**ARGUMENT # 3: THE OCCAM’S RAZOR RULE**

**Typical usage: "When there are two competing explanations for an event, the simpler one is more likely."**

**This argument is a principle that skeptics often misuse to try to force alternate explanations to a paranormal events, even if those explanations involve false accusations or do not fit the facts. This principle was popularized by scientist Carl Sagan in his novel turned movie "Contact", where Jodie Foster quotes it while during a conversation with a theist to defend her belief that God doesn’t exist. (Ironically, at the end of the movie it is used against her in a public interrogation by a National Security Agent.) However, an analysis on the facts and assumptions of this argument reveals some obvious problems.**

**1) First of all, Occam’s Razor, termed by 14th Century logician and friar William of Occam, refers to a concept that states that "Entities should not be multiplied unnecessarily." It was not intended to be used to evaluate claims of the paranormal as skeptics today use it for.**

**WINSTON, YOU COULD NOT POSSIBLY KNOW WHAT WILLIAM OF OCCAM IN THE 14TH CENTURY INTENDED ITS FUTURE USE TO BE.**

**The principle of simplicity works as a heuristic rule-of-thumb but some people quote it as if it is an axiom of physics. It is not. It can work well in philosophy or particle physics, but less often so in cosmology or psychology, where things usually turn out to be more complicated than you ever expected.**

**"The law of parsimony is no substitute for insight, logic and the scientific method.**

**WINSTON, YOU WOULDN’T KNOW LOGIC IF IT BITCH-SLAPPED YOU FOR 30 MINUTES.**

**It should never be relied upon to make or defend a conclusion. As arbiters of correctness only logical consistency and empirical evidence are absolute."**

**WINSTON - YOU APPLY NEITHER LOGICAL CONSISTENCY NOR EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE TO ANY OF YOUR CONCLUSIONS.**

**Even Isaac Newton didn’t use Occam’s Razor like the skeptics of today do. His version of it was "We are to admit no more causes of natural things than such as are both true and sufficient to explain their appearances."**

**WINSTON, EVEN YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO RECOGNIZE THAT NEWTON’S VERSION IS SUBSTANTIALLY THE SAME AS OCCAM’S.**

**Obviously, he was referring to explanations to explain natural phenomena, not paranormal or supernatural phenomena!**

**WINSTON, THAT IS BECAUSE EVEN 400 YEARS AGO, WITHOUT THE AID OF MODERN SCIENCE, HE HAD “COMMON SENSE.” SOMETHING THAT IS IN RARE SUPPLY IN TODAY’S WORLD.**

**2) Second, what is "simpler" is often relative. "Simplicity is subjective and the universe does not always have the same ideas about simplicity as we do."**

**WINSTON, YOU HAVE MADE “SIMPLE” MUCH EASIER TO RECOGNIZE.**

**3) Third, even if we take Occam’s Razor at face value the way skeptics use it, just because one explanation is more likely doesn’t mean that it’s always the correct one.**

**WINSTON, NO ONE IS CLAIMING THAT A MORE LIKELY EXPLANATION IS ALWAYS THE CORRECT ONE.**

**For example, if I toss a die, it is more likely that I will get numbers 1-5 than it is that I will roll a 6. But that doesn’t mean that a 6 will never come up.**

**WINSTON, WHO IN THE WORLD WOULD THINK THAT A “6” WILL NEVER COME UP? YOU JUST KEEP CREATING STRAWMEN, BUT I KEEP KNOCKING THEM DOWN BEFORE YOU DO.**

**Therefore, occasionally an unlikely explanation can be expected to be true sometimes. However, skeptics treat Occam’s Razor as if it were an absolute rule and use it as an excuse for denying any claim, no matter how valid.**

