

Attacking Materialism II: a response to Michael Clover

John Baumgardner

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Editor:

Michael Clover in his 3/14/96 letter insists materialist belief "is what makes science possible" and that challenging materialist belief represents an attack on science itself. What an incredible claim! Is Mr. Clover telling us that to do valid science one must be an atheist? Does Mr. Clover insist individuals like Kepler, Newton, Pascal, Faraday, Maxwell, and Kelvin were not real scientists and their contributions not genuine science because they did not hold materialist presuppositions but unabashedly acknowledged instead their belief in God? Are Maxwell's equations not to be trusted because Maxwell was an earnest Christian? Does Mr. Clover truly believe Lab staff members who do not share his atheist assumptions cannot do legitimate science? By what logic must science so restrict its scope to a materialist framework?

A lack of clear thinking also comes out as he addresses the issue of gaps in the fossil record. How can he possibly claim I quoted Stephen Gould out of context when the reality of gaps was what originally drove Gould to propose his model of punctuated equilibrium? The gaps are genuine, and this was precisely the point I was making when I quoted him. Moreover, the gaps exist -- not only at a genus and species level where Gould claims punc-eq operates -- but also, and more significantly, at the levels of family, order, class and phylum. I challenge Mr. Clover to find anywhere in Gould's writings an explanation for the systematic gaps at these higher taxonomic levels. This lack of candor on such crucial issues was one reason I argued why evolution, as normally presented, amounts to intellectual fraud.

Mr. Clover seeks to evade my points about language structures by claiming their reality exists only in the minds of humans. Does he not appreciate the bomb codes he deals with at work are language structures that have a reality outside the human mind? The essence of such structures is not in the paper and carbon particles of printed listings or in the alignments of magnetic domains on a memory disk. The essence is connected to the non-material rules of Fortran of which these codes are an expression. Despite their non-material essence, the codes are nonetheless objectively real. The nuclear weapons in the current US stockpile, for example, would never have existed apart from such programs and the computer simulations they enabled.

All such language structures, as I emphasized in my talk, are an example of an important category of reality that is non-material and cannot be accounted for by the

laws of physics. The existence of this category is a fatal problem for materialism. Unable to cope with this conflict, Mr. Clover insists that the rules of the DNA language are determined by stereochemistry and quantum mechanics. This is sheer fantasy. The specific vocabulary that bestows meaning to triplets of sequential base pairs, for example, is utterly independent of DNA structure so far as anyone can determine.

Finally, Mr. Clover's denial that his reasoning is grounded upon faith-based assumptions is just that -- denial. Even undergraduate mathematics majors understand that every logical framework rests upon an axiomatic foundation. Mr. Clover is an atheist and materialist by faith, whether he is able to admit it or not. But so once was I, until a curtain was pulled back on a dimension so wonderful and surprising that I had no further desire to remain in the darkness.

John Baumgardner