

institutional structures which make injustice inevitable. Now I am seeing the possibility that Chomsky, "the devil's accountant", there is a certain attraction to the undeniability of a body count. But I'm now seeing this perspective less as a bleeding heart response and more as a more attractive debating stance due to quantitative certainty rather than the qualitative nature of the actual human misery. The point which I think needs to be made to anarchist libertarians is that there is no proof that a society freed from militaristic patriarchal hierarchies would do any better until such a society is actually put in place.

Chomsky's worldview seems to me an unfinished project. More precisely, it is his basic focus—the nature of the human mind behind the worldview—which seems unfinished. He proposes a human brain hard-wired to not only represent sensory impressions with symbols, but (more importantly) to connect those symbols grammatically, thus setting the stage for the development of logic and mathematics. But this assertion is difficult or impossible to demonstrate by the ordinary methods of inductive science, so he has a problem with inductive reasoning. If we do have such a facility, its origin is difficult to determine according to the mechanisms discovered by evolutionary theory, so he has a problem with evolution—thereby opening himself to the accusation of being (I love it!) a "crypto-creationist".

Most puzzling of all is his belief that creative expression is central to human consciousness: in other words, it's also something we are all also hard-wired to do. I mean, I think that's wonderful, but I would expect that a reductivist would expect to examine creative expression and find mostly trial-and-error and mimicry. For the investigator looking for the iron-clad concept that would be impervious to assaults from the wrecking crew of peer review, creative expression seems a little too open to charges of epiphenomenality to pass muster. What I really don't understand is how he squares the notion of the ubiquity of creative expression with the notion that motives in social relations are predictable by the person's position in the social hierarchy.

My insight, or bias (if you prefer) is that these questions are best resolved by proper placement in the whole system. I suppose that this is neither a reductive nor inductive approach, but a formalist one that assigns investigation, logic, and generalization to stations within a scheme which divides time into present, past, and future; space into up/down, right/left, forward/backward; the observable material universe into matter, energy, and void; and which divides organic living matter from inorganic matter when it exhibits the latent tendency of matter to (under special circumstances) defy entropy by creating self-replicating structures that capture and process external matter and energy by source detection, acquisition, and metabolism; that perceives our particular life-form—humanity—from the three vantage points of the individual, the group, and the environment; and—finally—perceives waking human existence as a succession of the states of thinking, acting, and feeling. This is admittedly an anthropocentric (perhaps--oh horror of horrors--a Chuckocentric) viewpoint.

QUESTIONING CHOMSKY--4/25/03

Chomsky says, "For any datum there are infinitely many theories that can explain it." This would seem to imply that any theory arrived at by chance would be as good as any other. If this is indeed what he intends, then the history of science would seem to confute him—unless the near universal secular consensus about the validity and coherence of a vast body of scientific knowledge knit together by abstract theoretical generalizations can be shown to result from the investigator's and theorizer's bias. This kind of bias once informed a consistent theory postulating a terra-centric solar system, for example. That's the only way I can make sense of his assertion. Still, to me, this is still like the linguist saying that he has data that shows that the brain is hard-wired to make abstractions, but its ability to make valid abstractions about abstractions is no better than chance. What really puzzles me is that his statement indicates that he considers the bulk of what he does with his mind to be useless.

On an only tangentially related subject, one hears from the more "responsible" Democratic politicians, as well as from Chomsky, that speculating about an opponent's motives is a nefarious activity in which they're too high-minded to indulge. I admit that it's a more-or-less useless exercise, because the Republicans respond with accusations of liberal bias which the media immediately embraces as a valid rebuttal. On the other hand, progressive Democrats (to the degree they've not sold out to their contributors) are not only giving away a unique vantage point from which to attack their opponents, but fail thereby to provide the very real service of pointing out how all Republican initiatives have the result of concentrating power and wealth in the hands of the powerful and wealthy, no matter what the usually euphemistically announced purpose may be.

The conservative ideologue has a more difficult target in attacking liberal motivation because the liberal politician—who attempts to disperse power and wealth—is not visibly self-serving other than in the desire to gain reelection, a goal common to all politicians. Rather than impute hidden agendas to those to the left, neo-cons pronounce their opponents to be undesirable, if not unacceptable, kinds of people. An attack on the person substitutes for an attack on that person's motives.

Of course we all at times have hidden agendas. Politicians, in their fundamental capacity as deal-brokers, are always looking for "synergy". But the hidden agendas of the "economic interests of elite institutions", when they are (as they often are) counter to the real interests of everybody else, need to be brought to the public's attention. It's difficult to do this without imputation of un-provable motivations. Liberal politicians seem to find imputing motives "irresponsible", where the right has no problem with fielding rhetoric like "tax and spend", "soft on", "Saddam supporters", "America bashers", "class warfare", and the like. Even though it opens the door to speculation about their own motives, the left should take off the gloves. Otherwise the rightist's actual desired outcomes for their initiatives don't get discussed.

Others are more passionately involved with aspects of public affairs where victims of injustice and violence lay bleeding and dying in the streets. My focus is more on