

Morten Tolboll

My Work as a Paranormal Investigator

Pseudoskepticism is an important concept in my work as a paranormal investigator, because pseudoskepticism usually is used in opposition to an assortment of questionable claims (from UFOs and paranormal phenomena to alternative medical practices to religious ideas). Pseudoskepticism refers to arguments which use scientific sounding language to disparage or refute given beliefs, theories, or claims, but which in fact fail to follow the precepts of conventional scientific skepticism.

The term “pseudoskepticism” has gradually been expanded to include any unsubstantiated invalidation of a theory.

The term was coined by professor in sociology, Marcello Truzzi. Truzzi attributed the following characteristics to pseudosceptics:

- 1) The tendency to deny, rather than doubt.
- 2) Double standards in the application of criticism
- 3) Tendency to discredit, rather than investigate
- 4) Presenting insufficient evidence or proof
- 5) Assuming criticism requires no burden of proof
- 6) Making unsubstantiated counter-claims
- 7) Counter-claims based on plausibility rather than empirical evidence
- 8) Suggesting that unconvincing evidence is grounds for completely dismissing a claim

Truzzi characterized true skepticism as:

- 1) Doubt rather than denial; nonbelief rather than belief

- 2) An agnostic position, one that says the claim is not proved rather than disproved
- 3) Maintains that science need not incorporate every extraordinary claim as a new “fact.”
- 4) As a result, has no burden to prove anything
- 5) Discovering an opportunity for error should make such experiments less evidential and usually unconvincing. It usually disproves the claim that the experiment was “air tight” against error, but it does not disprove the anomaly claim.

Pseudoskepticism is often building on scientism; that is: it overestimates the importance of science, for example by claiming:

- 1) that philosophy and religion need to be founded in science
- 2) that certain single branches of science can give an explanation of everything
- 3) that certain single branches of science are self-sufficient and that philosophy and religion are superfluous.

Personally, I am supporting true skepticism within science, but my method is not itself building on science, but on philosophy. I consider myself as a philosophical investigator and spiritual practitioner, who is using critical thinking, and not a scientific investigator, who have to follow the precepts of conventional scientific skepticism. This is due to, that I have experienced spiritual crises and paranormal phenomena (therefore I can't be an agnostic), but at the same time I am critical towards how to describe and behave in relation to such phenomena.

The goal of critical thinking (rationality) is to arrive at the most reasonable beliefs and take the most reasonable actions. We have evolved, however, not to seek the truth, but to survive and reproduce. Critical thinking is, seen in that connection, an unnatural act (seen from a deeper perspective it is the opposite: here critical thinking is natural and irrationality is unnatural). Anyway, by nature, it seems, we're driven to confirm and defend our current beliefs, even to the point of irrationality. We are prone to reject evidence that conflicts with our beliefs and to attack those who offer such evidence.

The spiritual practice has in fact three aspects:

1) Critical thinking (spotting thought distortions, created by dualistic unbalance, both in yourself and in others - see my book [A Dictionary of Thought Distortions](#), which is a manual in critical thinking - free download).

2) Investigating the shadow (ignorance, the unconscious, the painbody, the cause of suffering, your own dark side, the Ego - see my articles [The Emotional Painbody and why Psychotherapy can't Heal it](#), [The Ego-inflation in the New Age and Self-help Environment](#), and [Suffering as an Entrance to the Source](#)).

3) The spiritual practice (going beyond all ideas and images – see my book [Sûnyatâ Sutras](#) – free download).

A central inspiration in my work as a paranormal investigator, is Sherlock Holmes. In his article, [Sherlock Holmes, Paranormal Investigator](#), the paranormal investigator Joe Nickell is describing how Holmes, in many of his cases, actually worked as a paranormal investigator.

In her book, [Mastermind – How to think like Sherlock Holmes](#), Maria Konnikova shows that Holmes' genius was based on an ability for neutral observation and passive listening presence; that is: meditation.

Another source of inspiration is my own concept of [The Matrix Conspiracy](#). Here I see myself as a Matrix rebel, who helps people out of the labyrinth of the Matrix, by investigating and exposing the strange beliefs, amusing deceptions, and dangerous delusions of the Matrix agents and sophists.

