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Comments

Your initial post: Jun 23, 2009 8:55 PM PDT
Last edited by you on Jun 29, 2009 6:05 AM PDT

Julio C. S. Barros says:

-

Welcome, commentators.

I will be using this comment section to explain further some of the items I have listed in my review. Also, I will try to reply to some critics, as long as they do not become too uncivilized; after all, scientific and philosophical issues are important, but human values must come first.

Best Wishes for All,

Julio Siqueira

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<http://www.criticandokardec.com.br/criticizingskepticism.htm>

In reply to your post on Jun 24, 2009 9:24 AM PDT
Last edited by the author on Jun 24, 2009 9:25 AM PDT

Steve Thomas says:

Julio,

As I have said, plain and simple, you are weird! You have an agenda and a worldview that

nothing will dislodge. You misquote Stenger and fail to understand: emergence, determinism and MWI. All of which I'll point out later (don't presently have time). I wouldn't call you a liar, because as I've said before, to lie, one first has to know the truth. You are too simple-minded to understand this book, which is evidenced by your review. I do, however, believe that you read it, but simply failed to understand it. Your mind is poisoned by your rabid worldview.

Your post, in reply to an earlier post on Jun 24, 2009 2:31 PM PDT

Julio C. S. Barros says:

Well, I really thought you would like my review. Anyway, if you happen to find any flaw in it, I will correct it and acknowledge your helping criticism. After all, my name is not... Stenger.

Thank you.

Julio

P.S.: by the way: Have YOU read this book? I doubt it...

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In reply to your post on Jun 24, 2009 3:30 PM PDT

Wojciech Langer says:

Thanks for exhausting review Julio. Stenger tries to grab too many cats' tails at the same time. He takes advantage of provoking people to read his books full of controversial topics. He does not care about criticism.

So, he says the laws of physics are human inventions and at the same time, that laws came from nothing. Hm...(LOL). Does he explain what came first (from nothing): laws or Universe (matter)?

Your post: Jun 24, 2009 3:55 PM PDT

Julio C. S. Barros says:

Hi Steve,

Well, you said quite offensive things in your replies (or reply) to me in the comments section of the review by Bob Zannelli, and I must say that made me a little bit surprised. But, so far, I survived :-). All I can say is that you terribly misunderstood me, what I am, my views, and all the rest. I will have to be brief in my comments. You said:

"you play yourself off as being open-minded and rational, but in reality you're not at all."

I am not open minded. And I am not rational. What made you think I see myself this way? I do not remember having said that I am rational or open minded (but I do remember having said the opposite, in comments in one of my amazon reviews rather recently). In fact, I think there can be no such thing as an open minded person. And as to rationality, this is only a tiny fraction of what human beings are. We are mostly emotional. So I think that if we really want to be honest, we must acknowledge and try to know our biases and emotional tendencies, in order to minimize their possible bad effects in our relations with people and with the search for knowledge and truth.

You also said: "You don't even really understand the point of Project Alpha, do you? Randi's position was simple: he was exposing the shoddy research methods being employed by these so-called paranormal investigators; they were not employing the scientific method and lacked strict controls."

I think I was pretty clear in that. In the beginning of the tests, the researchers were indeed

fooled by the two guys. They received lots of criticism from other parapsychology researchers then. And then they made their protocols tighter. And the guys could no longer fool them. When Randi noticed that he was about to lose his source of scandal against the researchers, he went to the media. Actually, if we see the whole picture, the researchers passed Randi's Alpha Project (he himself said that; are you aware of it?). But Randi publicized things in a way that made them look like imbecils. Well, in a way they were indeed imbecils. But the normal process WITHIN the parapsychological community led them back to good scientific standards. And Randi made things look as if it was the other way around. But I think you should read more about the Alpha Project before we talk more about it. You do not seem to know the details of what happened. As to the Benveniste affair, I did the research of the original files on my own. And I can guarantee to you: Randi is a dishonest liar. It must be stressed, though, that neither had Benveniste truly got good results in favor of homeopathy, nor had the "Alpha researchers" been properly smart all the way.

You also said, in regards to my post TO BOB ZANNELLI: "I feel obliged to be completely honest with you Julio, it is complete gibberish my good man, for it's like reading the paranoid ramblings of a mad man. I don't even really know what you were trying to accomplish by posting all that."

