**OCTOBER 5, 2008 THESKEPTICARENA.COM**

**[Argument # 18: "No psychic phenomena has been demonstrated under controlled conditions."](http://www.victorzammit.com/skeptics/winston.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22top)**

**Corollary: "Whenever proper controls are put in place, psi experiments only get average chance results."**

**This argument is often used by those who don’t believe psi is possible, and that only inadequate controls and methods can result in above chance psi results.**

**WINSTON, THAT HAS BEEN THE CASE - SO FAR.**

**Again, this is based on another a priori assumption that psi is impossible.**

**NO WINSTON, IT IS BASED ON THE FACT THAT PSI HAS NEVER BEEN PROVEN TO EXIST UNDER CONTROLLED CONDITIONS.**

**This argument puts skeptics’ mindframe into a closed way of thinking.**

**WINSTON, THAT’S IRRELEVANT. EVEN IF IT WERE TRUE THAT SKEPTICS WERE CLOSED-MINDED (WHICH IT IS NOT) IT WOULDN’T MATTER BECAUSE PROOF FORCES OPEN ALL RATIONAL MINDS. UNFORTUNATELY, PROOF RARELY FORCES OPEN THE IRRATIONAL MIND. THEY WILL SIMPLY DENY THE EVIDENCE TO MAINTAIN THEIR BELIEFS.**

**Any experiment that supports psi is automatically assumed by skeptics to be uncontrolled, and any test that fails is considered to be adequately controlled.**

**WINSTON, THAT IS BASED ON EXPERIENCE. ALL EXPERIMENTS THAT HAVE SUPPORTED PSI HAVE PROVEN TO BE POORLY CONTROLLED WHEN INSPECTED BY SKEPTICS. NO SUCCESSFUL PSI TEST HAS EVER WITHSTOOD THE SCRUTINY OF SKEPTICS. IF ONE EVER DOES, THEN PSI WILL HAVE TO BE ACCEPTED BY EVERYONE.**

**However, this is simply not so because as mentioned in Argument 17 above, the successful ganzfeld and autoganzfeld experiments were controlled.**

**NO WINSTON. THEY WERE POORLY CONTROLLED. EVERY TIME THEY TIGHTENED THE CONTROLS, THE RESULTS WENT DOWN. THE LAST TIME THEY WERE CONDUCTED THE PERCENTAGES WERE ABOUT AT THE LEVEL OF CHANCE.**

**Skeptics will say that an experiment was uncontrolled even when they were never at the location of the experiment.**

**WINSTON, IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO PHYSICALLY BE AT THE LOCATION.**

**This happened with the Stanford Research Institute’s experiments on famous Israeli psychic Uri Geller. Psychic debunker James Randi (Geller’s nemesis) and others who were not at SRI when Geller was tested, made a bunch of accusations against SRI such as poor controls and deliberate skewing of the results on the part of the scientists there, Harold Puthoff and Russell Targ. Since Randi and his skeptics were never there, all they have is speculation based on their closed beliefs. As Harold Puthoff told me in some email exchanges regarding Randi’s criticisms:**

**Puthoff:**

**"Not true at all. They just quote Randi and his pronouncements, e.g., in his book Flim Flam. In Flim Flam, he gives something like 28 debunking points, if my memory serves me correctly. I had the opportunity to confront Randi at a Parapsychology Association conference with proof in hand, and in tape-recorded interaction he admitted he was wrong on all the points. He even said he would correct them for the upcoming paperback being published by the CSICOP group. (He did not.)**

