

Readers, Authors, Reviewers

Kiefer Replies

It is a pity that my critics have not heard the tape they complain of, for all their objections are discussed in it. Had they heard the tape and remained unconvinced (a possibility I am willing to allow for) they might have broken new ground by explaining why my analysis of these objections fails to satisfy them. As it is, I can only reply by quoting most of the tape at them (which space considerations forbid) or by retorting that those who have foregone the luxury of hearing an argument should deny themselves the luxury of condemning it (which diplomatic considerations forbid).

Eric Mack has read Taylor's version of the argument, but seems to me to have misunderstood it. Taylor does remark in passing that we assume that our cognitive apparatus is in principle reliable, that we do not infer this reliability from biological theory or from anything else—that it is, as Adam Reed states, "axiomatic in the Aristotelian sense." But he does not offer this as a reply to Psychological Darwinism. His reply is that man's ability to find out truth far exceeds what is needed for survival.

I offer a slightly different reply: Natural selection produces and accounts for adaptive physical behavior. Nature, in Darwinian terms, selects rabbits who run when the wolf approaches. But the selection is independent of why the rabbit runs. It may run because it believes that the wolf will kill it, or because it believes that the wolf wants to play tag, or because it is an unconscious automaton physically programmed to do so. True belief, false belief, or no belief—all that matters for survival is the running. Psychological Darwinists ask, "Why do men have the ability to discover that nightshade berries are poisonous?" and answer, "In order to survive!" But if a belief that nightshade berries are the property of the elves, or a dislike for the taste of nightshade berries, or a purely physical aversive reflex, would accomplish the same thing, then the Psychological Darwinist answer misses the point. It is like the question, "Why do firemen wear

red suspenders?" If it is the color that we are asking about, then the traditional answer, "To hold their pants up!" is simply irrelevant.

Some persons, considering the great variety of complex situations which men encounter, and the ingenuity which they sometimes use in dealing with them, deny that it would be possible, even in principle, for any automaton to behave like that without accompanying and controlling conscious thought. (This is the analogue of arguing that no non-red suspenders can hold up pants. Behaviorists, in this parable, are color-blind.) I am accustomed to refer these persons to books such as R. Ashby's excellent *Design for a Brain: The Origin of Adaptive Behaviour*. Ashby's position on consciousness may be inferred from this quotation: "Throughout the book, consciousness and its related subjective elements are not used for the simple reason that at no point have I found their introduction necessary. . . . Such an observation. . . gives us no right to deduce that consciousness does not exist. The truth is quite otherwise, for the fact of the existence of consciousness is prior to all other facts."

Dean E. Wooldridge is also good—see his *The Machinery of the Brain* and his *Mechanical Man: The Physical Basis of Intelligent Life*. Robert Crim says that Darwinism can account for any physical structure in the human body. Just so. If all physical human behavior (which is what is relevant to biological survival) can be accounted for without reference to consciousness, then Psychological Darwinism is in ruins. I welcome the support of Reed and Crim on this major point.

I take it as obvious that if adaptive behavior does not require thoughts at all, then it does not require true thoughts.

Some persons object as follows: We know that man's mind is suited to the pursuit of truth. Nature could have made us otherwise, and still fit to survive, but she didn't. If you ask why she happened to give us reason rather than reflex as our primary tool of survival, I will shrug and say, "She flipped a coin." The whole question of Psychological Darwinism is a distraction, anyway. We don't need a theory of our origins from

which we can infer the trustworthiness of our minds. The trustworthiness is an axiom!

To this I reply: It is true that we do not need to hold a theory that implies that our minds are trustworthy, but we do need to reject one that implies that they are not. Determinism, as Dr. Branden points out, is such a theory. That a man's beliefs are determined does not imply that they are false. They may be true, just as answers provided by a coin (heads for "yes," tails for "no") may be true. But we assume, not that our beliefs happen to be right, but that they are trustworthy, that we have evidence about the nature of reality. A coin's answers to yes-no questions will sometimes be right, but will never be trustworthy, will never constitute evidence. If determinism is true, we may often have true beliefs, but can never have trustworthy ones. On these grounds, Dr. Branden, as I read him rejects determinism, and on the same grounds I reject Psychological Darwinism and other non-theistic accounts of the origin of man's mind. Those who have difficulty following the structure of my argument should study his. They are strict parallels.

I remind readers that my lectures are called *Objectivism and Theism*—that my argument is not that logical positivism implies theism, but that Objectivism implies theism. Those wishing to refute me must show where the parallel between my refutation of atheism and Dr. Branden's refutation of determinism breaks down—must find a flaw in my argument and show that it is not the analog of a flaw in his. (Those who think him wrong about determinism are not among those to whom my argument is primarily addressed.)

I am asked, "Who made God's mind?" Theists hold, of course, that God's mind, unlike human minds, is eternal and uncaused. For the most part, they also hold that all of reality is related to God in such a way that it is logically impossible for him to be mistaken about it, just as it is self-contradictory to say that a man falsely believes himself to exist, or to be thinking, or to be in pain. (The illusion of pain is a painful illusion.)

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