Related topics A to Z (will be updated from time to time)

A

B

C

Clairvoyance

Clairvoyance is a kind of para-psychic opening, that gives a visual, auditory or emotive knowledge about a past and a future, which lies outside your own personality. Clairvoyants, or psychics, can perform as mediums/channelers for the dead, for spirits or gods – or they can perform so-called “readings.”

Clairvoyance is also known in connection with astral travel or astral projection (out-of-body experiences). This can for example happen when a medium allows a dead person, or a spirit of some kind, to possess her body, and use it as a channel.

The problem with the alternative environment within the New Age movement is that the normal inaccessible areas of the astral plane's collective history, which in principle lie outside the area of the Ego-consciousness, are open for all sorts of fantasies.

Within the New Age movement there are countless people today, who work egoistic with karmic experiences – that is to say: they earn money as clairvoyants, regression therapists etc. Some of them live on pure make believe, others are direct frauds. See my article [Paranormal Phenomena Seen in Connection with Clairvoyance](#) Also read the article [Psychic](#), by Robert T. Carroll

List of notorious clairvoyants/psychics and topics on clairvoyance:

[Long Island Medium](#)

Long Island Medium is a television program on *The (so-called) Learning Channel* featuring Theresa Caputo doing readings as a psychic medium. The article tells some of the worst examples of disillusioned psychics, for example when they tell people that their missing relatives are dead, and later (often years after) it turns up that they not are dead at all. Also read [Is Caputo Kaputo Yet?](#) by Mark Edward

Follow the thought distortions explained in the texts (as for example *Subjective Validation*), or use my book [A Dictionary of Thought Distortions](#) as a manual.

.....

Conspiracy theories

Priory of Sion

1) [Holy Blood, Holy Grail: The Secret History of Christ & The Shocking Legacy of the Grail](#), by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln

The description of the book says: Is the traditional, accepted view of the life of Christ in some way incomplete?

Is it possible Christ did not die on the cross?

Is it possible Jesus was married, a father, and that his bloodline still exists?

Is it possible that parchments found in the South of France a century ago reveal one of the best-kept secrets of Christendom?

Is it possible that these parchments contain the very heart of the mystery of the Holy Grail?

According to the authors of this extraordinarily provocative, meticulously researched book, not only are these things possible — they are probably true! so revolutionary, so original, so convincing, that the most faithful Christians will be moved; here is the book that has sparked worldwide controversy.

2) [The Templar Revelation: Secret Guardians of the True Identity of Christ](#), by Lynn Picknett and Clive Prince

The description of the book says: In a remarkable achievement of historical detective work that is destined to become a classic, authors Lynn Picknett and Clive Prince delve into the mysterious world of the Freemasons, the Cathars, the Knights Templar, and the occult to discover the truth behind an underground religion with roots in the first century that survives even today. Chronicling their fascinating quest for truth through time and space, the authors reveal an astonishing new view of the real motives and character of the founder of Christianity, as well as the actual historical -- and revelatory -- roles of John the Baptist and Mary Magdalene. Painstakingly researched and thoroughly documented, *The Templar Revelation* presents a secret history, preserved through the centuries but encoded in works of art and even in the great Gothic cathedrals of Europe, whose final chapter could shatter the foundation of the Christian Church.

3) Do the descriptions sound convincing? Well, don't take everything at face value. Facts about 1 and 2:

Both books are based on the Priory of Sion Hoax, a myth they present as fact. Priory of Sion is the name given to a fringe fraternal organisation, founded and dissolved in France in 1956 by Pierre Plantard as part of a hoax. In the 1960s, Plantard created a fictitious history for that organization, describing it as a secret society founded by Godfrey of Bouillon on Mount Zion in the Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1099, conflating it with a genuine historical monastic order, the Abbey of Our Lady of Mount Zion. In Plantard's version, the priory was devoted to installing a

secret bloodline of the Merovingian dynasty on the thrones of France and the rest of Europe.

This myth was expanded upon and popularised by the books *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* and *The Templar Revelation*, which both, in that way, are pieces of pseudohistory. Later it was claimed as factual in the preface of the 2003 novel *The Da Vinci Code*, by Dan Brown.

After becoming a cause célèbre from the late 1960s to the 1980s, the mythical Priory of Sion was exposed as a ludibrium created by Plantard as a framework for his claim of being the Great Monarch prophesied by Nostradamus. Evidence presented in support of its historical existence and activities before 1956 was discovered to have been forged and then planted in various locations around France by Plantard and his accomplices. Nevertheless, many conspiracy theorists still persist in believing that the Priory of Sion is an age-old cabal that conceals a subversive secret.