**WINSTON, THAT ARGUMENT FAILS. IF A CLAIM IS VALID BASED ON EVIDENCE, NO EXCUSE WILL SUFFICE TO DENY A VALID CLAIM.**

**4) Fourth, while Occam’s Razor may be a good rule of thumb, the problem with it is that skeptics tend to use it as an excuse to insert false explanations over paranormal ones. They will do this even if it means denying the facts and assuming things that aren’t true or didn’t happen. For example, if someone had an amazing psychic reading at a psychic fair (not prearranged) where they were told something very specific that couldn’t have been guessed by cold reading, skeptics would start inventing false accusations such as: "Someone who knew you must have tipped off the psychic in advance", "A spy in the room must have overheard you mention the specific detail before the reading", "You must have something in your appearance that reveals the detail", "You must have remembered it wrong since memory is fallible", etc. Even if none of these accusations are true, skeptics will still insist on it simply because it’s the simpler explanation to them.**

**NO WINSTON. THEY DON’T INSIST ON IT BECAUSE IT’S A SIMPLER EXPLANATION, THEY INSIST ON EVIDENCE. WITHOUT EVIDENCE, YOU HAVE NOTHING.**

**Similarly, when someone during an NDE or OBE hears a conversation or witnesses something many miles away and later upon verification, it turns out to be true, the skeptics will say that the simpler explanation is that the patient knew about the detail or conversation beforehand but forgot it.**

**WINSTON, NOT ONE NDE OR OBE HAS EVER BEEN PROVEN TO HAVE ACTUALLY OCCURRED. IF AND WHEN THAT EVIDENCE IS EVER PRESENTED, IT WILL BE EXAMINED LIKE ALL OTHER EVIDENCE.**

**Likewise, if someone has a close up encounter of Bigfoot, skeptics will use Occam’s Razor to claim that it is more likely that the experiencer was either lying or hallucinating. Even if none of those alternate explanations are true, skeptics will still insist on them anyway, using Occam’s Razor as justification.**

**WINSTON, OCCAM’S RAZOR IS UNNECESSARY IN THIS CASE. WHAT IS NECESSARY IS EVIDENCE.**

**Hence, they prefer a false non-paranormal explanation, even if untrue, rather than accept the truth that it happened the way described.**

**WINSTON, IT DOESN’T MATTER WHAT THEY PREFER.**

**This is clearly a case of bias rather than objectivity. What skeptics don’t seem to understand is that reality is not confined or measured by Occam’s Razor, and the use of Occam’s Razor in this manner does nothing but impede progress and learning.**

**WINSTON, REALITY IS BASED ON EVIDENCE. OCCAM’S RAZOR IS SIMPLY A TOOL THAT EVERYONE, NOT JUST SKEPTICS, USE TO EVALUATE CLAIMS.**

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***

SCIENCE SEGMENT:

LAST WEEK I READ THE REPORT OUT OF MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY ABOUT THE HUGE BREAKTHROUGH IN EVOLUTION WHERE PROFESSOR RICHARD LEMSKI ACTUALLY PROVED EVOLUTION OCCURRED IN HIS LAB OVER A 20-YEAR PERIOD AND PRODUCED BENEFICIAL MUTATIONS IN BACTERIA.

THIS WEEK, LET’S GO BACK OVER HALF A CENTURY TO THE LAST GIGANTIC BREAKTHROUGH IN BIOLOGY THAT SHOOK THE WORLD WHEN STANLEY MILLER AND HAROLD UREY CREATED THE INGREDIENTS OF LIFE FROM INORGANIC ELEMENTS!

The **Miller-Urey experiment** was an [experiment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Experiment) that simulated hypothetical conditions present on the [early Earth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Earth) and tested for the occurrence of [chemical evolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chemical_evolution). Considered to be the classic experiment on the [origin of life](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origin_of_life), it was conducted in 1953 by [Stanley L. Miller](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanley_L._Miller) and [Harold C. Urey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_C._Urey) at the [University of Chicago](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Chicago).