**WINSTON, ALMOST EVERYONE ON THE PLANET NOW KNOWS THAT RANDI WAS RIGHT ABOUT GELLER. THE WHOLE WORLD WATCHED ON YOU TUBE RECENTLY AS GELLER GOT CAUGHT BY THE CAMERA PALMING A MAGNET. GELLER HIMSELF IS EVEN BACKING OFF HIS OWN CLAIMS OF POSSESSING SUPERNATURAL ABILITIES. YOU ARE ONE OF THE LAST PEOPLE ON EARTH WHO STILL CLING TO BELIEF IN ONE OF THE BIGGEST FRAUDS TO EVER HIT THE PLANET. LIKE I ALWAYS SAY: WINSTON - YOU ARE A SALESMAN’S DREAM!**

**In case one thinks that it was just a case of our opinions vs. his opinions, we chose for the list of incorrect points only those that could be independently verified. Examples: He said that in our Nature paper we verified Geller's metal-bending. Go to the paper, and you see that we said we were not able to obtain evidence for this. He said that a film of the Geller experiment made at SRI by famed photographer Zev Pressman was not made by him, but by us and we just put his name on it. We showed up with an affidavit by Pressman saying that indeed he did make the film."**

**"Geller did the same kind of remote viewing in our lab, that more than fifty others from the government and army have done as part of the 25 year remote viewing program. If the whole world has remote viewing abilities, why shouldn't Geller have some?"**

**WINSTON, WHAT? THE WHOLE WORLD HAS REMOTE VIEWING ABILITIES? BOY, DO I FEEL LEFT OUT.**

**"Again, these claims of inadequate controls are generally just repeats of what Randi says. The truth of the matter is that none of Randi's claimed suspected inadequate controls actually had anything to do with the experiments, which of course Randi was not there to know of. This has been independently reported by Scott Rogo somewhere in the literature, who came out specifically to check each of Randi's guesses about inadequate controls and found them inapplicable under the conditions in which the tests were conducted. In fact, all of Randi's suggestions were amateurish compared to the sophisticated steps we took, suspecting as we did everything from magician's tricks to an Israeli intelligence scam."**

**WINSTON, OBVIOUSLY THEIR SOPHISTICATED STEPS WEREN’T SOPHISTICATED ENOUGH.**

**In fact, during the course of his career, Uri Geller succeeded in 17 controlled experiments in different laboratories. Here are some quotes from the scientists who tested him. Notice the bold emphasis on the controls and strict conditions of the experiments.**

**WINSTON, DON’T FORGET - THE GANZFELD RESEARCHERS MADE THE SAME CLAIMS. WHICH HELD UP ONLY AS LONG AS NO ONE CHECKED THEM. ONCE THE SKEPTICS ARRIVED ON THE SCENE - ALL THE EVIDENCE EVAPORATED IN A CLOUD OF PSI.**

**"I tested Uri Geller myself under laboratory-controlled conditions and saw with my own eyes the bending of a key which was not touched by Geller at any time.**

**WINSTON, AS MOST EVERYONE ON THE PLANET NOW KNOWS, URI MADE A FOOL OF THAT GUY.**

**There was a group of people present during the experiment who all witnessed the key bending in eleven seconds to an angle of thirty degrees. Afterwards we tested the key in a scientific laboratory using devices such as electron microscopes and X-rays and found that there was no chemical, manual or mechanical forces involved in the bending of the key."**

**WINSTON, TRY TO USE YOUR HEAD - HOW COULD AN ELECTRON MICROSCOPE OR AN X-RAY DETERMINE IF A MANUAL FORCE HAD BEEN APPLIED?**

**WINSTON, I WOULD SUGGEST TO YOU TO GO TO YOU TUBE AND WATCH THE OLD CLIP FROM THE JOHNNY CARSON SHOW IN THE LATE SEVENTIES (BEFORE YOU WERE EVEN BORN) WHERE URI HUMILIATED HIMSELF ON NATIONAL TELEVISION.**

