

## REPLY TO ATTEMPT TO DEBUNK PARANORMAL DEBUNKERS

A Reply to:

Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers by Winston Wu. Available on Amazon and as an ebook.

1

PARANORMAL DEBUNKERS DOGMA: It is irrational to believe anything that cannot be proven.

No thinking sceptic holds that dogma. Its not a dogma of scepticism at all.

The Paranormal Debunker who teaches and accepts this dogma is being unfair. You can be a rational person and believe in what cannot be proven. As long as you have good evidence for it and have checked that evidence for errors and don't close your mind there is no problem. I agree with believers in the paranormal that this dogma should be rejected.

Paranormal Debunkers do not believe the dogma. Those that do only believe in it in relation to paranormal claims. That is unfair unless they come up with a genuinely logical reason why miracles do not happen or at least should not be believed in. If miracles logically cannot happen then there is no need to even consider any evidence in their favour. It is the same if they do happen but for some reason we should not believe in them. If most people in the world start saying that the world is an illusion and that they have some kind of experience saying as much, we should ignore this testimony and this evidence. This example proves that we are not necessarily being biased or bigoted by saying that if miracles happen we must not believe.

When we say a teaching is irrational we cannot mean that we are totally irrational in believing it. We may be partly rational. If a geography question for example is answered badly in an exam it can't be totally bad. If it were it would be gibberish. When we believe something rational it does not follow that our thinking and motivation for believing is entirely rational. You can believe in the truth for example not because it is the truth but because you want to believe in it.

The more we examine the evidence we have the more rational we become.

It seems we are saying a man should always be examining the evidence that his wife loves him. No. The man has his own way of getting this evidence. Her being with him can be evidence enough.

Believers say, "It may be that I experience an alien abduction. The reality of this is proven by my experience. It can be proven to me but to nobody else." But this has nothing to do with the dogma at all. Sceptics are speaking for people who have not experienced the supernatural. The fact that I think I have experienced the supernatural does not mean anybody else is obligated to agree with me.

We see that the believers claim that the paranormal is unbelievable and irrational to me does not mean that it is unbelievable and irrational to others. But they must agree that it is okay if I find it irrational and my neighbour does not or vice versa. If both views are okay, then should one of them be encouraged or neither? The believers only encourage their own point of view!

2

PARANORMAL DEBUNKERS DOGMA: Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence. The stranger and the more unusual the claim is the more evidence you need to justify accepting the claim as true.

It is assumed that this means we need magical evidence. That is not what it is saying. It is saying you need hard evidence. Nothing wrong with that!

RELATED OBJECTIONS:

Believers issue the following attacks on "extraordinary claims need backing up with extraordinary evidence".

BELIEVERS: Science does not use that rule. Science has discovered some bizarre things and not required extreme evidence for them. For example, where are the double blind tests and the controlled tests to back up the big bang?

THE ANSWER IS THAT THERE ARE TESTS BEING DONE. THEY DO NOT TEST THE BIG BANG BUT HOW IT HAS TO HAVE HAPPENED. THE EXPERIMENTS AND OBSERVATION OF THE COSMOS SHOW THAT THE BIG BANG HAPPENED. THE BELIEVERS SEEM TO EXPECT SCIENCE TO MAKE A UNIVERSE IN THE LAB THROUGH A BIG BANG!

BELIEVERS: There are extraordinary evidences of the paranormal. The White House Merry Go Round Incident of 1952 is evidence for the paranormal reality of UFO's. It has never been refuted.

ANY MIRACLE CAN BE MADE IRREFUTABLE IF YOU GET AT THE EVIDENCE AGAINST IT AND HIDE IT OR DISPOSE OF IT. OR IF THE EVIDENCE FOR A NATURAL EXPLANATION IS LOST OR OVERLOOKED.

BELIEVERS: Mystical experiences mean that you gain supernatural knowledge in your heart and no longer depend on faith. They are extraordinary evidence for the paranormal because they change lives. Ordinary experiences do not do that.