I, too, have to be honest with you. I do not judge people according to their color, body shape, or religion or lack of. I judge people according to their morality. Those writings that you felt free to label as gibberish did not have YOU as the intended recipient. They were directed to a man, a materialist atheist, that I have a sincere conviction is one of the most special human beings that I have met in these so many years of my wanderings through this World Wide Web. And the words I directed to him are my contextualized deeply-felt emotions and feelings. They are not a lavatory for you do drop you "caca" on.

You can be sure that I know an enormous lot more than you do in all these topics that I have mentioned in my comments and reviews. If you want to exchange points of view with me, that will be a pleasure and an honor. I usually do learn a lot from these intellectual (and emotional) interactions. But if you want to stick to "debatable moral standards and tactics", do not waste our time (mine and yours), for I might not even bother to throw back to you your... caca.

Best,
Julio

Your post, in reply to an earlier post on Jun 24, 2009 4:08 PM PDT

Julio C. S. Barros says:

In fact, I thought at first that it would be very hard for me to "fulfill the teasing" that I did with Zannelli (that is, giving little stars to this book). My own position is very bitter against these so called "Quantum Gurus." As a matter of fact, I think I could write this book far better than Stenger (I am sure you could too, and maybe even Steve, though in regards to Steve I have some doubts...). Not because I (or you) know more than Stenger does in this matter, but because I do not have the heavy burden of the agenda he carries plus his academic connections (and visceral bonds with Csicop) and all these things he is tied to. But, believe it or not, I still think Stenger is mostly a good guy.

Best Wishes,
Julio

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Posted on Jun 24, 2009 9:19 PM PDT
Last edited by the author on Jun 26, 2009 1:12 PM PDT

Steve Thomas says:

This frightful narrative begins with our weary and embattled protagonist, Julio - the self-appointed champion of scientific precision - who, by the divine light of providence dwells in propinquity to the scenic and most agreeable Ipanema Beach (a place of very beautiful women too), has, once again, employed his sizeable intellect to thwart the debauched plans of the fiendish Dr. Stenger. Whew, if not for Julio's well-timed and luminous examination of

Dr. Stenger's recent tome, "Quantum Gods," it is indeed quite probable - almost assured even - that thousands upon thousands of ingenuous bookworms might have been deceived into procuring this experiential propaganda. Mercifully, Julio's imprudent and blisteringly inane analysis has spared countless readers the iniquity of haplessly lining the pockets of the rapacious and unscrupulous Dr. Stenger, for only Jehovah knows as to what nefarious purposes this sinful physicist might have frittered away his burgled proceeds.

As such, in the glorious tradition of Martin Luther, our earl of epistemic accuracy has tacked his 95... err umm, his 11 theses to the door - I mean uh the webpage of the Minster of Amazon. Firstly, let me begin my erudite analysis by posing a question. Is it even possible for one to give zero stars? Surely this isn't anything more than numerical nonsense, and, furthermore, would it be a star or stars? Now, I'm really confused... At any rate, our hero begins his less-than-scholarly assault with the customary complaints: lying, cheating, stealing, ignorance, well, you get the point. But aside from his colloquial language and syntactical transgressions, is there any basis for our paranoid hero's assertions? Well, let's examine his 11 theses and we'll find out:

Thesis 1: "Stenger does not understand evolutionary theory." Julio is right, this stuff is far too complex and confusing for a physicist. Nonetheless, is this a thesis or an accusation? Hmm, anyway, on what evidence does Julio base this assertion? If it's not a combination of random mutations and natural selection, then what, pray tell, is it? I will await his answer on this one.

Thesis 2: What? Julio is confused, no way! C'mon, do you really think a physicist - even one as evil as Stenger - would miss such a glaring inconsistency? Nowhere on page 200 do I find Stenger making the claim that MWI is deterministic - Julio merely thinks this is what he read. On page 206, Stenger states, "The only deterministic quantum theory is that of Bohm." What our rather dishonest hero has failed to tell us is that Stenger goes on to tell his readers why Bohm is wrong, and therefore his theory isn't deterministic at all. As such, "... Bohm's theory is incapable of dealing with relativistic particles, that is, particles moving at such high speeds (but still less than the speed of light), that relativistic effect must be considered. Thus it cannot be easily extended to relativistic quantum field theory..." (Stenger 206). You see, Stenger wasn't claiming that the Bohmian model was deterministic, but rather was pointing out that no one has ever observed superluminal particles. Darn, there goes Star Trek.

