminacy applies—*that which can be many, from itself is not one of the many*. If water can be hot and can be cold, there must be some cause other than water why it is hot. (If it had from itself that it be hot, wherever you had water you would have hot water.) In the same way, if a horse can exist and not exist, there must be a cause other than its ‘horsiness’ why it exists: it does not exist from itself.

<sup>4</sup> In answer to those who would assert that her *life* resulted from tissue already living—the gametes of her dam and her sire—and therefore her *being* resulted from the being of these elements, it must be insisted that the life and being of each of these elements was limited (and ordained) to fertilisation by its complement [using ‘fertilisation’ generally, not precisely]. The two in their conjunction determine *what* the new horse shall be as well as its unique characteristics; they do not give it life or existence. The gametes operate only as instruments for the achieving of the end, the new horse. The new life, the new being, is that of neither.

And the process continues moment by moment—and will continue whenever she exists. Whatever influence it is *now* (i.e., at this present moment) that sustains the life of the mare, *Makybe Diva*, *now also sustains her in existence*. That is, her continued existence requires a continued act of creation.<sup>5</sup> These influences operate *now*, not in the past, and not because of the past.

### **Materialism and Subjectivism**

Whence did it come, this idea that *essence* being given, we can assume *existence*—take the *existence* of a thing for granted? It began with Martin Luther's rejection of the authority of God and His Holy Church. The Church's philosophy, grounded (since it is from God) in common sense, ever demanded that there must be a cause of both essence and existence.<sup>6</sup> When Luther and his followers chose to abandon the truth that God had revealed in favour of their own opinions they embraced a cognate philosophical error: distortion of theology brought about a distortion in philosophy. It is a *Protestant* idea that God is like a watchmaker, little more than an efficient cause, who having begun the business aeons of time ago sits idly by allowing the universe to develop willy nilly<sup>7</sup>. It is this silly idea that with the passage of the centuries has facilitated and fostered the development of materialism; that has allowed the folly of Darwinian theory to dominate, and darken, men's minds.

*Materialism*, the philosophy that confuses all causality with material causality, is balanced by a parallel philosophical error, *subjectivism*, the philosophy that confuses mental being with real being. They are like counterweights, one each side of him, that enable a man who has scorned the bridge of common sense, to walk a tightrope. Modern materialism's chief vehicle is Darwinian theory. That theory is grounded in subjectivism for Darwin began his excursus not with reality but with an *idea*, the idea that the immense complexity of the universe can be explained without recourse to any cause but matter.

The modern scientist, thoroughly infected with the virus, insists that no formal cause is needed to explain the rigid species of things. He transposes into reality what exists only in mind—that one species may gradually develop from another. He ignores his intellect and indulges his imagination. No one has ever seen such development; there is no evidence whatsoever that it has ever occurred<sup>8</sup>; but he can *conceive* of it happening. That is enough for him.

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<sup>5</sup> Philosophers give this ongoing creation the technical name *conservation*.

<sup>6</sup> Formulated definitively by St Thomas Aquinas in the XIIIth century. Cf. *Summa Theologiae* I, 3, a. 4.

<sup>7</sup> It was Protestantism that provided the impetus for Descartes' vapid re-invention of philosophy along mechanistic, that is, materialist, lines.

<sup>8</sup> On which topic, see Dr Michael Denton in his *Evolution A Theory In Crisis*, London, 1985, especially at p. 345 where he contends: "Neither of the two fundamental axioms of Darwin's macroevolutionary theory—the concept of the continuity of nature, that is, the idea of a functional continuum of all life forms linking all species together and ultimately leading back to a primaeval cell, and the belief that all the adaptive design of life has resulted from a blind random process—have been validated by one single empirical discovery or scientific advance since 1859. Despite more than a century of intensive effort on the part of evolutionary biologists, the major objections raised by Darwin's critics such as Agassiz, Pictet, Bronn and Richard Owen have not been met." The astute reader will observe that Dr Denton has

To assure himself of certainty in his view about natural things in the present (as remarked above), he *conceives* of time as if it were a real continuum connecting the present with the past.

To address the difficulty that science can detect no material element as the medium in which light and other electromagnetic energies travel though the universe, he assumes these qualities do not need a medium in which to travel. In other words, he conceives of the vast spaces that people the universe as if they are comprised of nothing—as if *nothing* could somehow exist. That this is *eo ipso* impossible never troubles his intellect, because can *imagine* nothing existing.

Again, because he can conceive of the *essence* of a thing as guaranteeing its *existence* he never allows the real distinction between these two to trouble him.

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There is, as Qoheleth says in *Ecclesiastes*, nothing new under the sun. The principle which (as the materialist thinks) sheds great light on the folly of past ages is an old and pagan idea, not at all a new one. It was first advanced two and a half millenia ago by the Greek philosopher Heraclitus [c.545-480 BC] who expressed it more comprehensively than did Darwin when he taught that nothing is the same with itself for a moment. Plato paraphrased his teaching in the *Cratylus*:

“Heraclitus says somewhere that all things are in process and nothing stays still and, likening existing things to the stream of a river, he says that you would not step twice into the same river.” [402A]

But under the influence of the wise, men came to see through the folly of the assertions of Heraclitus.

As, in due course they will come to see through those of Darwin.

Michael Baker

10 November 2009—*St Leo the Great*

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changed his view between 1985 and 1998 on the issue of the existence of ‘a functional continuum of all life forms.’ The reason lies in his unwillingness to abandon the philosophy of materialism despite his intellectual dismantling of its thesis. Cf. the author’s paper *Shaking the Darwinian Foundations* at [http://www.superflumina.org/PDF\\_files/shaking\\_darwin.pdf](http://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/shaking_darwin.pdf) for a critical assessment of his views.