The Priory of Sion myth has been exhaustively debunked by journalists and scholars as one of the great hoaxes of the 20th century. I find it extremely exciting to read about, but I'm also expressing my concern that the proliferation and popularity of books, websites and films inspired by this hoax have contributed to the subject of conspiracy theories, pseudohistory and other confusions becoming more mainstream. I'm troubled by the romantic reactionary ideology unwittingly promoted in these works.

The books are heavily infected by the thought distortion called Confabulation, a deep problem within New Age circles. Read about Confabulation in my book [A Dictionary of Thought Distortions](#) (free download).

Also read my articles [The Matrix Conspiracy](#) and [The difference between philosophical education and ideological education](#)

D

E

F

G

H

Hoaxes

[Hommer's Numerology Machine](#)

In Danish only, but very easy to handle (First: Vælg køn = choose gender - Next: Indtast dit navn hér = Enter your name here – third: you will get a note with your personality type (maybe you can copy and paste and translate) – pressure on and you will get your brand new name which will improve your personal abilities and competences – it might be a Danish name, but that doesn't matter, on the contrary). Read my article [Personality Typing is a Refined System of Prejudice](#)

.....

The Rumpology Hoax

A hoax of exposure created by the philosopher Robert T. Carroll. Rumpology, also known as butt reading, is the art of reading the lines, crevices, dimples, and folds of the buttocks to [divine](#) the butt owner's character and get a glimpse of what lies ahead by analyzing what trails behind.

According to Jacqueline Stallone, a foremost American rumpologist, rump reading is an art that was practiced in ancient Babylon, India, Greece, and Rome. She claims that the ancient Greeks thought the butt was the key to health and fidelity. She says the Romans used butt prints the way some people use [graphology](#) today: to determine potential talents and future success.

[The Rumpology Hoax](#) (or Rumpology for Dummies) is written as a recipe on how you as a therapist (in just about anything) can create success. Carroll of course uses, as example, one of the most stupid New Age therapies to date, in order to show how easy it is to fool people and get success.

.....

The Sokal Hoax

[Fashionable Nonsense: Postmodern Intellectuals' Abuse of Science](#), by Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont

In 1996, Alan Sokal published an essay in the hip intellectual magazine Social Text parodying the scientific but impenetrable lingo of contemporary theorists. Here,

Sokal teams up with Jean Bricmont to expose the abuse of scientific concepts in the writings of today's most fashionable postmodern thinkers. From Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva to Luce Irigaray and Jean Baudrillard, the authors document the errors made by some postmodernists using science to bolster their arguments and theories. Witty and closely reasoned, *Fashionable Nonsense* dispels the notion that scientific theories are mere "narratives" or social constructions, and explored the abilities and the limits of science to describe the conditions of existence (also see *The Lack of Skepticism among Skeptics* under *Pseudoskepticism and Pseudoscience*).

Read my article [The Sokal Hoax](#)

I

J

K

L

M

N

O

P

Paranormal

Related articles on the paranormal:

[Paranormal Phenomena Seen in Relation with Spiritual Practice](#)

[Paranormal Phenomena Seen in Relation with Mystical Experiences](#)

[What is Dream Yoga?](#)

[Spiritual Crises as the Cause of Paranormal Phenomena](#)

[Paranormal Phenomena Seen in Relation with Clairvoyance](#)

[Paranormal Phenomena Seen in Relation with Channeling](#)

.....

Pseudoskepticism and pseudoscience

Related book:

[Worlds of Their Own: A Brief History of Misguided Ideas: Creationism, Flat-Earthism, Energy Scams, and the Velikovsky Affair](#), by Robert J. Scadewald

History is written by the winners; including the histories of science and scholarship. Unorthodoxies that flourish at the grassroots are often beneath the contempt of historians. Zetetic astronomy (flat-Earth science) was a household term in Victorian England, but not a single reference to it is found in conventional histories. We ignore such histories at our peril; the modern "intelligent design" movement is almost a carbon copy of the 19th century flat-Earth movement in its argumentative techniques. When orthodox science finds itself stumped, or a certain segment finds it unpalatable, the unorthodox may rush in to fill the void. The past two decades have brought a surge of interest in the history and philosophy of science. But how do we discern between pseudo and actual science? To fully understand what science is, we must understand what science is not. Written with penetrating insight into the minds of alternative thinkers, this book throws light on the differences between pseudo and actual science. The droll humor that permeates *Worlds of Their Own* makes it as enjoyable a read as it is enlightening.