Thesis 3: Can our hero really be this dumb? Stenger tells us, "And, I have shown that what are called the laws of physics are the inventions of humans, not God" (Stenger 261). Notice that he says "what are called the laws of physics?" A mere reference to their man-made appellation, but our protagonist is attempting - like most theologians - to take the "Bible" out of context. On page 263, the evil Dr. states, "The model in which the universe is made of matter and nothing else and had a spontaneous, uncaused, natural origin from a state of chaos equivalent to "nothing" agrees with all the data. As a state of the universe, "something" is more natural than "nothing." One has little to do with the other.

Thesis 4: He delivers a staggering non-sequitur. If he isn't a physicist, then how does he know who's the best? Well, let the reader decide. At any rate, based on what I've seen on Amazon, the voting button decides what's true anyway.

Thesis 5: He only distorts Gosmani's words on pages 38 and 39? Hey, who's Gosmani? Oh I get it, he meant "Goswami," now that's better. Please don't doubt our hero just yet; he's getting to the good stuff. Well then, only on pages 38 and 39, he must get them right on every other page; that's got to be good enough, eh? For the life of me, I fail to understand how one could confuse a Cartesian perspective with a pantheon. But, I keep wondering where our protagonist learned to read and think... Maybe on Ipanema Beach? No, I know what he'd be thinking about if he learned to think there...

Thesis 6: Did you notice that our dear hero fails to tell us anything in thesis 6? I guess thesis 6 isn't a thesis after all, but rather an inane rambling... Ok, great, but what did all these Dali-philos say?

Thesis 7: The evil Dr. is lying again. I wonder if this is the lie, "He [Goswami] claims that evidence for special powers of the mind can be found in psychic studies such as mental telepathy (extra-sensory perception, or ESP) and mind-over-matter... However, Goswami is forced to acknowledge, "Telepathy has not yet been recognized as a scientific discovery" (Stenger 176). Stenger, darn you, stop lying!

Thesis 8: This is a wild assertion, so our dear hero will have to elucidate before we can examine his thesis any further.

Thesis 9: Hey dear hero, isn't there a universe of difference (say, I made a physics funny) between proving something beyond a reasonable doubt and proving it beyond any doubt? By the way, I am not doubting you about doubting but rather just doubting, huh? I suppose the preponderance of the evidence doesn't mean anything anyway.

Thesis 10: Actually, he admits this on several pages, so? He also says this, "Nothing I have said conflicts with existing physics. No one has pointed to a single error in the mathematics presented in the "Comprehensible Cosmos" (page 260). Say, could it be that our "guru" is actually basing his hypothesis on evidence rather than air? No, then this would mean that our hero is incorrect and I could never believe that.

Thesis 11: Indeed, hero, he does say what you suggest, but he also says this too, "Furthermore, macrosystems are not all chaotic and those that are involve time delays, so this option is not always available" (Stenger 243). Could it be that the evil Dr. is perhaps claiming that not all events would have a predetermined outcome? Indeed, on page 243, that's exactly what he says...

By now, as you might imagine, telling the tale of our brave but obtuse hero has been exhausting. Perhaps one day our hero will begin to understand the difference between science and pseudoscience, but, alas, I wouldn't hold my breath. He associates himself with theologians who, like cockroaches continually seep into the dark corners of the unexplained, proclaim God. He is the self-proclaimed skeptic of skeptics. Hey, wait a minute, if he is skeptical of skeptics, doesn't that make him a skeptic? Now you're just trying to confuse me. Sadly, our hero isn't so heroic, for he rather reveals his bend in the simple fact that he relinquishes empiricism and reason in order to maintain his worldview. In the end, Julio, O' Captain, My Captain, Thou protest far too loudly...

In reply to [an earlier post](#) on Jun 24, 2009 11:41 PM PDT
Last edited by the author on Jun 24, 2009 11:42 PM PDT

[Jeffrey Koehn](#) says:

Well said, Steve!

There's nothing I can add to your excellent riposte, except to say I admire your tenacity in attempting to communicate with this dolt. Myself, when I see someone with such a poor command of basic grammar, syntax and spelling as Julio, not to mention basic logic and critical thinking skills, I tend to conclude that he is an uneducated lout, and I don't waste my time on such people. so I just let it go.

