

[24] Friedman Conversation 1-3-05

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From: Milton Friedman  
To: Gordon Brown  
Subject: Re: Your 12-09-04 Comments  
Sent: Monday, January 03, 2005 11:40 AM

Dear Gordon

Herewith a few comments on yours of 12/23/04.

1. I am willing to continue the conversation between us, but I believe we are fast reaching the point where we are repeating ourselves, so that it cannot be for long. Incidentally, Rose and I shall be on a cruise for most of the month of January and early February.

2. You say

**What science can deliver are findings of agreement among individual perceivers.**

I do not disagree with that, but it begs the question of what they agree on. I argue that they reach agreement on conjectures about the external world.

3. You say

**On the other hand, I would make no assumptions as to the characteristics of that stuff called "water" as it exists independently of my sensory system.**

You make such assumptions when you decide not to try walking on that stuff called water.

4. You say

**Now, getting to the heart of the matter, it is the foregoing reasoning that provides the primary basis for a philosophy of individualism, which in turn is the foundation upon which a free-market economy can be solidly erected.**

You have not persuaded me of this proposition. Tolerance is essential, but people who profess to believe in a God may possess tolerance.

5. I did not mean to shock you with my statement that "it is religion not science that delivers the truth." You and I agree that we cannot know the truth, yet all of us desire to know the truth and religion professes to deliver the truth. Any statement which no observable evidence can contradict is either a truism (the father of a father is a grandfather) or a religious statement (God did it). Organized religions have been the source of much evil--but also of much good.

I am afraid that these comments do not get us any closer.

Milton