Despite its focus on unorthodox ideas, *Worlds of Their Own* is about human nature. Whether they drew their ideas from the Bible or nature, all the pseudoscientists discussed in this book were driven to communicate their "truth" to the misinformed world. None was afflicted with self-doubt. All defended their "truth" with similar standards of evidence, modes of reasoning, and methods of scholarship. Their counterparts are legion - the blue-collar philosopher who refutes Einstein from his barstool, the preacher who refutes (but cannot define) evolution from his pulpit, the narcissist who promotes quackery courtesy of modern talk shows and infomercials. Each topic discussed in *Worlds of Their Own* covers a once-popular concept that persists to this day.

Read this [review](#), by Donald Simanek, the man behind [The Museum of Unworkable Devices](#) and [The Ideal Scientific Equipment Company](#)

Related articles on the topics discussed in the book:

[Immanuel Velikovsky's Worlds in Collision](#)

[Modern flat Earth societies](#)

[Free energy machine](#)

[The Hutchinson Hoax](#)

[Creationism and Creation Science](#)

[Doomsday & Doomsday Cults](#)

Related Comment to Worlds of Their Own:

It is a puzzle to me why the critics of the theories in the book don't realize that the newest trend on universities all over the world, Social Constructivism, actually can justify all the theories in a rather sophisticated way (read my article [Constructivism: the postmodern intellectualism behind New Age and the Self-help Industry](#)).

Richard Dawkins

Clinton Richard Dawkins is an English ethologist, evolutionary biologist and author. He is an emeritus fellow of New College, Oxford, and was the University of Oxford's Professor for Public Understanding of Science from 1995 until 2008.

Dawkins first came to prominence with his 1976 book *The Selfish Gene*, which popularised the gene-centred view of evolution and introduced the term meme. With his book *The Extended Phenotype* (1982), he introduced into evolutionary biology the influential concept that the phenotypic effects of a gene are not necessarily limited to an organism's body, but can stretch far into the environment. In 2006, he founded the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science.

Dawkins is an atheist, and is well known for his criticism of creationism and intelligent design. In *The Blind Watchmaker* (1986), he argues against the watchmaker analogy, an argument for the existence of a supernatural creator based upon the complexity of living organisms. Instead, he describes

evolutionary processes as analogous to a blind watchmaker in that reproduction, mutation, and selection are unguided by any designer. In *The God Delusion* (2006), Dawkins contends that a supernatural creator almost certainly does not exist and that religious faith is a delusion. He opposes the teaching of creationism in schools.

Critical books on Dawkins:

[The Dawkins Delusion? – Atheist fundamentalism and the denial of the divine, by Alister McGrath](#)

McGrath criticizes Richard Dawkins for what he perceives to be "a dogmatic conviction" to "a religious fundamentalism which refuses to allow its ideas to be examined or challenged."

He objects to Dawkins' assertion that faith is a juvenile delusion, arguing that numerous reasonable persons chose to convert as adults. He cites himself and Antony Flew as two specific examples. Like Dawkins, McGrath rejects William Paley's Watchmaker analogy as specious. To express his true feelings on the subject of Irreducible complexity, McGrath instead cites the work of Richard Swinburne, remarking that the capacity of science to explain itself requires its own explanation – and that the most economical and reliable account of this explanatory capacity lies in the notion of the monotheistic God of Christianity. When considering the subject of Aquinas' *Quinque viae*, to which Dawkins devotes considerable attention, McGrath interprets the theologian's arguments as an affirmation of a set of internally consistent beliefs rather than as an attempt to formulate a set of irrefutable proofs.

McGrath proceeds to address whether religion specifically conflicts with science. He points to Gould's supposition of Non-overlapping magisteria, or NOMA, as evidence that Darwinism is as compatible with theism as it is with atheism. With additional reference to the works of Sir Martin Rees, Denis Noble, and others, McGrath advocates a modified version of NOMA which he terms "partially-overlapping magisteria". He posits that Science and Religion co-exist as equally valid explanations for two partially overlapping spheres of existence, where the former concerns itself primarily with the temporal, and the latter concerns itself primarily with the spiritual, but where both can occasionally intertwine. McGrath confirms his position by suggesting that some scientists are also theists, pointing specifically to Owen Gingerich, Francis Collins and Paul Davies as examples.