**RANDI TOLD CARSON NOT TO LET URI USE HIS OWN SPOONS. WHEN URI SAT DOWN TO DO HIS TRICKS HE WAS SHOCKED THAT THEY WOULDN’T LET HIM USE HIS OWN SPOONS. THE NEXT 10-20 MINUTES WAS SOME OF THE MOST HUMILIATING TELEVISION EVER BROADCAST OVER THE AIRWAYS AS URI SQUIRMED AND MADE EXCUSES AND FINALLY RAN OUT WITH HIS TAIL BETWEEN HIS LEGS IN DISGRACE NEVER TO RETURN TO THAT SHOW AGAIN.**

**BUT I AM NOT GOING TO SUGGEST IT TO YOU WINSTON BECAUSE IRRATIONALS MUST DENY ALL EVIDENCE THAT CONTRADICTS WHAT THEY DESPERATELY WANT TO BELIEVE.**

**BUT I WOULD SUGGEST TO LISTENERS TO WATCH THE VIDEO: IT IS ABSOLUTELY HILARIOUS - UNLESS YOUR LAST NAME HAPPENS TO BE GELLER OR WU.**

**"Through intense concentration, Uri was able to bend a 3/8" cold rolled steel bar under controlled conditions, as he rubbed the top of it with his forefinger. I was sitting very close to him during this experiment. On another occasion, a radish seed sprouted and grew 1/2" as he held it in his hand. I watched this very closely as well. "**

**Jean Millay PhD. (Saybrook Institute U.S.A.)**

**WINSTON, THIS PROVES HOW EASY IT IS TO FOOL PEOPLE WHO THINK THEY ARE SMART.**

**"Uri Geller was tested in my laboratory at UCLA. During the experiments in Kirlian photography and after hundreds of trials, he produced three extraordinary photographs in which flashes of energy were clearly visible. What wonderfully welcome sights they were! I have also tested Uri's watch-fixing and metal-bending abilities. He has demonstrated these to me under controlled scientific conditions, in a most convincing manner".**

**Dr. Thelma Moss (Professor of psychology at UCLA and one of the first**

**U.S. researchers to experiment with Kirlian photography - U.S.A.)**

**WINSTON, THIS IS A SECOND EXAMPLE OF HOW EASY IT IS TO FOOL PEOPLE WHO THINK THEY ARE SMART.**

**"Uri bent a strong heat-treated alloy bar held by myself and my assistant at each end. There was absolutely no pressure exerted by Uri while the bar was bending.**

**Professor Charles Crussard (Professor of Metallurgy, School of Mines,**

**Paris, and Scientific Director of Pecheney, France)**

**WINSTON, MAKE THAT 3.**

**"Uri Geller, as a psychic genius, has been able to demonstrate the repeatability of controlled scientific psychic experiments. Thereby he has proved the reality of psychic phenomena (such as telekinesis, clairvoyance and telepathy)."**

**Professor P. Plum, MD (Emeritus Professor of Pediatrics, University of**

**Copenhagen, former chairman of the Danish Medical Research Council -**

**Denmark)**

**WINSTON, YOU ARE DOING A SPLENDID JOB OF COMPILING A LIST OF GULLIBLE PHD’s.**

**"We have observed certain phenomena with the subjects [including Uri Geller] for which we have no scientific explanation. As a result of Geller's success in this experimental period, we consider that he has demonstrated his paranormal, perceptual ability in a convincing and unambiguous manner." (The results of these experiments were published in the respected British journal Nature, Vol. 251, No. 5).**

**Dr Harold Puthoff and Russell Targ (Stanford Research Institute - California, U.S.A.)**

**WINSTON, LET’S HOPE STANFORD’S REPUTATION DOESN’T RELY ON THESE TWO CLOWNS.**

**"Laser physicists Russell Targ and Harold Puthoff of Menlo Park's Stanford Research Institute admit their kind of research invites chicanery and trickery. They have taken special precautions, they said, to conduct the Stanford Research experiments under doubly strict laboratory conditions."**

**"Under these conditions, they said, no magician has been able to duplicate through trickery the psychic feat performed by Uri Geller and others. Some won't even try."**