So I applaud the fact you haven't yet reached my level of cynicism. I have scant hope for Julio, but there's always a chance that you might reach another reader of these postings. To that end, you have my respect, and I hope you will continue to fight the good fight for science and reason!

In reply to [an earlier post](#) on Jun 26, 2009 9:33 AM PDT
Last edited by the author on Jun 26, 2009 1:33 PM PDT

[Steve Thomas](#) says:

Julio,

You know, in all seriousness, I like to poke some fun at you, but, in all honesty, you seem like a pretty good and interesting guy. So, for what it's worth, do not take my comments too harshly, for I recognize that I can often be a bit too frank with my observations. As such, I would like to give you some advice. First of all, if you want to be taken seriously you've got to lose the paranoid belief that scientists have some sort of hidden agenda - they don't! Are scientists biased? Absolutely, but let us not equivocate here, for a scientific bias is hardly comparable to the bias of a racist, is it? Furthermore, I do not think that any rational scientist would deny this. Having said that, I am going to direct you back to some of your comments:

"I am not open minded. And I am not rational. What made you think I see myself this way? I do not remember having said that I am rational or open minded (but I do remember having said the opposite, in comments in one of my amazon reviews rather recently). In fact, I think there can be no such thing as an open minded person. And as to rationality, this is only a tiny fraction of what human beings are. We are mostly emotional. So I think that if we really want to be honest, we must acknowledge and try to know our biases and emotional tendencies, in order to minimize their possible bad effects in our relations with people and with the search for knowledge and truth."

Julio, if you're not open-minded and rational, then the only conclusion one can extract from your statement is that you're closed-minded and irrational. If so, then on what basis can you make any logical claims? However, I do not think this is what you're saying, for having read the remainder of the above paragraph; you seem to be saying something altogether different. The above paragraph, Julio, cannot make sense. In the first sentence, in the most unequivocal terms, you're claiming to be irrational, but in the last paragraph seem to be appealing to rationalism. Isn't it rational and logical to want to identify our biases? Of course it is, but then this renders your first sentence invalid. So, you asked, "What made [me] think I see [you] this way?" The answer is simple: it is through your words, sir.

Furthermore, you keep going on about James Randi, but I have met him on numerous occasions and I do not have any reason to believe anything other than he is a perfect gentlemen and unquestionably honest. If you want to be taken seriously, Julio, then you really need to dismiss with all of these conspiracy theories. We both know that there isn't a stitch of evidence to support any paranormal claims - at best these claims are supported by anecdotal evidence. And ninety-percent of the time these claims are falsified or made by people who clearly have an agenda - cash. The very fact that you're making these claims tells me that you really didn't understand Stenger's book. Firstly, if most paranormal activities are real, they would leave detectable signs which physicists could study, and, perhaps more importantly, this would nullify or at least cause physicists to make massive revisions to the special theory of relativity. Here's the rub, Julio, modern physics hasn't detected any such activities, nor does the math support yours and others' paranormal claims. Why is this so hard to see? You overlook the obvious Julio; scientists don't care whether paranormal activities are true or not, for they don't have any vested interest. So, why would they cover this up? They reject for lack of evidence, nothing more.

Furthermore, you stated, "I do not judge people according to their color, body shape, or religion or lack of. I judge people according to their morality." You appear to be intimating that I judge people according these criteria, Julio. Alas, I do not, for I judge people - at least as far as the internet is concerned - by what they write, so your ethereal claims that I judge people according to body shape or religion or lack of is pure hyperbole. And what you often write, Julio, is either unproven nonsense or is out-and-out false. You keep attacking Victor Stenger and his work, but only from an emotional and needy standpoint. As I pointed out, many of the claims that you made were your own misunderstandings of his words.

Put simply, Julio, you are guilty of the subjectivist fallacy, which is: using the fact that one believes or wants a proposition to be true as evidence of its truth. We both know that neither empiricism nor rationalism works in this manner. Julio, you then stated, "You can be sure that I know an enormous lot more than you do in all these topics that I have mentioned in my comments and reviews." Here's the catch with this statement, I am not certain that you do, in fact, I am almost certain that you don't. However, if you do, then please start showing it. You appear to be far too emotional to be either scientific or logical, and, in my opinion, this fact alone renders you a poor candidate for scientific endeavors, but a rather great one for the priesthood. Ergo, if you want to be taken seriously, Julio, then I highly recommend that you start writing in a manner that suggests you are serious. You seem desperate to prove that Dr. Stenger is wrong - which in and of itself is highly suspicious, but, most importantly, you don't provide evidence; only what you believe is evidence.

