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## quotation beauty "spiritual" not necessary

Posted by Ralph Williamson - 2009/09/08 13:28

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I am searching for the best way to counter those folks who insist that man is a spiritual being, that spirits are everywhere and that you must be spiritual to be anybody. They also claim that natural beauty is spiritual and therefore comes from god, so you must be godly to be spiritual. I claim that beauty comes from nature and has nothing to do with any god or spirit. Can you give me a few good words I can use to counter their nonsense? Thank you, Ralph Williamson

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Posted by Oldayz - 2009/09/08 13:28

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Posted by Charles Appel - 2009/09/08 13:28

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any god or spirit. Can you give me a few good words I can use to counter their nonsense? Thank you, Ralph Williamson A first step might be to ask them to define their terms. What exactly do they mean by spirit and spiritual. If they can't define these terms, then they (literally) don't know what they are talking about. If they can define these terms, then the next step would be to ask for proof. They are the ones making the (extraordinary) claims and they are the ones who must provide proof. This is a far better strategy than denying the existence of these spirits - as you would then be put in the position of proving they do not exist. Charles Appel Bona Na Croin

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Posted by Automort - 2009/09/08 13:28

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Can you give me a few good words I can use to counter their nonsense? Maybe you should ask to be shown something that isn't spiritual.

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Posted by Larry Mundinger - 2009/09/08 13:28

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Posted by Tony Dermody - 2009/09/08 13:28

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I am searching for the best way to counter those folks who insist that man is a spiritual being, that spirits are everywhere and that you must be spiritual to be anybody. They also claim that natural beauty is spiritual and therefore comes from god, so you must be godly to be spiritual. I claim that beauty comes from nature and has nothing to do with any god or spirit. Can you give me a few good words I can use to counter their nonsense? I don't know if the following would qualify as the best way to counter the (generally shallow) arguments of the type you mention. Perhaps, though, it will help you to reflect in a different and insightful way on this problem. The whole line of argument is based on the ideas of the English philosopher, Christopher Caudwell, as presented in his book *Illusion and Reality*. This was first published by messrs Macmillan in 1937, the year Caudwell was killed in action in the Spanish Civil War, fighting for the International Brigade, at Jarama. It seems to me that such folk as you describe are in harness to a common form of dualist thinking, which would divide the world into the 'natural' and the 'spiritual'. Ultimately the whole argument resolves into the various 'mind versus matter' and 'subject versus object' conundrums, e.g. What is mind? What is matter? Are they different manifestations of the same thing? Or are they different things? If they are different, which is primary? In fact, neither mind or matter, nor subject or object, are ever completely pure, and the impurity is reflected in language. Mind and matter, subject and object interpenetrate each other. Science, which is concerned with objective reality, tries to use words as far as possible to eliminate or cancel out the subject. Art, which is concerned with subjective reality, tries to build up and enhance the subject. Human beings in their long history have tried to separate them (e.g. subject and object) as mutually exclusive opposites and to give only one or other the status of reality. Thus all reality is reduced to those phenomena which do not contain any part of the other: but since these two opposites are not exclusive, but mutually interpenetrate, such a reduction reduces the world to nothing but a meaningless name. The notion of spirituality arises in human consciousness. The tension which generates it is only a special case of the tension which drives society; a tension the forces of which are worked out in the everyday life and consciousness of human beings, i.e. the contradiction between human desires and nature's necessity. This central contradiction is the source of the vast illusory fantasy-world of humanity, a world which yet retains a definite and functional relationship with the real world of which it is (as Caudwell says) the blossom. Let me quote his much more eloquent words than mine: (Human) instincts, unadapted by society, are blind and therefore unfree. The brute is not free; the ant is the slave of its innate responses. Man's freedom is obtained by association, which makes it possible for him to obtain mastery over nature through becoming actively conscious of its necessity and his own. This association necessarily imposes certain restrictions, conventions, and obligations, such as good behaviour, language and mutual aid. But all these things are not fetters on the free instincts (libido); they are the instruments by which instinctive man realises his freedom. The view of reality which is science, the canons of feeling which are art and ethics, are imposed on the instincts from without; nonetheless they are not fetters, distortions, inhibitions, or sublimations. They are the means by which instinct realises its freedom because they give it understanding of nature's necessity and its own, and therefore are - since nature will not yield to a mere wish - the only means by which the will can actively realise itself. And man's consciousness, with its ego, its sublimations, its distortions, and its vivid rich complexity, is nothing but the adaptation produced in man's psychic genotype by the conditions of working in association with other men towards the realisation of freedom. Might I suggest then, that having carefully considered what you mean by spirituality, you could meet the arguments of these good people head-on, by agreeing that spirituality is a very important part of what it is to be human. Take care, before doing so, that you are comfortable with the material understanding of spirituality, the bare bones of which I have really only hinted at above. Tony Dermody. (Delete 'nodamnjunk.' from e-mail address). Art is the science of feeling, science the art of knowing. We must know to be able to do, but we must feel to know what to do. (Christopher Caudwell: *Illusion and Reality* ; 1937).

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