**Los Angeles Times, Monday July 28, 1975**

**WINSTON, RANDI HAS DONE IT MANY TIMES AND WITH EASE. GO ON YOU TUBE AND YOU CAN LOCATE ANY NUMBER OF VIDEOS SHOWING RANDI DUPLICATING GELLER’S STUNTS. AND … RANDI DOES IT BETTER!**

**"I have personally witnessed and experienced on two occasions the metal bending abilities of Uri Geller. These experiments were conducted under rigorous laboratory conditions. In these two experiments the thick steel rod I was holding and observing carefully bent, and continued to bend, in my own hand. One rod bent to 90 degrees during a period of approximately six minutes while I was holding it. The other steel rod bent after Uri Geller stroked it and continued bending on a glass table without anyone touching it. The steel rods were provided by myself. I consider the Geller effect to be a phenomena which should be studied seriously by science. "**

**WINSTON, I’LL BET THAT GUY WOULD GIVE ANYTHING IF HE COULD TAKE THAT BACK NOW.**

**"A scientist would have to be either massively ignorant or a confirmed bigot to deny the evidence that the human mind can make connection with space, time and matter in ways which have nothing to do with the ordinary senses.**

**IN OTHER WORDS WINSTON, HE IS SAYING THAT IF YOU DO NOT AGREE WITH HIM - YOU ARE EITHER MASSIVELY IGNORANT OR A CONFIRMED BIGOT. NOW WE CAN SEE WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE TO WORK FOR THIS “SUPERIOR” MAN.**

**Further, he cannot deny that these connections are compatible with current thinking in physics, and may in the future become accepted as a part of an extended science in which the description 'paranormal' no longer applies, and can be replaced by 'normal'."**

**Dr. Kit Pedler, (Head of the Electron Microscopy department, University**

**of London:)**

**WINSTON, MAYBE THIS IS WHY LONDON IS SO FAR BEHIND IN THE SPACE RACE. THIS SCIENTIST APPARENTLY IGNORES HIS TRAINING AS A SCIENTIST WHICH SUPPOSEDLY TAUGHT HIM THAT A THEORY MEANS NOTHING UNTIL IT HAS …. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE.**

**As you can see, the testimony of experts who tested Geller appears convincing indeed.**

**WINSTON, THIS SHOULD BE A LESSON TO YOU BUT WE ALL KNOW IT WON’T. ALL THESE SCIENTISTS WERE FOOLED BY A TWO-BIT MAGICIAN. GELLER HAS BEEN EXPOSED MORE TIMES THAN MADONNA. THESE SCIENTISTS WOULD PROBABLY SELL THEIR PENSIONS IF THEY COULD REMOVE THEIR NAMES FROM YOUR LIST OF GULLIBLE SCIENTISTS.**

**Besides, the failed psi experiments often cited by skeptics are almost always done by skeptics and debunkers themselves. (Gee, how unbiased is that?) The results of real scientists, fortunately, are not so one-sided as skeptics would have you believe.**

**WINSTON, PUT ON AN OLD X-FILES DVD AND HUM ALONG “YA GOTTA BELIEVE.”**

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**THE SCIENCE SEGMENT**

**INTERESTING FACTS FROM THE FIELD OF MEDICINE**

**Aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) blocks the manufacture of prostaglandins, thereby reducing pain and swelling.**

**Brain cells (human) stop regenerating by age 6 months,**

 **however, it is common in adult fish & canaries.**

 **The brain only uses glucose for energy (not fat).**

**Calcium doesn't stop osteoporosis.**

**Cyclosporin (from soil fungus) blocks the body's effort to reject foreign organs.**

**Cool down slowly after exertion, otherwise a tide of hormones can endanger the heart muscle.**

**Gall bladder Stores fat-emulsifing bile (not essential for life)**

**Heart Works on electricity: potassium is hoarded inside while sodium is ejected from heart cells. This causes a voltage difference which results in an electric current spreading through out the heart's muscle cells. Their contraction makes the heart pump.**

