

MAGIC AND THE NEW PHYSICS

Imagine somebody reports that a statue of Jesus moved its lips and talked to them.

Would that be a miracle - a supernatural event?

Remarkably some Christians say that the molecules comprising the statue's mouth can go wrong and the lips can speak. They say physics allows for such blips. But they add that they agree with physics that "the odds against such a coincidence are unimaginably great but they are not incalculably great" (see page 12, Answering the New Atheism: Dismantling Dawkins Case Against God). They would accept that the event need not be a miracle. I sure they would add that on the other hand it could be a miracle. So nobody knows.

But it would be most rational to assume that it could be a blip and thus natural. Why assume it could be anything else? Science has shown blips may happen but can never prove that a miracle has happened or that we should assume miracles are possible. An event assumed to be a miracle might only be a blip. So the resurrection of Jesus would not prove he is really our saviour.

Suppose a statue bleeds as a result of a blip. Clearly if the blip is unimaginably unlikely you need remarkable evidence to verify that it happened. You need excellent evidence that it really was a blip and not just somebody's mistaken interpretation.

Even if miracles happen, it does not follow that any of the miracles reported by religion are believable. That depends on how good the evidence is for them. We cannot merely take a person's word for it about the blips so why the miracles? We need to check and investigate.

Magic believers presuppose that the future is not fixed or determined or programmed in advance. So you can change the odds in your favour by doing miracles through magic. They think that Quantum Physics verifies these beliefs of theirs.

But...

Keith Ward, More Than Matter?, "Quantum physics is usually taken to undermine a wholly deterministic interpretation of the laws of nature. But of course it does not undermine the fact that there are laws of nature. What it suggests is that the laws will in general produce predictable results, but at the subatomic level we will have to work with probabilities where not all details are predictable - and sometimes this will result in larger scale unpredictabilities. In other words, there are elements of genuine randomness, but even they are governed by laws of probabilities where not all details are predictable.

"No phenomena can be considered totally in isolation from other phenomena in the universe. This fact places constraints on what possibilities are open within the system. As Michio Kaku says 'Einstein often asked himself whether God had any choice in creating the universe. According to superstring theorists, once we demand a unification of quantum theory and general relativity, God had no choice.'

See pages 94,95

Now we see that science denies that miracles have a supernatural explanation. There is no room for the notion that even if randomness takes place, it does so under the laws of nature.

The creator by definition is not the Christian God for he had no choice but to create and make things as they are. The Christian God has free will. Indeed an unfree God would be an oxymoron.

More than Matter? Lion, 2010

If you can do a rite and that makes a person love you, that is magic.

If you can turn water into wine by snapping your fingers, that is magic.

If you can cause God to change his plans by a prayer then that is magic. You are partly or fully the cause.

Magic is making things happen without using natural means. It's supernatural.

The person who believes that walking under a ladder brings bad luck is a believer in magic. There is no difference between magic and superstition.

Magic believers and superstitionists are selective in what they believe. They may believe that the stars control all that happens on earth. Or they may think the gods do it. In the same way, the believer who thinks that walking under a ladder is unlucky may think that accidentally breaking a mirror is not unlucky. The same refusal to be reasonable is to be found in the Catholic who thinks that God would not have spoken to the Mormon Prophet Joseph Smith but that God speaks to the pope. It's all bias. To encourage that bias would be dangerous. It fuels our tendency to prefer delusion to fact. It fuels our wish to be comforted by our beliefs and suppositions even if it hurts and sets bad example for others.

Magic believers get sick and die and are no luckier than us sceptics about magic. That is the most important statement on this page.

Magic believers try to appeal to the New Physics to support the existence of psychic powers or magic. They think they see its discoveries and principles as showing that magic is real. But take the Uncertainty Principle - it says uncertainty is built into the very nature or fabric of reality. It would follow then for magic believers that if you do a spell to get a job, you are tuning into the powers of uncertainty and heaven knows what you might unleash. What kind of magic is that? It's no good!

Physicists such as Einstein found that in some experiments light was waves. In others it was particles. Thus light was found to be both waves and particles - two contradictory things. Physics came up with a solution to the contradiction. The answer is in the Copenhagen Interpretation. Light and all reality at its deepest level is indeterminate. There is randomness and uncontrollable and seeming causelessness at the heart of reality. There is therefore unpredictability.

The Copenhagen Interpretation revealed that in that world there are many potential things that can happen. What happens is actually caused by our observation of it. If we observe light as waves then the observation caused that. And the same if it's observed as particles.

Magicians and mystics are delighted at such a thought. They think it confirms the power of magic and mind over light and matter. This leads to the insane notion that if you are sick, it is because of your warped interpretation and perception of life. It's your own fault. It makes people think they make the world by the power of their consciousness.

The main objection to this is that if our thoughts affect the subatomic world, it does not follow that they will magically alter our human level interactions with the universe. If we can influence a light particle we cannot necessarily influence anything bigger. The influence only applies in the sub-atomic level. It is important to remember that this does not affect the human level of reality.

If you make light manifest as a particle or wave it does not follow that you can control the universe with your mind. It does not follow that you can mystically put thoughts in the mind of another. Experience proves that you cannot make yourself the wealthiest person in the world just by casting a spell.

That settles it!

Also, light behaves as a particle or a wave because of our observation but is our observation something that happens to us or something that we do? It happens to us. If you feel cold, it does not follow that your observation of feeling cold is caused by you. It happens to you whether you like it or not. Whatever force then that causes light to be a wave, could also be behind our observation. We conclude that even if our observation causes light to appear as a wave or particle, it does not follow that we cause it.

If science really had verified magic, scientists would be making a fortune selling the best magical books and primers and spellkits.

Magic believers dodge scientific scrutiny by inventing excuses for its failure. They say that magic helps those who help themselves. They say that you must not sit back and expect prayers and affirmations and spells to do everything! You have to get out there and make it happen the normal way. It is no wonder some spells seem to work when the practitioners of the magic are making them work! Anything that cannot be falsified is mere superstition.

We conclude that there is no scientific basis for magic. Science insists on trying to disprove everything and rejecting all theories but the most likely one and the one that matches the evidence best. But magic calls for belief not such scepticism.

Magic is a threat to science. To not be for science is to be against it.

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