MYSTICS ARE KNOWN TO HAVE AN EXPERIENCE AND THEN DOUBT IT LATER. THEY HAVE TO GO BACK TO FAITH AGAIN. AND A RELIGION OR SUPERSTITION THAT IS A PACK OF LIES IS NOT MADE TRUE IF IT IS GOOD AT CHANGING LIVES.

3

PARANORMAL DEBUNKERS DOGMA: When there are two or more competing explanations of the evidence, accept the explanation that is the simplest for the simplest one is most likely to be true and reject any inadequate ones.

Paranormal believers accept it but complain that it is used to limit explanations to natural ones. But the reality is we can test natural things and if something paranormal is at work you cannot know or test exactly what it is or what it is doing.

4

PARANORMAL DEBUNKERS DOGMA: You have no proof for me that God or the supernatural or miracles exists. I have no proof that unicorns exist either. I don't believe in unicorns. You don't blame me. So why should I believe in God or the supernatural? Why blame me for not believing in God and praise me for not believing in unicorns?

Believers say the "problem with this is that it puts everything that cannot be proven into the category of made-up or invented. What people experience as true is not an invention. A person sincerely believing in God even if there is no proof does not mean that the person is fictionalising God. There are millions who experience God and miracles but the unicorn comparison is unfair for hardly anybody says they saw one. The more people experience something the more likely the experience is to be real. I can't prove to anybody else that I was thinking of Spain this morning but that has nothing to do with indicating that others should not believe I thought of it if I say so. They do not need proof to reasonably believe this."

Sceptics reply: The believers are setting up a straw man argument. The true sceptical position is, "You have insufficient evidence for me that God or the supernatural or miracles exists. I have insufficient evidence that unicorns exist. Therefore I don't believe in unicorns. You don't blame me. So why should I believe in God or the supernatural? Why blame me for not believing in God and praise me for not believing in unicorns?"

5

PARANORMAL DEBUNKERS DOGMA:

Anecdotal evidence for the paranormal or for anything supernatural or magical is invalid and unreliable. That is all the kind of evidence there is for the paranormal.

Believers reply:

"Some sceptics go as far as to say that such evidence is worth zero. They are definitely pseudo-sceptics. The correct view is that there could be evidence for an against an event being miraculous but admitting that won't stop you agreeing with the evidence that it is false provided the evidence in favour is not stronger and better."

"If we automatically dismiss human testimony in relation to the paranormal then how could we think it could be any good in relation to other things?"

The validity of testimony and anecdotal evidence can be tested as follows:

- 1 Is the person reliable and telling their story with reasonable consistency?
- 2 Is the person normally truthful
- 3 The more witnesses the better if they are all consistent
- 4 Is the testimony clear and fresh? The nearer the testimony is to the fervent it describes the better.

5 Where the witnesses or witness in the right state of mind - e.g. not drunk  
6 Could the person have a strong motive for lying or not? Weak motives may be dismissed.

These tests should be applied whether the person says a miracle event is fake or real.

The anecdotal evidence is not necessarily invalid or unreliable.

Sceptical Reply: Sceptics accept all that. We do deny that anecdotal evidence is enough for justifying belief in a miracle. It may be valid and reliable but because it is anecdotal it is unsatisfactory. Again the believers are accusing sceptics of holding positions they do not hold at all. And believers themselves do not believe every miracle anecdote they hear.

The believers confuse good testimony with anecdotal evidence. The two are not the same. A testimony is rigorous while an anecdote is not and each anecdote has opposition from rival anecdotes too!

6  
PARANORMAL DEBUNKERS DOGMA: People who report paranormal experiences and miracle depend on memory. Memory is unreliable and people distort their memories without even realising. Therefore paranormal reports are based on mistakes and misperception if not lies.

Believers say, This really means that we should listen to memory and the memories of others for we cannot live if we don't but we must make an exception when the memory is about paranormal experiences. This is biased and unfair.