**influenza Greatest single epidemic in history was the influenza wave that killed 21 million people at the end of the First World War.**

**index is now being assembled by scientists to list the 50,000 proteins that make up a human being (it will take 10 years).**

**lead Even low levels of blood lead can be hazardous to health.**

**lungs Ave male lung capacity = 2800-3500.**

**Top athlete = 6000.**

**Oncogenes genes that cause cancer.**

**Snoring now correctable by surgery. The soft palate (back roof of the mouth) relaxes too much during sleep.**

**Speech in addition to the brain, is what sets man above animals.**

 **Superiority in speech is due to position of the larynx: it is**

 **much lower allowing more sound modulation. Also, it's closer**

 **to the brain stem. The trade-off is that humans are more sus-**

**ceptible to choking while eating and to crib death (suffocation).**

**Tourette's Lack of ability to control impulses.**

**Ultrasound pulverizes kidney stones and can determine a baby's**

 **sex. Unfortunately, dangerous vapor-filled cavities can form,**

**chromosomal damage can occur, or the immune system can be impaired. Ultra-shock is less invasive.**

**vision We see by use of "visual maps" (located in the visual cortex at**

 **the back of the head). Each map responds to various stimuli.**

 **However, some of the map's functions overlap so that their**

 **response is one of degree. Map structure is apparently in-**

 **volved in nearly all activities: hearing, speech, thinking,**

 **touching, etc.**

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**THE ARENA GOES ABROAD**

**SOUTH AFRICA**

**Matthias Rath, the vitamin campaigner accused of endangering thousands of lives in South Africa by promoting his pills while denouncing conventional medicines as toxic and dangerous, has dropped a year-long libel action against the Guardian and been ordered to pay costs.**

**Rath sued over three Guardian articles that condemned his promotional activities among Aids sufferers in South African townships.**

**A qualified doctor who is thought to have made millions selling nutritional supplements around the globe through his website empire, Rath claimed his pills could reverse the course of Aids and distributed them free in South Africa, where campaigners, who have won a hard-fought battle to persuade the government to roll out free Aids drugs to keep millions alive, believe Rath's activities led to deaths.**

**The Dr Rath Foundation focuses its promotional activities on eight countries - the US, the UK, Germany, the Netherlands, South Africa, Spain, France and Russia - claiming that his micronutrient products will cure not just Aids, but cancer, heart disease, strokes and other illnesses.**

**The collapse of the case will have repercussions around the world. International authorities on Aids welcomed the outcome. Prof Brian Gazzard, one of the UK's leading HIV/Aids experts, who advised the Guardian on its case, said he was delighted at the result. "The widespread provision of anti-retrovirals in sub-Saharan Africa is one of the most important public health measures of this century," he said. The confusion caused by suggestions that giving undernourished people vitamins and minerals was an alternative to taking Aids drugs was "extremely harmful".**

**Mark Wainberg, director of the McGill Aids centre in Montreal, said: "It is clear that he [Rath] has done enormous harm to people with HIV." Rath was linked to the Aids deniers who convinced people, he said, that Aids was not dangerous and that "you can treat yourself with medicines that are a complete waste of time".**

**John Moore, professor of microbiology and immunobiology at Cornell University in the United States, said: "The promotion of micronutrients and vitamin pills as effective remedies for HIV harms infected people. If they stop taking the anti-retroviral drugs that we are know are effective, their health suffers."**

**After the high court awarded initial costs of £220,000 to the Guardian, its editor, Alan Rusbridger, said: "We are very glad that Rath has dropped his libel action, doubtless designed to discourage other journalists - in Britain and abroad - from looking too closely at his dubious claims and methods. We will seek to recover the costs of defending our journalism."**

**The Guardian articles appeared in January and February last year in the Bad Science column written by Ben Goldacre, who said Rath "aggressively sells his message to Aids victims in South Africa that Rath vitamin pills are better than medication".**

