**SEPTEMBER 14, 2008 THESKEPTICARENA.COM**

[**Argument # 14: "Believers in the paranormal are thinking in primitive, irrational, childish and uninformed ways."**](http://www.victorzammit.com/skeptics/winston.html#top)

**This statement is often made by the more extreme and opinionated type of skeptic. Fortunately, many skeptic groups have realized the extremity and folly of these types of statements and have stopped making them in public. The fact is, many who hold spiritual beliefs or metaphysical views came to them after researching all the data and examining the different explanations, making informed conclusions.**

**WINSTON, THAT’S THE SAD PART. EVEN AFTER REVIEWING THE EVIDENCE, THEY WERE UNABLE TO FIGURE IT OUT. THESE PEOPLE ARE OFTEN QUITE WELL-EDUCATED; OFTEN THEY HAVE EXPERIENCED MANY YEARS OF LIFE, SO THEY ARE NOT “IMMATURE.” SO WHAT CAUSES PEOPLE TO SIDE AGAINST THE EVIDENCE OR TO BELIEVE IN INADEQUATE EVIDENCE?**

**I BELIEVE THE ANSWER LIES IN TWO THINGS: FIRST, THE FAILURE OF OUR SOCIETY TO TRAIN ITS CITIZENS IN CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS, LEAVING THOSE INDIVIDUALS VULVERABLE TO DISHONEST OR ILL-INFORMED PEOPLE.**

**SECONDLY, I ALSO BELIEVE THAT EGO PLAYS A HUGE ROLE. ONCE EGO HAS TAKEN OVER THE MIND, RATIONAL THINKING BECOMES NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE. PEOPLE WILL THEN DEFEND THEIR BELIEFS AGAINST ALL EVIDENCE RATHER THAN ADMIT THEY COULD BE WRONG.**

**WINSTON, YOU HAVE EVERYTHING BASS ACKWARDS. EVERYTHING THAT YOU SAY TO DESCRIBE SKEPTICS, PERFECTLY DESCRIBES IRRATIONALS. YOUR DESCRIPTIONS DO NOT DESCRIBE SKEPTICS WINSTON, THEY DESCRIBE YOU.**

**Nevertheless, it can also be argued that closed-minded skeptics who are out to debunk everything paranormal are thinking in irrational and uninformed ways because they simply refuse to consider the data that support strong paranormal phenomena cases, but instead dismiss it on a priori grounds.**

**WINSTON, YOU COULDN’T POSSIBLY WRITE ANYTHING MORE BACKWARDS THAN WHAT YOU JUST DID.**

**HERE’S A CONCEPT FOR YOU: INSTEAD OF ATTACKING PEOPLE WHO DARE TO DEMAND PROOF OF YOUR UNSUPPORTED BELIEFS, WHY DON’T YOU BECOME THE FIRST PERSON ON EARTH TO PROVIDE THE FIRST PIECE OF ACTUAL EVIDENCE IN SUPPORT OF ANY ONE OF THOSE BELIEFS. THINK OF THE FAME WINSTON!**

**If they are not up to date on the evidence, then they are the ones who are acting uninformed. How can one be truly informed if they only wish to look at the data that support their views? Rationalizing away facts to defend one’s paradigm is not an example of rational thinking.**

**WINSTON, I COULDN’T HAVE SAID IT ANY BETTER. (REREAD HIGHLIGHTED).**

**I THINK THE SADDEST PART OF THIS WHOLE WINSTON MATTER IS THAT HE ACTUALLY BELIEVES HIS DESCRIPTIONS APPLY TO OTHERS, AND DOESN’T HAVE EVEN THE SLIGHTEST CLUE THAT HE IS DESCRIBING HIMSELF.**

**Furthermore, people who hold paranormal or other non-empirical beliefs may simply be expressing a cultural, personal or spiritual view, and nothing more.**