McGrath criticizes Dawkins' portrayal of religion as both an evolutionary by-product and as a memetic virus. McGrath examines Dawkins' use of Russell's teapot analogy as well as the basics of Dawkins' theory of Memetics. McGrath criticizes

Dawkins for referencing Frazer's *The Golden Bough* as an authority on anthropology, as he considers the work to be more of "a highly impressionistic early work" than a serious text. McGrath also points to Dawkins' lack of training in psychology as indicative of an inability to address the most important questions of faith.

Quoting Dawkins' description of the Old Testament God as "a petty, unjust ... capriciously malevolent bully", McGrath counters that he does not believe in such a god and knows no one personally who does. Setting aside Dawkins' remarks, McGrath instead points to Jesus and the New Testament as superior examples of the true nature of Christianity. "Jesus", McGrath argues, "...was the object, not the agent, of violence". McGrath suggests that "far from endorsing 'out-group hostility', Jesus commanded an ethic of 'out-group affirmation' and Christians may certainly be accused of failing to live up to this command. But it is there, right at the heart of the Christian ethic". He believes that Dawkins is right when he argues that it is necessary to critique religion, and right to demand that there be an external criterion for interpreting texts; but argues that Dawkins appears unaware that religions and their texts possess internal means of reform and renewal, and that Dawkins seems unaware of the symbolism of several of the Bible passages which he quotes. McGrath cites the works of numerous authors, including Kenneth I. Pargament, Harold G. Koenig, and Terry Eagleton, to demonstrate how closely he feels religious faith to be tied to well-being.

The Dawkins Delusion? concludes with the suggestions that belief in God has "rebounded", that Dawkins' work is more theatre than scholarship, and that *The God Delusion* denotes little more than "panic" on the part of non-believers.

[Dawkins' God – from the Selfish Gene to The God Delusion, by Alister MacGrath](#)

McGrath begins with an overview of evolutionary biology and Darwinist theory. He then presents Dawkins' view that the current state of scientific knowledge should lead a rational person to conclude that there is no God. McGrath argues that Dawkins fails to declare or defend several crucial assumptions or premises. McGrath also defends other conclusions in the book, including:

- 1) the scientific method cannot conclusively prove that God does or does not exist;
- 2) the theory of evolution does not necessarily entail any particular atheistic, agnostic, or Christian understanding of the world;
- 3) Dawkins' refutation of William Paley's watchmaker analogy does not equate to a refutation of God's existence;

4) Dawkins' proposal that memes explain the evolutionary development of human culture is more illogical and unscientific than a clearly articulated defence of Christianity;

5) Dawkins is ignorant of Christian theology and mischaracterizes religious people generally.

McGrath argues that Dawkins' rejection of faith is a straw man argument. According to McGrath, Dawkins' definition that faith "means blind trust, in the absence of evidence" is not a Christian position. In contrast, argues McGrath, accepting Dawkins' definition would require blind trust since he offers no evidence to support it. Rather, it is based upon what McGrath calls "an unstated and largely unexamined cluster of hidden non-scientific values and beliefs" (p. 92). McGrath then argues that Dawkins frequently violates the very tenets of evidence-based reasoning that Dawkins himself claims to uphold and use to dismiss all religious belief.

Also on page 92, McGrath states "... Darwinism neither proves nor disproves the existence of God (unless, of course God is defined by his critics in precisely such a way...)."

Some comments on Richard Dawkins and the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry (CSI)

The best criticism of Dawkins's writings about religion is that they're not based on empirical studies of religious phenomena; that he doesn't seem aware of the assumptions he makes; and that he makes assertions without backing them up with evidence.

For example, Dawkins criticizes (mocks, perhaps?) describing children as Christian, Muslim, etc.. He claims that to describe a child as Christian is to attribute to them an intellectual understanding and acceptance of Christian doctrine that they do not have.

But, is this what Christians mean when they describe a child as Christian? That's easy enough to investigate - you could ask them.

In Catholicism a child becomes a member of the Catholic church through the sacrament of baptism. During the sacrament the child's God parents make vows on their behalf (e.g. Do you reject Satan and all of his empty promises?), which the priest explains by pointing out that the child isn't capable of taking the vows on their own behalf. The priest also makes clear that the parents and God parents are

responsible for ensuring the child is educated in Catholic teachings until they can make the vows on their own behalf.