Julio C. S. Barros says:

Hello Steve,

First of all, thank you for not being too uncivilized this last time (we don't need, though, to be "Mother Teresas;" some "spice" is welcome... :-). This is important, because it enables a rich exchange of viewpoints (in this case, between you and me) that can only be beneficial to those who might be reading us and, arguably, to us both too.

The bad news (or good, depending on how you decided to spend your time while you were on Ipanema Beach... :-)) is that you seem to have found an "inamorato," Mr. Jeffrey Condom (Oops, I did it again... I meant Cohen). Weird World this one of ours... But, going past this "foreplay," let's get down to business.

I don't mean to be offensive, really. But I must say that I am impressed by your lack of knowledge concerning these matters that this book deals with, as revealed by your comments. I think it would be interesting to take right now to your "attempt at refuting" of the 11 topics (there are, also, other topics - Stenger's mistakes - that I did not include in my review). But before that, I will comment on some of your assertions that kind of surround it. Let's see some of them:

A- "(Julio) dwells in propinquity to the scenic and most agreeable Ipanema Beach (a place of very beautiful women too)." Yes, it is a place of some healthy atmosphere and some healthy activities, including healthy sex (hetero and homo). Also, of healthy family-gathering (kids having fun, etc). Naturally, it is the place where bad things, too, take place. Perfection is not a feature of our species (or of the Universe, for that matter). Perhaps that is the reason why, in the Indian language, Ipanema means "water that stinks."

B- "for only Jehovah knows as to what nefarious purposes this sinful physicist might have frittered away his burgled proceeds." We (that is, I) can be straight forward when it comes to Stenger : Stenger is an activist atheist-materialist linked to CSICOP. He is a typical CSICOP core member. In the USA (and Britain too; also elsewhere, but in pretty much different ways), organized religion has been a coercive and destructive force within society in many regards (it also has positive actions, though). Sometimes, non-organized religion (i.e. the individuals when not connected to institutionalized religions) has acted similarly. Some of the main "victims" of it are atheist-materialists. Atheist-Materialism is one of the boldest, most brilliant, and most constructive world-views that mankind has ever come up with (we have to take atheist-materialism very seriously, for this may be the correct alternative instead of theism and etc). On average (imho), atheists are well above the level, in terms of morality, when compared to religion followers (this may not apply to you, Steve). If I were God, I'd rather have Heaven populated with atheists than with believers... (this might apply to you, Steve). So we have the society dominated by religiosity and its vices (granted, it also has virtues). On the other hand, we have Academia dominated by atheist-materialism. In a way, this is a modern "ghetto." It is just natural that, being humans, atheist-materialists also end up, sometimes at least, engaging in excesses of their own; becoming, now and then, a little bit irrational; achieving some power and, so typical of our human history, getting corrupt (to a certain extent) by this power (also remember: religion is a mighty source of power, and so it attracts corruption mightily as well). So, I see Stenger straying in some moments, and I point it out. That is what I have done regarding him. He has interests related to: 1- His own prestige; 2- His previous writings (have you ever seen Stenger acknowledge having been wrong?); 3- His personal academic and professional connections (if he says that Parapsychology has, in some instances, good experimental protocols, his peers will laugh at him); 4- His budget (he wants to get money from his activities; fair enough. But if peers start laughing at him... So honesty becomes second in the agenda); 5- The sake of the "new atheist movement" (if he acknowledges virtues in psi research, the movement will become - so he thinks, arguably - a little bit weaker and atheist-materialists will continue to be unduly offended by believers and etc. There are some parts in his book where you can clearly see this). Basically, Stenger's deeds are not sinful. They are natural and, to a great extent, also justified. But often, they are exaggerated, and unduly harmful to some people. That is where he must get corrected.

