

## WINNOW OUT ALL FORMS OF SELF-DECEPTION - BE YOUR AUTHENTIC SELF

A mother is hit by her son who she adores. She convinces herself that she dreamt it. She knows deep down that she didn't. But she turns off that voice that tells her that. Now she seems to believe that he didn't do it. She is engaging in self-deception.

Because she knows the truth and won't face it she is deceiving herself. She is deceiving anybody who she tells that her son would never hit her. When she seems to succeed in fooling them that confirms her denial - she finds it harder to see her own foolishness. Even when she simply says he is good, one of her implicit meanings is that he wouldn't hit his mother. So the deception goes deeper than her simply denying her son has or would hit her.

We are so good at self-deception that psychologists and psychiatrists deny that we can ever be completely unbiased and fair and objective. Christian psychiatrist Andrew Sims admits this. Page 146 of his tome, *Is Faith Delusion?*, says that all attempts to be objective or totally unbiased fall short in the sense that there will always be a bias or subjective aspect. In short, the unprejudiced observation does not exist.

Even the most devoted servant of God is practicing a degree of deceit in his or her religious affairs and practices.

The atheist must be engaging in self-deceit too in order to be an atheist.

The best we can hope for is that everybody's statements and beliefs are or are intended to be sufficiently accurate. Their accuracy and the intent to be accurate will have been degraded by the self-deceit.

Self-deception influences all we believe and testify to. Suppose somebody reports a miracle. Is it more probable that the claim arises because somebody is deceiving themselves than that a real magical event happened? We have stronger proof that people deceive themselves than we do of miracles. For example, everybody practices self-deception but hardly anybody sees miracles. And when they do they don't experience as many miracles as they do episodes of self-deception. Also, people suffer and die for their self-deception but you don't see anybody dying for belief in miracles.

Another problem is that a miracle can be caused by a magical violation of nature or it can be caused by a natural law that we don't know of yet. The latter is the most likely possibility of the two. Thus even miracles then cannot prove that the supernatural exists. Maybe the secret natural law rather than causing blood to come from a statue is actually causing people to think it came from the statue though their mechanism of self-deception?

Christianity says the testimony of twelve apostles is enough to make belief in the resurrection of Jesus reasonable. The word apostle in the special sense is used to mean those who have seen the resurrection of Jesus and have been accepted as its official witnesses and missionaries. The Book of Acts say that the apostles chose Matthias as a new apostle in the place of the traitor Judas as he knew Jesus like they did. We say that the testimony of twelve psychiatric patients that self-deception is very powerful makes it more reasonable to deny that the testimony of the twelve apostles is enough.

Christians have twelve witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the apostles. Did these witnesses deceive themselves? Christians say their testimony is accurate. They cannot know that so they are deceiving themselves - they would need to be the apostles to see if self-deception was at work.

We know of wives who died because they would not stop believing that their evil monster husbands who murdered them were good people. The evidence that people die for self-deception is better than the evidence that people die for the truth or what they genuinely know is true.

The evidence for the reliability of human testimony to miracles is always counteracted by evidence that people deceive themselves.

If religion makes self-deception worse or gives us another reason to engage in it as if we don't have enough as it is then religion is a bad thing.

Rationalising means

- you call something rational when you have not thought it out for yourself. Religion likes to say, "People say our religion is

stupid and wrong. But if it is, why do so many intelligent people even scientists support it?" Every religion says the same thing and if a religion is ridiculous you need intelligent people to make it look sensible. Calling yourself rational means you take it for granted that you have to do the thinking yourself. Nobody has the right to expect another to see them as rational - the person must give you the reasons and let you test for yourself. You simply cannot know a person makes sense without seeing they make sense.

- you make far-fetched excuses for holding a view that is wrong or improbable. For example, Padre Pio was able to undergo surgery without anaesthetic yet he claimed it was painful if somebody tried to touch his allegedly miraculous stigmata marks. Another example. The medium Florence Cook used props and was caught fraudulently pretending that she could call up the dead. She claimed she did not know what she was doing for she was in a trance when these tricks occurred. Mediums used props and tricks to supposedly help them focus their powers to call up the dead. The powers can sometimes fail. The mediums said they needed to resort to fraud when their powers let them down or were too weak because the pressure to produce signs and messages could actually cause them to fail. The excuse is that the tricks take the pressure off the mediums so that they can be relaxed and more attuned to their powers. Mediums know that they will keep enough of their followers and clients after being exposed for cheating. Another tactic was to claim that the cheating was really a set up by evil spirits.

- you use speculation to ignore the problems. For example, the Bible's Book of Daniel contains predictions that could have been made after the events. There is no evidence at all that the book was really written centuries before the events. The Christians say that Jesus who claimed to be God's prophet said it was authentic and that settles it! But if Jesus was wrong he would have been a false prophet! Why should we agree with the Christians? The Book of Mormon says the wheel was used over a wide part of ancient America. No evidence has surfaced to back this up. The Mormon excuse is that God laid waste the nation destroying the evidence and its people became barbarians and lost the knowledge they once had.

- rationalisers say their religion is true and they try to explain away the evidence against the religion being true all the while having little evidence that the religion is true. Mormons say Joseph Smith their prophet knew the future from God. They explain away his false prophecies. That approach would only be fair if they could give us authentic examples of prophecies that did impressively come true. This then would allow us to reason, "Prophecy 1 came true and this must have been miraculous. Prophecy 2 seems to have failed. Let us see if it really was a prophecy or if it really failed. Maybe there is something wrong with our interpretation? Is the text correct?" If a person does not start with the pro-evidence, that person is a rationaliser and a fraud and a self-deceiving fool. Instead the person will try to explain away problems and leave it at that.