**WINSTON, THAT IS NO EXCUSE. VIEWS BASED ON FAITH RATHER THAN EVIDENCE ARE IRRATIONAL.**

**This does not mean they are less intelligent, more irrational or childish than non-believers of the paranormal.**

**WINSTON - TRUE, FALSE, TRUE. IT DOES NOT MEAN THEY ARE LESS INTELLIGENT NOR MORE CHILDISH, BUT THEY ARE MORE IRRATIONAL, SIMPLY DUE ON THE FACT THAT THEIR BELIEFS ARE BASED ON FAITH.**

**In fact, these people are usually capable of applying rational and intelligent thought to a wide variety of everyday situations when it matters, and no doubt do this effectively and rationally.**

**WINSTON, GOOD POINT. PEOPLE ARE VERY COMPLEX.**

**THINKING BECOMES A HABIT AND PEOPLE WILL TEND TO THINK EITHER RATIONALLY OR IRRATIONALLY. OBVIOUSLY RATIONAL PEOPLE DO NOT ALWAYS THINK RATIONALLY. LIKEWISE, IRRATIONAL PEOPLE DO NOT ALWAYS THINK IRRATIONALLY.**

**SOMETIMES IT DEPENDS ON THE SUBJECT. PEOPLE WHO HOLD IRRATIONAL BELIEFS CAN FUNCTION QUITE RATIONALLY IN SITUATIONS WHERE THOSE BELIEFS ARE NOT CHALLENGED. FOR EXAMPLE, IN THE CASE OF A DEVOUT MUSLIM WHO WORKS AS A GEOLOGIST, BUT KEEPS THEIR BELIEFS SEPARATE FROM THEIR WORK.**

**We have to remember that basically, it is simply our a-priori beliefs that affect our acceptance of the data for paranormal phenomena.**

**WINSTON, THAT IS TRUE ONLY FOR THE IRRATIONAL THINKER. THEREFORE WINSTON, IT IS TRUE FOR YOU.**

**Closed minded skeptics and debunkers know going into an investigation that there is a natural explanation, and are firmly committed to finding it.**

**WRONG AGAIN WINSTON. THEY LIKELY BELIEVE THAT THERE IS A NATURAL EXPLANATION. BUT ANY EXPLANATION WILL REQUIRE PROOF. THAT IS SOMETHING THAT YOU DO NOT REQUIRE WINSTON.**

**The problem is that it can (and has in some cases) lead to incorrect or premature conclusions.**

**WINSTON, NAME ONE.**

**It also doesn't do much for skepticism’s reputation when a researcher goes in (falsely, and obviously so) proclaiming neutrality when the reality is otherwise.**

**WINSTON, EXACTLY THE SAME THING APPLIES TO YOU.**

 **Why not just be honest and say "I don't believe it. It is possible to convince me, but I don't think that is going to happen because in my experience, the world doesn't work that way.'"?**

**WINSTON, YOU SHOULD LISTEN MORE CLOSELY - THAT IS WHAT THEY SAY.**

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**THE SCIENCE SEGMENT**

**INTERESTING FACTS FROM BIOLOGY (THE ANIMAL KINGDOM)**

**Gene length of DNA which synthesizes specific a protein.**

**Human Genome DNA nucleotides: Adenine, Cytosine, Guanine, & Thymine**

**in groups of 3. For RNA: replace Thymine with Uracil.**

 **Humans have ~20,000 genes containing an average of**

**100,000 units each > 231!**

**an Organism's genetic map**

**chromosomes (bacteria has 1 / humans have 46).**

**genes (long sequences of chemical bases containing instructions to construct a protein).**

**Virus Non-living.**

**life smallest = 200 nanometers**

**mutation germline (sperm or egg) - passed to offspring.**

**somatic - not inheritable.**

**sex males = xy ; females = xx.**

**mules A mule is a sterile hybrid of a female horse and a male donkey.**

**(they are sterile because they inherit and odd # of chromosomes.**

**A mule did, however, give birth! = a one in 2 billion chance).**

**rattlesnakes Rattlesnake venom: Zinc is the killer agent.**

 **It combines with a protein in the snake to form poison.**

**turtles Its sex is determined by egg temperature.**

**sponge Is the animal from whom all other animals on earth evolved!**

**niderians The next multi-celled animal to develop after sponges.**

**unlike sponges, they were able to travel to get food and therefore became the first to develop most of the predatory systems now seen throughout the animal kingdom; including a mouth, stomach, tentacles, etc.**