So, clearly, within Catholicism describing a child as Catholic doesn't attribute an intellectual understanding and acceptance of Catholic doctrine to them. It indicates their membership in a Catholic community.

With this in mind, Dawkins' critique is based on attributing a meaning to someone else's statement that exists in his head, not theirs and the absurdity he finds in the phenomena stems from his own lack of comprehension. That's a minor point, but it illustrates a greater trend in Dawkins' approach to religion - he relies on his unexamined assumptions more than an actual investigation into what he's discussing.

Here are five key problems with Dawkin's attack on faith:

- 1) Dawkins attacks on religion are a strawperson attack on faith.
- 2) Dawkins uses over-generalization/guilt by association to attack faith. Using Islam to inspire stereotype, bias, and hate against people who are Christians. That's pretty absurd. He is using thought distortions up the throat (he is a sophist, not a philosopher – see my book [A Dictionary of Thought Distortions](#)).
- 3) Dawkins doesn't take an honest look at Christianity. Either from the perspective of anthropology, theology, or history.
- 4) Dawkins doing philosophy, not science (he is a reductionist and reductionism is philosophy not science – and Dawkins “philosophy” is a philosophical shipwreck – as mentioned: he is a sophist, not a philosopher).
- 5) Dawkins criticisms of God and cultural relativism offset each other. (Moreover: reductionism is itself relativism and self-refuting).

Dawkins, when he cites a religious figure, cites only the worst ones. He never says, but does imply, that all religious persons are either as bad as the Taliban or would become so bad if given the chance. Reduction ad Absurdum since it with the same weight could be used against Atheism, for example Stalin, etc., etc.

The result of Dawkins' stance is that I sometimes hear this, when I criticise someone's rhetoric. I am told, in effect: "What gives you the right to complain when atheists criticise? After all, religious people [commit these atrocities]..."

What is more: when I ask what it means that Christians such as Desmond Tutu are the opposite of the fanatical barbarians that my opponent implies are "true Christians," I hear that their Christianity is irrelevant to their virtues. This argument is blatantly unfair. You could continue with another Reductio ad Absurdum argument. Dawkins would obviously be excited to erase the world from all the great Christian art, literature and music (Bach, Mozart, etc., etc.), which must (with his own words) be hijacked by an infectious malignant god-virus, because god is delusion a "psychotic delinquent" invented by mad deluded people.

This of course raises the question: should we then live in Dawkins' incredible grey and boring Brave New World, because it is "rational"? Who is deluded here?

While Dawkins does admit to deist views, he continues to insist that these do not count ... similar to the unfair arguments I have heard regarding Christians. I am not a Christian; I am also not a Jew, and that does not mean I would support anyone who cries "Death to Jews."

The worst thing Dawkins did in his book was to misquote Robert M Pirsig out of context. "When one person suffers from a delusion, it is called insanity. When many people suffer from a delusion, it is called religion." (p. 28)

This is not what Pirsig said. Dawkins apparently does not know what Pirsig believes; or perhaps he finds it convenient to ignore it. He is citing Pirsig's second book, *Lila*, but proceeds to ignore much else that Pirsig believes.

Pirsig stated clearly that "sanity" for him represents conformity to cultural values. Being "sane" then is not necessarily to be in touch with reality; and to be "insane" is not necessarily to be out of touch with reality. (p 381-85).

Pirsig also stated that his goal in comparing religion to insanity is "not to undercut religion but to illuminate insanity." (p. 433) He also states that "an insane delusion can't be held by a group at all. A person isn't considered insane if there are a number of people who believe the same way. Insanity isn't supposed to be a communicable disease..." (p 432)

His approach to insanity is opposite that of Dawkins.

Pirsig's view of insanity is more nuanced than Dawkins' view, and to misquote Pirsig is perhaps the lowest blow Dawkins has resorted to in this book.

Philosophy is the opposite of pre-emptive mockery, because it seems like pointless cruelty. And few people indeed would appreciate receiving it.

Not all Christians are deluded. Not all Christians insist that the Earth is ± 6000 years old or that evolution is some sort of "godless doctrine." In my personal experience, Christians who did believe these things were in the minority, and most other Christians were embarrassed by their antics.

