

Should You Believe in Psychics? Psychology and logic join forces to debunk psychics.

This article was posted on Apr 24, 2019 on Psychology Today by Paul Thagard Ph.D.

Here is his most important contribution to this debate:

1 Science explains using mechanisms, whereas pseudoscience lacks mechanistic explanations.

2 Science uses correlation thinking, which applies statistical methods to find patterns in nature, whereas pseudoscience uses dogmatic assertions, or resemblance thinking, which infers that things are causally related merely because they are similar. Practitioners of science care about evaluating theories in relation to alternative ones, whereas practitioners of pseudoscience are oblivious to alternative theories.

3 Science uses simple theories that have broad explanatory power, whereas pseudoscience uses theories that require many extra hypotheses for particular explanations.

4 Science progresses over time by developing new theories that explain newly discovered facts, where pseudoscience is stagnant in doctrine and applications.

Parapsychology as used by psychics fits this pseudoscience profile and accordingly should be dismissed as a source of reliable knowledge.

MY COMMENT: Consider 1. A witch claims to be putting a power into nature to make it go a certain way so that though it looks natural and mechanistic it only seems that way. This is the same sort of thinking behind a God of supernatural power. Like the witch power, God power is supposed to be doing the same thing and be the reason the laws are the way they turn out.

Consider 2. Miracle believers ignore the statistical evidence that most claims are suspect or downright nonsense. And miracle tales can be shown plausible and then something happens to overturn that. All that is ignored without any concern for misleading the public.

Consider 3. You can't just say a supernatural power or a power that is not part of nature is acting on nature or even interrupting it. Supernatural is vague. You are not scientific if you say power boils your kettle. What power? What kind? Power is too vague. Supernatural is even vaguer for it can mean anything. Is the power God? Magic? Some kind of paranormal intelligence? Is it Aphrodite who is doing it? Is it something we cannot have an analogy for? Maybe its an invisible fairy?

Consider 4, faith and religion tend to persist in the face of evidence that they are false or lying. Is that stubborn streak a symptom of their being lazy? Science is hard work and religion and faith are not work at all in comparison. If religion and faith are innately stagnant then that is because they are based on pseudoscience.