**beetles It is the world's strongest animal.**

 **It can carry up to 100 times its own weight.**

**treesuckers They "tap" sap flowing beneath surface of plants.**

**Their excrement is called honeydew.**

**High in protein and sugar, it is used as food by insects and man.**

**Ants domesticate and "milk" treehoppers much as man does a cow.**

**Barnacles Have evolved the largest penis (for their size) in the animal kingdom because once a barnacle becomes attached to an object it can never leave.**

 **They are hermaphroditic.**

**Lobsters "crusher claw" development is determined by one claw**

 **being exercised more than the other, which remains a "cutter."**

**Orcas 1) Fish-eaters. They have a rounded dorsal fin.**

**They live in large pods.**

 **2) Mammal-eaters. Have a pointed dorsal fin.**

**They live in small groups.**

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**THE ARENA GOES ABROAD: THIS WEEK - MALTA**

**A certain Vince Fenech, Evangelist pastor and director of the fully-licensed, state-approved “Accelerated Christian Academy Creationist institution” in Malta, has achieved a new level of fantasy that rivals most of what we encounter these days, even on the US political scene. Says this student of mythological science, dinosaurs helped build the pyramids of Egypt. This is a little-known aspect of archaeology, even as taught in Egypt or to Scientologists.**

**While some of us have the quaint notion that dinosaurs – we’re talking BIG ones here – became extinct some 65 million years ago, Fenech reveals to us that they actually co-existed with early humans, and even helped in the construction of the pyramids. He tells us that the beasts are mentioned in the Book of Job, but cautions that his observation about their being used for pyramid construction is only “his personal belief.” The curriculum of the Academy is not exactly free of such fanciful reinventions of history. They insist the basic Evangelist tenet that the entire universe was created in 4004 BPE, is true, and Fenech supplies “proof” of the notion:**

**When man landed on the moon [1969], they expected the landing module to sink in a deep layer of dust. But the layer was only a few inches deep. This proves that the universe is still young!**

**I NEED TO BUTT IN HERE FOR A MOMENT. FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO ACCEPT THE MOON ARGUMENT AS VALID, I SUGGEST YOU VISIT THE WEBSITE:**

**http://www.answersingenesis.org/home/area/faq/dont\_use.asp**

**THIS IS A WELL-KNOWN CHRISTIAN WEBSITE THAT STANDS OUT FROM THE REST FOR HIS HONESTY ON SCIENCE ISSUES. WHEN THEORIES SUCH AS THE “MOON DUST” ARGUMENT HAVE BEEN DISCREDITED, THIS WEBSITE HAS THE HONESTY TO ADMIT IT; WHILE MOST OTHER CHRISTIAN SITES DO NOT.**

**THE REASON WHY THE “MOON DUST” ARGUMENT FAILED WAS BECAUSE THE THEORY WAS BASED ON FAULTY DATA WHICH GROSSLY OVERESTIMATED THE AMOUNT OF DUST THAT THEY EXPECTED TO FIND ON THE MOON.**

**As an article in the Malta Times revealed when they commented on this nonsense from the Accelerated Christian Academy Creationist Institution, Malta’s Education Director Dr. Cecilia M. Borg was notified about the blatantly unscientific nonsense evidently taught there. She was queried by the Times about resolution #1580, passed by the Council of Europe’s parliamentary assembly on 4 October 2007, entitled “The Dangers of Creationism in Education.” This resolution observes that**

**…the war on the theory of evolution and on its proponents most often originates in forms of religious extremism which are closely allied to extreme right-wing political movements.**

**And EU members are asked to**

**…firmly oppose the teaching of creationism as a scientific discipline on an equal footing with the theory of evolution and in general resist presentation of creationist ideas in any discipline other than religion.**