To begin with mockery, then, is to be unfair to the Christians who are not as deluded; and for those who are, it is pointless cruelty. It is like throwing sand in a bull's face.

When Christians (or other religious people) pick a fight, we should fight back. The problem is when Dawkins (or one of his disciples) begins with an attack, he is making his opponents look better than they are. He is sinking down to their level, though he seems unable to realize this.

As McGrath points out: Dawkins should have read Pirsig more closely: Pirsig described people's reactions to insanity as analogous to how orthodox believers treat heretics.

Dawkins disdains, through mockery, the idea that he comes off as fanatically as some of the most offensive believers do. Nonetheless, that is the message he gives.

And there it is.

Dawkins is unfair to religion, has a limited definition of God, has misquoted Pirsig, and often appears to be as fanatical as some of his opponents.

That he speaks about philosophy (& theology) despite having no background whatsoever in either subject, and ends up making a fool of himself in the eyes of people who know better. For example, his explanation of how our sense of morality evolved is mind bogglingly stupid. He's a popular figure (with tons of sycophants), not an academic one, he may be respected as an evolutionist, but when it comes to philosophy & theology, most people with a background in either know that Dawkins is competent in neither.

The God Delusion trumpets the fact that its author was recently voted one of the world's three leading intellectuals. This survey took place among the readers of *Prospect* magazine in November 2005. So what did this same *Prospect* magazine make of the book? Its reviewer was shocked at this "incurious, dogmatic, rambling, and self-contradictory" book. The title of the review? "Dawkins the dogmatist".

Richard Dawkins is one of the main gurus, if not *the* main, in The Committee for Skeptical Inquiry (CSI), formerly known as the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP),

CSI is a program within the transnational American non-profit educational organization Center for Inquiry (CFI), which seeks to "promote scientific inquiry, critical investigation, and the use of reason in examining controversial and extraordinary claims." It was founded by Paul Kurtz in 1976 as an independent non-profit organization (before merging with CFI as one of its programs in 2015, to counter what he regarded as an uncritical acceptance of, and support for, paranormal claims by both the media and society in general. Its philosophical position is one of scientific skepticism.

So, the puzzle is: why is it that Dawkins is so praised in the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry - (Center for Inquiry (CFI) and Richard Dawkins Foundation are now formally merged) - where the main virtues only can be described as the precise opposite of Dawkins? Because the underlying goal is ideology and neither science or philosophy. Religious pseudoscience and atheistic pseudoscience is two sides of the same Matrix coin in The Matrix Conspiracy valuta.

If you dare to go into a forum of these dogmatists, trying to have a sober and rational discussion about something which is not shared by the members, you will be bullied out by people parroting Dawkins in every sentence.

The lack of Skepticism among Skeptics

Confirming the above: [The Conceptual Penis as a Social Construct: A Sokal-Style Hoax on Gender Studies](#) is a new article in the Skeptic Magazine which are going the rounds among prominent members of the skeptic community. It is an attempt to take down the field of gender studies by getting a "Sokal-style" hoax article published (read about *The Sokal Hoax* under **Hoaxes**).

But, but: have you ever witnessed a prank gone wrong? If not, here you go: This is precisely what happened when the philosopher and mathematician, Peter Boghossian and James Lindsay, respectively, had the article published in a journal called Cogent Social Sciences. The article was simultaneously published in the magazine Skeptic.

The project was loudly advertised as a "hoax on gender studies." It primarily aimed to expose what the authors presume to be the nonsensical absurdity of gender studies,

an interdisciplinary field that attempts to understand gender identity and how these identities play out in society.

Yet Boghossian and Lindsay's prank article unambiguously failed to do this and ultimately have exposed and harmed the skeptic community itself. First, the open-access journal that published their article [requests that authors pay](#) to publish. In the case of Cogent Social Sciences, the recommended fee is a whopping \$1,350. Boghossian and Lindsay were, for unknown reasons, asked to pay less than half of this, namely \$625, but the journal apparently never got around to actually requesting the money. Boghossian has repeatedly declared on social media that he and his colleague paid "nada" for the article's publication, which taken out of context is patently misleading.

Furthermore, their article was initially rejected by a serious journal, "NORMA: International Journal for Masculinity Studies". But they were referred to the smaller outlet, 'Cogent Social Sciences', that offers publication where you 'pay what you like' (and, apparently, they didn't pay [anything](#)).