[continue]

Comments

Your post: Jun 29, 2009 8:23 AM PDT
Last edited by you on Jun 29, 2009 8:25 AM PDT

Julio C. S. Barros says:

[continuing]

C- "Firstly, let me begin my erudite analysis by posing a question. Is it even possible for one to give zero stars?" That is a good question. In principle, if we use "stars," this means that zero is plural. Then you seem to be suggesting that we use "star" (zero star). What are you implying? That zero is singular? How can it be that NOTHING is singular? Singular refers to ONE. Anyway, I thought that you were about to talk of something really interesting and relevant, such as "is it really possible that something is so bad that it deserves to receive zero stars?" Instead, you engaged in phony grammar/syntax (inamorato followed you, wagging his tail). I do not think you are likely to mention this again, but if you do, we will have to add to our exchange of ideas the notions and insights from linguistics (as opposed to traditional grammar) and the notion of English as an international language (and not the language of the USA and Britain or of your backyard). For now (in this very issue), I leave you with the link below:

<http://www.searchengineguide.com/ebooks/freebook.html>

D- "He (Julio) associates himself with theologians who, like cockroaches continually seep into the dark corners of the unexplained, proclaim God." Oh Boy, how much you miss my point...

E- "He (Julio) is the self-proclaimed skeptic of skeptics. Hey, wait a minute, if he is skeptical of skeptics, doesn't that make him a skeptic? Now you're just trying to confuse me." I am a skeptic. I have a skeptic site (in Portuguese, analyzing and criticizing one Brazilian religion:

kardecism, or spiritism, a mediumistic religion that advocates the idea of an almighty god, of an afterlife, of reincarnation, and of communication with the dead, all concepts that I, incidentally, happen to... agree with). Sometimes I end up falling in pseudoskepticism myself. In short: I am a human being. I wonder why you felt (or thought) I was something different from it...

F- "First of all, if you want to be taken seriously." I am not really sure if I want to be taken seriously by people like you...(no offense meant). As I said already, you are not the intended recipient of most of my messages. But I might accept you as an incidental recipient.

G- "you've got to lose the paranoid belief that scientists have some sort of hidden agenda." We all have our agendas. That is why we became the dominant species on this planet. Our task is to identify what exactly is our opponent's agenda, both in type and in intensity (amplitude).

H- "Julio, if you're not open-minded and rational, then the only conclusion one can extract from your statement is that you're closed-minded and irrational. If so, then on what basis can you make any logical claims?" Many times, I am indeed closed-minded and irrational, but always with some blend of rationality and open-mindedness. In short: I am human.

I- "Furthermore, you keep going on about James Randi, but I have met him on numerous occasions and I do not have any reason to believe anything other than he is a perfect gentleman and unquestionably honest." I remember in the seventies (twentieth century) when they caught a nazy living here in Brazil, Gustav Fanz Wagner. He was very kind, gentle, a perfect neighbor and citizen. Anyway, I have the proof for what I say regarding Randi. He signed (co-authored) a document saying that Benvenist's experiments did not suffer from fraud (they were, as we all know, merely unsuccessful) and a few days/weeks afterwards he went to press to say that there was fraud from the part of Benveniste's people. That is dishonesty, Steve. It does not matter if the one doing the action is Randi, Julio, Steve, Gustav Wagner, or God Almighty Himself. Dishonesty will be Dishonesty. And that is it. Pure and simple. And, in your case, Naïve admiration will be naïve admiration. Again, simple as that.

[to be continued]

Your post: Jun 29, 2009 9:02 AM PDT
Last edited by you on Jun 29, 2009 9:03 AM PDT

Julio C. S. Barros says:

[continuing]

J- "We both know that there isn't a stitch of evidence to support any paranormal claims - at best these claims are supported by anecdotal evidence. And ninety-percent of the time these claims are falsified or made by people who clearly have an agenda - cash." I guess that by "both" you are referring to you and to "inamorato." Please, don't count me in in this ménage à trois. Scientifically, there is good evidence for paranormality. It is not anecdotal. There are lots of interesting pieces of evidence for many different "paranormal claims," (some of them rather "anecdotal") but the most compelling is indeed the evidence for "telepathy" in controlled experiments using the Ganzfeld protocol. There is a fairly good introductory description of it in the book "Psi Wars" (by the Journal of Consciousness Studies).

