

Contagion of Miracles: Miracles in the light of Slippery Slope Concerns

If you accept supernatural beliefs, and if you have good evidence in favour of them, that makes you and those influenced by you, accept further supernatural beliefs on less evidence if they seem to fit your beliefs. For example, if you think water from a shrine has cured a person's cancer, then it is easier for you to believe other people who come along and claim it cured them.

And if you really believe that the Virgin Mary appeared at Lourdes, then you have no reason to reject the testimony of Hindus who say they had a vision of their false God Krishna and that he wants them to abstain from all food for a week. There is nowhere to draw the line.

It is said that we ought to reject slippery slope arguments such as that.

Slippery slope really refers to what you might expect to happen. Usually there is no slope only a possible one for the unexpected happens a lot of the time. And when something should slide down the slope it often slides down it because something new put that slope there. Nevertheless there are some things in which the slippery slope is always or largely going to be a problem. What in cases where it need not be a slippery slope but could be? And what about the risk? It is not worth it. Slippery slope arguments are useful a lot of the time. But not always. We can live without belief in the supernatural. Its therefore an unnecessary belief. Thus if the slippery slope arguments give us anything to worry about then they do prove fair and square that ANY belief in supernaturalism is irresponsible.

A slippery slope argument such as, "Allowing abortion for the sake of saving a woman's life will only lead to abortion on demand in time." That argument is dubious. Abortion is needed to save a woman. And to allow abortion on demand may be an abuse. It is not the same thing. The abuse of a law does not mean a slippery slope is happening.

It is complained that slippery slope arguments insist that any harmless action - eg making beer - that can open the door to abuse - eg people becoming alcoholics - are to be opposed and prohibited by law if possible.

Carrying a knife is a harmless action in itself. Yet the law bans it for people abuse the knives and start stabbing each other. Slippery slope arguments can be dangerous for there is nothing that is not open to abuse. If we took the slippery slope arguments too seriously we could end up banning marriage because it sometimes leads to wife beating! Slippery slope arguments are valid when criticising religion. Why? Because religion is not an essential to human welfare and indeed most of those who say it is important to them do not mean that the religious dogma is important to them. How can it be when they often don't know it very well or pick and choose what they like? And most only think about religion for an hour on a Sunday.

The argument that if the milder recreational drugs are legalised at all everybody or most people will take them and need them all the time is an example of how faulty a slippery slope argument can be. But is it really that bad? It is possible that in time then most people will get addicted. But is it probable? No.

Many worry that users are getting permission to do take drugs if the drugs are legalised. It says this is the most important problem. It makes the drug-taking socially acceptable. But if you accept supernatural beliefs then you should accept people having and inventing even sillier ones than yours. You are giving permission.

A religion that says unbaptised babies are unholy and not sacred has to argue that individuals and religions that want to say things like that about black people must be given the right and permission to. That is why there is an unbreakable link between saying that unbaptised babies need God's forgiveness and saying that black people are banned from God. Supernaturalism would suggest that if a religion should say babies that are not baptised are not friends of God's then white Christians could start saying black people are not friends of God either.

St Paul in the Bible said that the Christian faith is of no importance if Jesus Christ has not really risen from the dead. This is an example of somebody using the slippery slope to manipulate people. You could say people are of

no importance if atheism is not the true philosophy.

So when a belief is unnecessary and can lead to problems in terms of the slippery slope then the belief is plainly bad news. It is bad at least in what it infers and opens the door to.

The slippery slope form of argument can be very dangerous. It must be used wisely and with great caution. Religion only increases the need for slippery slope arguments and is fond of wielding them itself. Thus religion is dangerous.