Which raises a very important question: why are the titans of the skeptic/rationalist community being pointedly irrational, when it comes to the reason this hoax was published?

The article in Skeptic Magazine highlights how regularly people will vastly lower their standards of skepticism and rationality if a piece of information is seen as confirmation of a pre-existing belief – in this instance, the belief that gender studies is fatally compromised by seething man-hate seen in connection with Capitalism and climate change (as I have said many times: an ideology always have an anti-ideology, which they projects onto everyone that doesn't agree with them – see my article [The Difference between Philosophical Education and Ideological Education](#)). All these things was what Sokal avoided.

The standard machinery of rationality would have triggered a moment of doubt – 'perhaps we've not put in enough work to separate the signal from the noise', or 'perhaps we need to tease apart the factors more carefully'.

That slow, deliberative mechanism of self-assessment is non-existent in the authorship and sharing of this piece. It seems quite likely that this is due largely to a pre-existing hostility towards gender studies, 'identity politics' and the general focus of contemporary progressive America.

It seems the conclusions drawn from Boghossian's hoax go beyond post-hoc rationalisation and into a more recent trend in conservatism, where an irrational idea is accepted not because it conforms to that person's beliefs, but because it contravenes the beliefs of ideological opponents.

Perhaps, on some level, authors like Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, Steven Pinker and Michael Shermer recognised that significantly more effort and analytical rigour was needed to come anywhere near a comprehensive conclusion about an entire field, but that niggling feeling was buried deep beneath the visceral thrill of seeing their ideological opponents dealt a mighty blow.

This reveals just how problematic the pay-to-publish model can be, even tainting the peer-review process — which in the best of circumstances can be flawed. But the fact that Bohannon got the phony paper published is not an indictment of science itself. Why would it be? To show that the intellectual values of a field are fundamentally flawed, one would need to publish in the best journals of that field and trick genuine experts into believing the hoax is a non-hoax. That was what mathematician and physicist Alan Sokal did in the notorious "[Sokal affair](#)," which attempted to unveil the obscurantist vacuity of some postmodern theory.

In connection with the Sokal Hoax I raised the question: How, given the recent and sorry story of ideologically motivated conceptions of knowledge – Lysenkoism in Stalin's Soviet Union, for example, or Nazi critiques of "Jewish science" – could it again have become acceptable to behave in this way?

At that time the question was aimed at the left-wing postmodernism, which Sokal exposed. Sadly enough, now this article in the Skeptic magazine has shown the precise thing same going on in the right-wing conservative, so-called "skeptical" atheist movement. But, as I have shown above in the case of Richard Dawkins: all real scientific skeptics knew it.

The Postmodern-generator, the random nonsense computer used to generate much of the content of the hoax paper, is available [here](#).

Related articles:

[The Pseudoscience of New Age and reductionism](#)

[The Pseudoscience of Reductionism and The Problem of Mind](#)

[The Difference between Philosophical Education and Ideological Education](#)

Q

R

S

*Shamanism***Plastic Shamanism**

[Plastic shaman](#), or plastic medicine people, is a pejorative colloquialism applied to individuals who are attempting to pass themselves off as shamans, holy people, or other traditional spiritual leaders, but who have no genuine connection to the traditions or cultures they claim to represent.

List of notorious plastic shamans:

[Carlos Castaneda](#). Carlos Castaneda was a best-selling author of a number of books centering on a Mexican Yaqui brujo (witch, sorcerer, or [shaman](#)) and his pharmacologically induced visions. He called the brujo Don Juan Matus. Castaneda claimed he was doing anthropology, that his books were not fiction. He was granted a Ph.D. by the UCLA Anthropology Department in 1973 for his third book, *Journey to Ixtlan*. Critics say the work is not ethnographically accurate and is a work of fiction.

[Lynn Andrews](#). Lynn Andrews has been instrumental in propagating the non-existent Sisterhood of the Shields. She has been shown to peddle fantasy, and heads the list of fake medicine people.

James Arthur Ray. Read my article [James Arthur Ray and The Sweat Lodge Tragedy](#)

Stanislav Grof. Read my article [A Critique of Stanislav Grof and Holotropic Breathwork](#)

T

U

V

W

X

Y

Z

*All articles and books referred to are available in free PDF Versions. Links can be found on my
blog: www.MortenTolboll.blogspot.com*

Copyright © 2017 by Morten Tolboll.

Terms of use:

http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/deed.en_US