K- "Firstly, if most paranormal activities are real, they would leave detectable signs which physicists could study, and, perhaps more importantly, this would nullify or at least cause physicists to make massive revisions to the special theory of relativity. Here's the rub, Julio, modern physics hasn't detected any such activities, nor does the math support yours and others' paranormal claims. Why is this so hard to see? So, why would they cover this up?" Firstly, who on Earth told you that "most paranormal activities are real"? Not even psi researchers think that. A more sober (and scientific) assertion would be that "some of the paranormal phenomena seem to be real." They do have detectable signs. Some physicists study them, with tremendous difficulties and some positive results. If telepathy in Ganzfeld proves to real indeed, it may (may!) lead to a revision of the know physical theories. But maybe it won't lead to these revisions. It may be that the theories themselves are wrong (as Roger Penrose warns us about, in regards to quantum mechanics), or it may be that

there are aspects of these theories that we do not understand properly (it has happened before, aplenty!). So there is just no way of knowing, right now, if math is on our side or not. What is the math involved? What math tells us that spirits do not exist and cannot reincarnate? (or that God does not exist). Only the math of woo woos, obviously (just as it is the math of the woo woos that informs us that God has been proved by sheer mathematics). And as for the "covering up," the main reasons are: 1- lack of interest in a phenomenon that has, thus far, no applicability whatsoever; 2- lack of a good theory backing it up or predicting it (although the existing theories do not necessarily rule it out); 3- the dangers involved in accepting "new phenomena" (there are numerous dangers; we may talk about it later). Basically, Steve, if I (Julio!) were the Emperor of Science, I myself would not declare that paranormality exists or that telepathy exists. But I would declare that good parapsychology exists and that some good results exist that deserve to be known and scrutinized by the world scientific community.

L- "You appear to be intimating that I judge people according these criteria, Julio. I judge people - at least as far as the internet is concerned - by what they write, so your ethereal claims that I judge people according to body shape or religion or lack of is pure hyperbole." Actually what I meant was that many people are prejudiced when analyzing what someone says. They think that if a person is not a materialist like them, then this person does not deserve much attention, is not much rational, etc. More importantly, I also meant that I was judging Zannelli and You according to the morality you have shown. Zannelli, in the highest regards. You, on the other hand,...

[to be continued]

Your post: Jun 29, 2009 9:20 AM PDT
Last edited by you on Jun 29, 2009 9:21 AM PDT

Julio C. S. Barros says:

[continuing and finishing]

M- "You keep attacking Victor Stenger and his work, but only from an emotional and needy standpoint. You seem desperate to prove that Dr. Stenger is wrong most importantly, you don't provide evidence; only what you believe is evidence." Steve, in my numerous online articles criticizing Stenger, I have presented many many many factual instances where he went wrong. This is not viewpoint. This is not emotion. This is fact. If you are too lazy to read what I have written, ok, but how can you then want to refute what I say without knowing what I say? Is this what you call rationality and honesty. Gosh, I really need more English classes, because I thought these terms meant something different altogether! I will list again the links below for you:

<http://www.criticandokardec.com.br/criticizingskepticism.htm>

http://www.criticandokardec.com.br/amazon_reviews.htm#stenger

http://www.criticandokardec.com.br/victor_stenger.htm

http://www.criticandokardec.com.br/amazon_reviews.htm#stenger_went_bananas

http://www.criticandokardec.com.br/victor_stenger_went_bananas.htm

And this above just to begin!

N- "But, I keep wondering where our protagonist learned to read and think... Maybe on Ipanema Beach? No, I know what he'd be thinking about if he learned to think there..." Well, I have indeed learned a lot on Ipanema Beach. As a young child, building sand castles, I learned to love and respect my parents and the tremendous loving dedication they had for me. As a teenager and young adult, I learned to love beautiful and not so beautiful women and to respect them enormously in all their aspects (sexuality included). Yes, I learned to be a human being there, trying to be honest and positive in my effects on society. That is, indeed, the way I read the world. And that is the way I think about the world. So Ipanema taught me to read and think. Steve may be right when he seems to think that someone like me should not expect to be taken seriously by someone like him. I wish, from the bottom of my heart, that he could have stayed longer on "Ipanema Beaches" and learned the many life lessons they have to teach...

Best Wishes for the Beaches,

Julio Siqueira

P.S.: later today, I will start to take a deeper look at the 11 topics raised by me and "refuted" by Steve.