**Goldacre praised Zackie Achmat, founder of the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) in South Africa, for winning his long-running battle with the government for the distribution of free Aids drugs. This victory, said one of the articles, was deeply damaging to Rath and his colleague Anthony Brink, a barrister and former spokesman for Rath's organisation who actively campaigns against anti-retroviral drugs.**

**Rath wanted to exclude from the court's consideration part of one of Goldacre's articles, which mentioned Brink's attempt to have Achmat indicted for genocide at the international criminal court in The Hague. In February, Mr Justice Tugendhat ruled that the entire article must be considered. Had the case proceeded, the court would have been presented with details of Brink's complaint to The Hague, which called for Achmat to be permanently confined "in a small white and concrete cage, bright fluorescent light on all the time to keep an eye on him" and force-fed his Aids drugs or, "if he bites, kicks and screams too much, dripped into his arm after he's been restrained on a gurney with cable tied around his ankles, wrists and neck". The complaint was described by the Rath Foundation in January last year as "entirely valid and long overdue".**

**In a pattern that has been repeated in other countries, he began by running newspaper advertisements attacking the pharmaceutical industry and promoting natural remedies for diseases. Eventually he was stopped by the South African advertising standards authority for making unsubstantiated claims about the benefits of vitamins in the treatment of Aids.**

**In 2005, Rath began to offer his nutritional supplement VitaCell to people with Aids in Khayelitsha, a township outside Cape Town. He claims he was running a trial, that participants were suffering from advanced Aids and that none were on or had been on anti-retroviral drugs. Some died, however, and relatives have given statements claiming that some of them had been on ARVs but were told to stop using them.**

**In June this year, TAC won a ruling from the high court that the trial was illegal. VitaCell was being promoted as a medicine, the court said, and therefore it needed permission. The court also ruled that the South African government had breached the law by not clamping down on unlicensed remedies. Rath has been given permission to appeal against this ruling.**

**The Rath Foundation recently expanded its reach into Russia, where Aids has been on the increase. In an advertisement in Izvestia in February, Rath attacked the pharmaceutical industry and suggested that heart attacks, strokes and cancers could be cut to a fraction of the present level through "natural health approaches".**

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**FAMOUS QUOTES**

**Dan Barker (born June 25, 1949) 59 Years Old.**

**He is a prominent American atheist activist who served as a Christian preacher and musician for 19 years, but left Christianity in 1984.**

**He received a degree in Religion from Azusa Pacific University and was ordained to the ministry by the Standard Community Church, California, in 1975. He served as associate pastor at a Friend's (Quaker) Church, an Assembly of God, and an independent Charismatic church. In 1984 he announced to his friends that he was an atheist.**

**A successful musician, Barker has composed over 200 songs that have been published or recorded. He is the current co-president with his wife Annie Laurie Gaylor of the Freedom From Religion Foundation, an American Freethought organization that promotes the separation of church and state. Barker is co-host of Freethought Radio, a Madison, Wisconsin based radio program for atheists, agnostics, and other freethinkers. His foundation published his book Losing Faith in Faith: From Preacher to Atheist, and he has written numerous articles for Freethought Today, an American freethought newspaper.**

**He is a member of the Lenni Lenape (Delaware Indian) Tribe of Native Americans, and in 1991 edited and published Paradise Remembered, a collection of his grandfather's stories as a Lenape boy in Indian Territory. Dan's father, Norman Barker, was also a musician who played the trombone. Barker belongs to a number of high IQ Societies, including Prometheus Society, which has an entrance requirement at the 99.997th percentile. (That is 1 in 30,000 or an I.Q. of around 170-180).**

**HIS QUOTE**

**“There is joy in rationality, happiness in clarity of mind.**

**Freethought is thrilling and fulfilling -**

**absolutely essential to mental health and happiness.”**