Memory is usually right in the big things and can be right or wrong in the details.

The truth: It is correct about memory being less reliable than people would like to think. It is indeed unfair to claim that if a person remembers the supernatural then its NECESSARILY a memory error. It is okay to say it is not enough for you to believe them for they MAY be wrong and sometimes errors and mistakes can come across as magical when they are not. It is not true that its a sceptic's dogma that a paranormal claim is always rubbish just because it is paranormal. If it were a dogma, could it be that it is the truth and what the evidence says?

The dogma is useless by itself. It is fine if we have evidence that the paranormal is not real. If the evidence casts doubt on the miracle story we can then surmise that the witnesses' memory is in error.

7  
PARANORMAL DEBUNKERS DOGMA: Those who report paranormal experiences or miracles are mistaken or lying or they have had an illusion or hallucination.

The Sceptics reply, We should not assume this. We should only believe this if we find the evidence that they are somehow wrong is the best.

If sceptics are right that such reports are irrational that is different. We don't need the evidence simply because the irrationality is evidence itself.

8  
PARANORMAL DEBUNKERS DOGMA: There is no evidence that miracles have ever happened or that the paranormal is real.

The Sceptics reply, This assumption should be rejected by believers and sceptics alike. But if the evidence says that there is no reason to believe then that is not a dogma but an evaluation of the evidence.

Evidence conflicts. There is often at least some evidence against even things that we know are true. Even if evidence pointed to a magical event being real it would not be enough unless it were very good evidence.

9  
PARANORMAL DEBUNKERS DOGMA: Science is the only reliable method for finding out what is probably true or what is true.

Critics of this dogma assert that there are other ways to know things. This is true.

But science matters more than all these for it always tests and re-tests and is open to changing its mind if the evidence is good enough. It is pure reason that some testable method matters more than methods that are less testable.

Critics say that sceptics accept scientific test results that refute the paranormal and ignore the ones that show that it is real. But they forget that the sceptics look at the evidence for those things and find holes. They never ignore real cases for there are none as far as can be ascertained. And how can a sceptic know which cases to ignore if he does not look at the case and the evidence?

The argument is simply ad hominem. It implies that there are cases that are so obviously supernatural that anybody who does not believe is guilty of ignoring the evidence. That is nonsense.

It is possible that you can test the best mediums in the world and find no evidence of genuine supernatural abilities and then hear of other tests on them that give different results and which seemingly point to out of this world powers. The believers say, "Maybe supernatural powers are erratic. That way you could say they did not show up in your tests but could have showed up in the other tests." Thus the believer could accept that both sets of tests are valid. The notion that the powers do not work all the time makes it sound like an excuse is being made for the failure to show abilities in some tests. Thus it is more rational to hold that the tests that argue for scepticism or doubt are valid. If you have a supernatural power, why can't you use it to stop whatever it is that blocks your powers sometimes? The believer is just making excuses for believing in gods and psychics and witches who have been caught cheating and faking their abilities. It is deranged to think that good powers and good spirits would use people like that to get in touch with the poor clients. And irresponsible.

10

PARANORMAL DEBUNKERS DOGMA: Paranormal and miraculous events do not happen for they contradict what we know of science.

Believers say that we take to be the laws of nature is based on observation. We are always updating this knowledge. So what we believe to be a law of nature today may change tomorrow.

The truth: That is true only of more unusual or unimportant laws. We know that hollow oaks cannot have kittens. Suppose blood comes from a statue of the Virgin Mary. Even then believers themselves do not want to get people to reject the law that statues do not bleed. The point is, believers and sceptics and pseudo-sceptics all want to believe in the laws and indeed do for they cannot function in life if they start holding that nothing is regular and nobody knows say if the car will come to life tomorrow morning. The dogma is extremely important and implies that it is best not to agree that miracles happen.

Believers exaggerate how much science changes its mind.