**From Dr. Borg came this response:**

**From previous correspondence I am sure you could clearly deduce that the position of the Education Division is perfectly aligned to the Council of Europe Resolution 1580 since it was made amply clear that while every school is obliged by law to follow the National Minimum Curriculum in all curricular matters, religious, moral and ethical instruction is imparted in respect to the freedom of belief as guaranteed by the Constitution and in the light of “the right of every parent of a minor to give his decision with regard to any matter concerning the education which the minor is to receive,” as entrenched in article 6 of the Education Act.**

**MY FINAL COMMENT ON THE MATTER IS THAT THIS REPLY FROM DR. BORG IS THE TYPICAL DOUBLETALK YOU GET FROM PEOPLE WHEN THEY GET CAUGHT DOING SOMETHING WRONG. FIRST, THE EDUCATION DIVISION IS NOT PERFECTLY ALIGNED WITH THE RESOLUTION - IT IS IN CLEAR VIOLATION OF IT. SECOND, BY “FREEDOM OF BELIEF” I ASSUME SHE MEANS “FREEDOM OF RELIGION.” NO ONE IS CHALLENGING THEIR FREEDOM OF RELIGION. THEY ARE FREE TO TEACH WHATEVER THEY WANT IN THEIR CHURCHES AND SUNDAY SCHOOLS. BUT IMPOSING THEIR RELIGIOUS BELIEFS ON OTHERS IN A STATE-SUPPORTED SCHOOL IS NOT “FREEDOM OF RELIGION.” IT IS FASCISM. THIRD, THE PARENTS DO NOT MAKE THE LAWS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS EXCEPT THROUGH THEIR REPRESENTATIVES.**

**PERSONALLY, I WOULD LOVE TO SEE A BUNCH OF MUSLIMS MOVE INTO THE SCHOOL DISTRICT AND WATCH WHAT HAPPENS.**

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**FAMOUS QUOTES**

**Christopher Eric Hitchens (born April 13, 1949) is 59 years old.**

**He is an English-born American author, journalist and literary critic. Currently living in Washington, D.C., he has been a columnist at Vanity Fair, The Atlantic, World Affairs, The Nation, Slate, Free Inquiry, and a variety of other media outlets. Hitchens is also a political observer, whose best-selling books have made him a staple of talk shows and lecture circuits. His latest book being God Is Not Great.**

**Hitchens is said to be a polemicist and intellectual. While he was once identified with the Anglo-American radical political left, he has more recently embraced some arguably right-wing causes, notably the Iraq War; the war has had the support of some liberal commentators of Hitchens' acquaintance in the UK and Canada.**

**Formerly a Trotskyist and a fixture in the left wing publications of both the United Kingdom and United States, Hitchens departed from the consensus of the political left in 1989 after what he called the "tepid reaction" of the European left following Ayatollah Khomeini's issue of a fatwa calling for the murder of Salman Rushdie.**

**The September 11, 2001 attacks strengthened his embrace of an interventionist foreign policy, and his vociferous criticism of what he calls "fascism with an Islamic face."**

**He is known for his ardent admiration of George Orwell, Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson, and for his excoriating critiques of Mother Teresa, Henry Kissinger, and Bill Clinton. Hitchens is an antitheist, and he describes himself as a believer in the Enlightenment values of secularism, humanism, and reason.**

**Hitchens’s Quotes:**

**"What can be asserted without evidence can also be dismissed without evidence."**

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**"I have no invisible means of support."**

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**"Long before the critical day of September 11, 2001,**

**I could sense that religion was beginning to reassert its challenge to civil society."**

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**"From a plurality of prime movers,**

**the monotheists have bargained it down to a single one.**

**They are getting ever nearer to the true, round figure."**

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**"So then, let the advocates and partisans of religion rely on faith alone,**

**and let them be brave enough to admit that this is what they are doing."**

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**"All religions take care to silence or to execute those who question them."**