- rationalisers will shovel rubbish into a system that makes it look believable. For example, the resurrection of Jesus to eternal life is supposed to fit the idea that God saves body and soul and wants us to have a community in Heaven. But that does not make the story of Jesus' resurrection true or credible. If somebody claims revelations say that Abel the son of Adam rose from the dead and sanctioned and preached the philosophy that goes with resurrection and claimed to be the only person who would resurrect before the end of the world that would not make these revelations true. A rubbish doctrine that is slotted into good philosophy is still rubbish. The good philosophy should not need it and will not.

Rationalisation gives silly things a veneer of plausibility. It leads to rubbish "ringing true".

Rationalising and deceiving yourself are one and the same thing. The rationaliser tries too hard meaning he or she knows fine well that his or her claim about the supernatural or paranormal is suspect or downright wrong.

Rationalising is dangerous for anybody. Most of us do it on naturalistic grounds. That puts some limit on the scale of it. Belief in the supernatural takes the limit away. If Jesus' bones turned up the Church might say that Satan cloned Jesus's corpse for the real Jesus has risen.

Rationalising like all forms of lying can even make you think and feel you are not lying when you in fact are!! Its a form of abuse for it is open to getting others to abuse themselves by fooling themselves.

Reason is best seen as a tool for protecting yourself from fools and liars - it protects you from what happens if you make yourself a fool or self-deceiver. That takes away its off-putting cold clinical stereotype - especially when it is called logic not reason - and makes it a warm safety net. Reason is a tool for empowering yourself and society by distinguishing what is true from what is untrue. It is judgmental in the sense that it is a tool for weeding out liars.

Reason is thinking without contradicting yourself for A cannot be B at the same time and in the same way that A is A. Reason is about knowing when something is a fact and holding beliefs that do not contradict it. A person who follows reason in preference to religious dogma and emotional feelings is called a rationalist. We can't get away from reason. Even those who say that faith and not reason should be listened to are reasoning that faith is better. Their reasoning is bad for why their preferred faith and not another? But it is still reasoning. Accordingly, it is only natural that we should check

anything we are told with commonsense and logic.

It is right to have a faith that exalts human beings as the supreme dignity and which questions all things to get the right answers and is open-minded and eager to hear all sides if you must have a faith. Keep away from religion. Religion is bias and prejudice.

Reason will not answer all questions but encourages us to be fair and sensible and consistent and we can fill the gaps with harmless hypotheses that we are happy to change if need be and when they are disproved. It is a way of dealing with what we are told and experience. Rationalism should not advocate reason alone. That won't work for we do need faith but we need godless faith that is tested by reason which sees no contradictions or impossibilities in it. Feelings are fine as long as they don't control our thinking. We should experience joy in our reasoning.

It is unreasonable to believe in reason alone because we need faith to help ourselves and to fill the gaps. But it can be said we believe in reason alone because we only have the faith that reason permits us to have and because reason tells us to use faith and have it. Positive thinking is a virtue for even when it is proved wrong it is still the best approach for it has less suffering in it and it amounts to better rationality overall. Positive thinking is faith.

It is said that if we are rational, we will ignore our feelings. Being rational is good. But being rational and enjoying it and feeling good about it is far better. Our feelings will spur us on to passionate adulation for reason and truth. Being rational and emotional are not only compatible but desirable. Our feelings and desires must direct and fuel our rationality.

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#### SELF-ESTEEM

Feeling good about yourself and liking yourself. If you don't like yourself you can't like other people either. You will be afraid they will not like you either or notice what it is that you don't like about yourself. Self-esteem is a sin in the Bible, God's word, for it commands that you should look up to everybody else as better than yourself (Philippians 2:3). So you shouldn't think you are as good as anybody else or let anybody else think they are good. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ taught that if you love those who love you then you deserve no praise for that for even evil people love those who care about and for them (Matthew 5:46-48). If this love deserves no reward as Christ says then how much less of a reward one must deserve for loving oneself? Jesus says evil people get no reward for loving their families and friends. He really hates evil people when he says that you should get no reward even if you are good person and care for your family and friends simply because they care for theirs too. It is like saying that people should be condemned for reading the Koran just because it is the "bad Muslim's" book!

Jesus' message is that if we look after our health it is to be solely so that we can help others and not burden them. Self-love then is no good. This tells us that if we do good for ourselves we must do it only for others and it must have nothing to do with looking for anything from them. You must serve them even if they hate you and plot against you.

The Bible also says that it is a sin to think you know anything without loving God (1 Corinthians 8:1-3). Only true Christians love God according to the Bible for they are born again so nothing anybody says who is not a Christian is to be valued. You need God to know things, for you are good for nothing.

Self-esteem makes a person rejoice in making others happy for he or she wants to share and find his or her happiness through others. To do this properly it is necessary to avoid anti-social acts like stealing and slandering and lying.

Christianity says we must do good for others just because it benefits God. It says that as we are not 100% sure God exists, we must have the attitude, "Hypothetically if God does not exist we must do it just because it benefits others". If the faith really believes all that then it is a sin to say you were glad you did the good because you enjoyed it.

Luke 17:7-10 (ESV) - 7 Jesus said, "Will any one of you who has a servant ploughing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and recline at table'? 8 Will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink'? 9 Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? 10 So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'"

That says it all! It proves that if Jesus said love your neighbour as yourself he meant do good actions and it is not about feeling good or loving. In fact he commanded that you must feel you are no good.