They go as far as to say that as the laws of nature are not laws as such that maybe the supernatural is possible. In other words, the "laws" are really observations so you might expect a second sun to appear in the sky tomorrow. That is too loose. The laws are observations yes but FIRM OBSERVATIONS. That believers would abolish that firmness in order to believe in magic or to allow for belief in it is extreme. They are like faith heads - spiritual addicts.

11

PARANORMAL DEBUNKERS DOGMA: When we cannot explain something, that does not mean that it is paranormal. There are natural laws we know nothing about and which may come into play very rarely.

Believers in the paranormal respond that "something can happen although we think or thought it can't. If we think something impossible happened, we automatically should not assume that there is a mistake or lie somewhere."

Sceptics see that in fact we should assume there is a mistake or a lie. We need to believe that certain things are impossible. Marble statues do not bleed.

Believers reject the dogma because they say, "Just because we cannot explain something, we must not assume that whatever the explanation is, it is non-paranormal."

They are saying then that when confronted with what we cannot explain then we should assume that there could be a paranormal or supernatural explanation as well as some unknown natural explanation. True sceptics agree with this. We are not going to be able to tell then if the event was paranormal or not. The sceptic may say, "I don't know how it happened but I don't believe that it is supernatural just because I see no reason to go that far." The believer will say, "I don't know how it happened but I believe it is supernatural." The sceptic makes the most sense.

Believers say, "Deniers of the paranormal are assuming that that inexplicable events do not have a paranormal explanation. They have no evidence or proof of this. They are only guessing."

We don't need evidence. No matter what happens there could indeed be a natural explanation that we have perhaps not found yet.

12

PARANORMAL DEBUNKERS DOGMA: Sceptics do not go by beliefs but by reasoned judgments of the evidence. Instead of beliefs they look at the evidence.

Beliefs and assumptions are often confused. Too many people think they believe something when they only assume it. Real belief comes from looking at the evidence. True sceptics would correct the wording of the dogma to: Sceptics do not go by assumptions but by reasoned judgments of the evidence. Instead of assumptions they look at the evidence and may form reasonable beliefs.

13

PARANORMAL DEBUNKERS DOGMA: Scepticism is not based on cynicism but is a method of getting at the truth.

True scepticism is all about that dogma. Too many who claim to be sceptics actually ignore it in practice if not in theory.

To see that a claimed supernatural event may not be supernatural is not cynicism.

14

PARANORMAL DEBUNKERS DOGMA: Believers in the paranormal and miracles are at least a bit stupid or good at deceiving themselves and or others.

The Sceptic says: Not necessarily. Most miracle claims involve people who do not have the competence to know if it really is a miracle or not. Most irrationally refuse to admit that the alleged miracle might have strange natural causes - unknown laws can do strange things.

Smart people can be manipulated to think they have experienced the supernatural for the psychic knows how to press the buttons and make it look intelligent. A person with good observation can be fooled by a psychic who knows how to manipulate somebody who sees and hears all.

15

PARANORMAL DEBUNKERS DOGMA FOR SOME: We do not say that God and the supernatural and miracles are fiction. What we say is that we simply do not believe. We do not say unicorns are fiction but that we simply do not believe. It is not up to us to disprove these things but up to those who assert these things to prove them.

The believer's response is that deep down the sceptics say that God and the supernatural are fiction.

Some debunkers say the dogma is absolutely correct and they embrace it with enthusiasm.

But deep down, you may think that say God is fiction or that you don't know if he is or not.

You could then be disbelieving - denying God's existence - or misbelieving - just failing to believe.

Belief in the supernatural is harmful to truth and to people. It is better to just not believe, at least. Many of us prefer to go further and disbelieve. That is good too.

Conclusion:

THE OBJECTIONS TO UNBELIEF IN THE SUPERNATURAL FAIL DISMALLY AND IN FACT PROVE THAT THE UNBELIEF IS THE ONLY RATIONAL AND SANE AND FAIR AND INTELLIGENT POSITION.