The experiment used [water](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water) (H2O), [methane](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Methane) (CH4), [ammonia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ammonia) (NH3) and [hydrogen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hydrogen) (H2). The chemicals were all sealed inside a sterile array of glass tubes and flasks connected together in a loop, with one flask half-full of liquid water and another flask containing a pair of electrodes. The liquid water was heated to induce [evaporation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evaporation), sparks were fired between the electrodes to simulate [lightning](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lightning) through the [atmosphere](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earth%27s_atmosphere) and [water vapor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water_vapor), and then the atmosphere was cooled again so that the water could condense and trickle back into the first flask in a continuous cycle.

At the end of one week of continuous operation Miller and Urey observed that as much as 10-15% of the [carbon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carbon) within the system was now in the form of organic compounds. Two percent of the carbon had formed [amino acids](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amino_acids), including 2-3 of the 22 that are used to make [proteins](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protein) in living cells, with [glycine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glycine) as the most abundant. Sugars, lipids, and some of the building blocks for nucleic acids were also formed. Nucleic acids (DNA, RNA) themselves were not formed.

CREATIONISTS HAD ALWAYS ARGUED THAT LIFE COULD NOT BE CREATED FROM INORGANIC COMPOUNDS. THIS EXPERIMENT PROVED THAT THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF LIFE COULD FORM FROM INORGANIC COMPOUNDS. EVOLUTION COULD THEN DO THE REST.

CREATIONISTS NEVER YIELD TO ANY SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE HOWEVER, AND TO THIS DAY, STILL ATTACK THE EXPERIMENT IN ANY WAY THEY CAN. ONE ATTACK SAYS THAT THE CONDITIONS OF THE EARLY EARTH WERE FAR DIFFERENT THAN IN THIS EXPERIMENT. HOW WOULD THEY KNOW? THAT ISN’T IN THE BIBLE.

NO MATTER WHAT ATTACKS THEY TRY, THERE IS NOTHING THEY CAN EVER DO TO UNDO THE RESULTS OF THIS EXPERIMENT IN WHICH, FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER, THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF LIFE WERE CREATED BY HUMANS, USING ONLY INORGANIC COMPOUNDS. IF THIS EXPERIEMENT COULDN’T BE DUPLICATED, IT WOULDN’T BE SCIENCE. SORRY CREATIONISTS, BUT IF YOU THINK THIS WAS BAD NEWS AND THAT LEMSKI’S “EVOLUTION IN THE LAB” WAS BAD NEWS, YOU DON’T EVEN WANT TO IMAGINE WHAT SCIENCE HAS IN STORE FOR YOU AROUND THE CORNER.

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***

SPAIN: BREAKING THE MORAL MONOPOLY OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

BY FERNANDO ROBLES

**With the new school year starting in September, children in Spain will have a new secular civics class that has the Roman Catholic Church up in arms. “Education for citizenship” will include ethics, civics and human rights. Based on the values enshrined in the 1978 Constitution, it is designed to prepare students in public elementary and junior high schools to become self-determined, responsible and tolerant citizens of a modern, pluralistic democracy.**

**The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) has taken the course as a challenge against its moral monopoly and launched a furious campaign against it. The Episcopate alarmed Catholic parents that the civics classes violated their constitutional right to decide about the “moral formation” of their children and had to be fought by all legal means. The archbishop of Madrid threatened to appeal to the Constitutional Court of Spain to stop this “ethical-moral educational program that negates religion". But the government is not impressed. “No faith can impose itself on the law”, said Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero in a speech on a youth congress last month. "Spain is a lay country, and its lay principles guarantee pluralism and tolerance".**

**Most explosive about the new program is for the bishops the fact that it includes – among many other things - issues of gender, sexuality and family. One of its stated goals is to teach children to reject "existing discrimination for reason of sex, origin, social differences, affective-sexual, or whatever other type" and to exercise a "critical evaluation of the social and sexual division of labor and racist, xenophobic, sexist, and homophobic social prejudices.” According to the bishops, this is “indoctrinating children with the sexual ideology and social agenda of the left” – in short: “Sodom and Gomorrah!”**

