

Case 2 - Rebutting the Materialist Vision

I return to another quote from Sam Harris' *Free Will* (page 16):

[B]ecause we know that determinism, in every sense relevant to human behavior is true. Unconscious neural events determine our thoughts and action ...

In addition to the previous piece's quote on the cello-playing prodigy, one might compare Harris' point with what one conjoined (attached) monozygotic twin commented about the other "[w]e are two completely separate individuals who are stuck to each other. We have different world views, we have different lifestyles, we think very differently about issues". More generally, studies have found that monozygotic twins whether they were raised together or separately, are more different than alike personality-wise. Thus these clones can closely share the same environment or inhabit separate ones (with whatever differences in epigenetic implications) and still they appear to have comparably different personalities. Given such a contradiction why hasn't science loosened their allegiance bio-robotic determinism?

Side-stepping into the health arena, a 2006 NYT article (G. Kolata, 8/31/2006) offered a description of a healthy and active 92 year old and her identical twin. The latter was "incontinent, [had] had a hip replacement, [had] a degenerative disorder that destroyed most of her vision ... [and had] dementia". Yet the two had the same DNA, grew up together, and lived their lives in the same place. Similarly, the large longevity study reported on in that Kolata article found only small differences in the longevities between monozygotic twins versus same-sex dizygotic twins (who share only half of their variable DNA). These tiny differences resulted in an estimate of "only 3 percent of how long you live compared to the average person can be explained by how long your parents lived". But this amazingly small connection (with an unidentified DNA basis) resulted in an article title of "Live Long? Die Young? Answer Isn't Just in Genes". This title was consistent with the widespread credibility given to the presumptions of scientific materialism.

Next to consider is the transgender phenomenon. It appears that in the last several years media coverage has opened to an ongoing mystery that some individuals appear to strongly identify with the (biologically-) opposite gender. Readers can find articles discussing this unexpected and challenging situation, for example NYT's "What's So Bad About a Boy Who Wants to Wear a Dress?" (8/8/2012). As pointed out in my 2011 EXPLORE paper, what materialist's explanation comes to mind when encountering people who have spent their entire lives wishing they were the opposite sex and a related recent study that found that many of them who have undergone sex-change efforts (transitioned) "knew they had been born into the wrong gender from

childhood”? A scientific explanation would seem to require some kind of mutation in our evolution-selected DNA blueprint collection which beget an individual whose brain then felt committed to identifying with the opposite gender. Beneath the hood here of course, is just programmed molecular interaction where the perceived entities including self and free will are illusions. All of this has to be able to produce - to parental bewilderment - very young children sobbing when they see themselves in the mirror.

It was also worth noting that the transgender phenomena is neighborly with the larger gender scientific challenge, innate exclusive homosexuality. Such gender mysteries allow for the introduction of another flavor of explanation - environmental influences. In the above cited transgender article one authority was cited in suggesting environmental influences involving “overprotective mothers, emotionally absent fathers or mothers who are hostile toward men”. Reading this it is hard not to flash back to critical commentaries on environmentalism such as Steven Pinker’s (*How the Mind Works*, p. 48):

[f]or most of this century [20th], guilty mothers have endured inane theories blaming them for every dysfunction or difference in their children (mixed messages cause schizophrenia, coldness causes autism, domineering causes homosexuality, lack of boundaries causes anorexia, insufficient “motherese” causes language disorders).

Pinker of course presumes that there are largely DNA-based explanations, but what will he and other scientists turn to if that hypothesis continues to fail?

Any careful look at the mysteries apparent in life is likely to quickly encounter a realization that the intellectual confidence in science’s materialist position is unjustified. In writing my paper for the online journal for *Cureus* I got some notable feedback from scientists. None could significantly question the mysteries cited. One commented that the “genuinely mysterious phenomena” considered were consistent with their own conclusion that the “current modes of explanation in human genetics are unrealistically additive, but that the answer is not metaphysics, it is more complex science”. Another conceded that “[y]es, as argued by Christopher, modern genetics does not have ready answers” but “with possibly eons of scientific knowledge to come, is it not possible that our understanding of biological processes will provide credible explanations for what today is beyond comprehension?”. The same scientist later commented that “[s]cience is in many ways it’s own religion” and that “somewhere in the intersection of both worlds [open-minded followers of science and religion] will lay the truth.” These represent large shifts from the prevailing scientific position.