**When the socialist government took office in March 2004, it changed – much to the chagrin of the RCC - the social climate in Spain with a series of new politics. It scrapped plans for compulsory religious classes in public schools, cut down government subsidies for Catholic institutions, eased the laws for divorce and abortion and recognized gay marriages. Despite the archbishop’s outcry that Madrid had now become “Sodom and Gomorrah”, Zapatero's liberal social model enjoys wide support among the people. In a July survey by the Center for Sociological Research in Madrid, more than two thirds of respondents welcomed, for example, the legalization of gay marriages, though 77 percent described themselves as Catholics (of which, however, only 16 percent said they went to church every week, while 55 percent almost never).**

**The influence of the RCC is waning in the once most Catholic country in Europe. The education system is still one of its strongholds: about one quarter of the country's children are educated in Catholic schools that get about half their funding from the state and the other half from non-government sources. But even among students and parents represented by the Catholic Association of Private Education Companies in Madrid, 94 percent don’t have any objection to the civics classes. In fact, the furious resistance of the Catholic bishops against the new syllabus threatens to backfire. The government seems to wait that time ripens to put the RCC in its place.**

**The man behind the new civics program is Gregorio Peces-Barba Martínez, Professor of Legal Philosophy at Madrid University and one of the authors of the Constitution of 1978. In an article in the Spanish daily El Pais, he warned the noisy bishops not to “pull so hard on the rope”. Criticising them for their “extreme arrogance, a sensation of impunity and an insufferable sense of superiority, derived from the fact that they administer 'superior truths'”, he accused them of “defying the legitimate authorities, the Constitution and the law, attempting to impose their criteria before the common good and the popular sovereignty residing in the Parliament” and held them “responsible for the agitation that impedes social peace”. If the RCC was not able to adjust itself to the new social climate in the next legislature, he concluded, “it would be necessary to address the topic of the actions and situation of the Church and establish a new status, that puts them in their place and that respects the autonomy of the civil authority.” Prof. Peces-Barba's statements are considered significant because of his influence in Spain's government.**

**FAMOUS QUOTES**

**BLAISE PASCAL** June 19, 1623 - August 19, 1662 39 Years.

Pascal was a [French](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France) [mathematician](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mathematician), [physicist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Physicist), and [religious](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion) [philosopher](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosopher). He was a [child prodigy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_prodigy) who was educated by his father. Pascal's earliest work was in the natural and applied [sciences](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science) where he made important contributions to the construction of mechanical [calculators](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calculator), the study of [fluids](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fluid), and clarified the concepts of [pressure](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pressure) and [vacuum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vacuum). Pascal also wrote in defense of the [scientific method](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientific_method).

Pascal was a mathematician of the first order. He helped create two major new areas of research. He wrote a significant treatise on the subject of [projective geometry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Projective_geometry) at the age of sixteen, and later corresponded with [Pierre de Fermat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre_de_Fermat) on [probability theory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Probability_theory), strongly influencing the development of modern [economics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economics) and [social science](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_sciences).

Following a [mystical](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mysticism) experience in late 1654, he abandoned his scientific work and devoted himself to philosophy and [theology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theology). Pascal was in poor [health](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health) throughout his life and his death came just two months after his 39th birthday.

**Pascal is also famous for “pascal’s wager” in which he suggests that it is “safer” to believe in God than not to because if you are wrong, the penalty is not as severe.**

**The problem with this idea though is that it assumes that a mere human can fool God. If you believe in God because you are “playing it safe,” do you really think you can fool Him? Do you really think He doesn’t know what you’re doing?**

**Another problem with the “wager” is that it omits the other gods. Allah makes the same demand and promises a similar punishment for non-belief. For the wager to be “safe” you would have to know for sure which God to pretend to believe in or you would have to find a way to fool both of them.**

**Fortunately, most of the other gods do not threaten humans with incineration if they choose the wrong god.**

**Pascal’s Quote:**

**"Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction."**