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Julio C. S. Barros says:

Julio Explains Thesis 1: As I have pointed out, Victor Stenger does not understand evolution theory. Evolution theory, in principle, is simple and non confusing. All it takes for one to understand it is good reading and honesty. Stenger seems to lack both... The evolution theory, from the times of Darwin to the present, can, arguably, be described in a three-phase manner. In phase one, we have Darwin's (and Wallace's) view itself. In it, there was natural selection. It is important to stress that there is a "second element" in this view that Darwin himself stressed and that is often forgotten by the "science" writers: sexual selection. So, by natural selection, we mean basically the selection of those (genes) who will die plus the selection of those (genes) who will thrive. So this is natural selection. At the time of Darwin, there was no such concept as random mutations. They were not known. Natural selection acts on what there is, and on the changes that come. But how do these changes come to be? Are they random? Are they blind? Are they Lamarckian? It turns out that Darwin himself thought they were often Lamarckian...! In phase two, we have the so called neo-darwinian evolution theory (it has other names, such as the modern synthesis, etc). In it, we have the concept of blind mutations, random mutations, as the source for changes in the organisms. Natural selection would act on these. This is an old concept. And a very wrong one too. Mutations are not random, at least not the way people think. So we come to phase three, and for that I refer the honest interested reader to the writings of James Shapiro. Links below for an introduction:

<http://bostonreview.net/BR22.1/shapiro.html>

All that Shapiro says is mainstream. It is the view of evolution theory today. And it incorporates a lot of notions of "biochemical intelligence," so to speak. It seems that people like Stenger, and his evolutionist Master Richard Dawkins (zoologist and pseudoscientist), do not like to let people aware of these interesting facts because they might indicate that there is more to life than the mechanics of biochemistry. Honest scientists think otherwise. Late evolutionist Stephen Jay Gould highlight the short sightedness of people like Dawkins and his pupils (Dennett/Stenger), in this article below:

<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1151>

Gould, himself a atheist-materialist and CSICOP member, states: "if Richard Dawkins has trivialized Darwin's richness by adhering to the strictest form of adaptationist argument in a maximally reductionist mode, then Dennett, as Dawkins's publicist, manages to convert an already vitiated and improbable account into an even more simplistic and uncompromising doctrine." (I thank the blogger Jime for this reference). I called Stenger's attention to this fact several times while I was in his forum. He stuck his tiny head down into the big sand. Shame on him. Flawed and misinformative writings from him. Will Steve do the same? Maybe...

Julio C. S. Barros says:

Thesis 2: What? Julio is confused, no way! C'mon, do you really think a physicist - even one as evil as Stenger - would miss such a glaring inconsistency? Nowhere on page 200 do I find Stenger making the claim that MWI is deterministic - Julio merely thinks this is what he read. On page 206, Stenger states, "The only deterministic quantum theory is that of Bohm." What our rather dishonest hero has failed to tell us is that Stenger goes on to tell his readers why Bohm is wrong, and therefore his theory isn't deterministic at all. As such, "... Bohm's theory is incapable of dealing with relativistic particles, that is, particles moving at such high speeds (but still less than the speed of light), that relativistic effect must be considered. Thus it cannot be easily extended to relativistic quantum field theory..." (Stenger 206). You see, Stenger wasn't claiming that the Bohmian model was deterministic, but rather was pointing out that no one has ever observed superluminal particles. Darn, there goes Star Trek.

Julio Explains Thesis 2: sorry, Steve, but the MWI is indeed deterministic. Why don't you send an email to Vic to check it out? Or you could enter the avoid-L forum for that too. Afraid of spotting a flaw in your idol? I also noted that your copy of Stenger's book is lacking page 261... So suspicious. Did you really read, and do you really have this book? I am beginning to doubt it.

That is all for today,
Best Wishes,
Julio Siqueira

Your post: Jun 29, 2009 2:12 PM PDT
Last edited by you on Jun 29, 2009 2:18 PM PDT

[Julio C. S. Barros](#) says:

two more points now:

Thesis 3: Can our hero really be this dumb? Stenger tells us, "And, I have shown that what are called the laws of physics are the inventions of humans, not God" (Stenger 261). Notice that he says "what are called the laws of physics?" A mere reference to their man-made appellation, but our protagonist is attempting - like most theologians - to take the "Bible" out of context. On page 263, the evil Dr. states, "The model in which the universe is made of matter and nothing else and had a spontaneous, uncaused, natural origin from a state of chaos equivalent to "nothing" agrees with all the data. As a state of the universe, "something" is more natural than "nothing." One has little to do with the other.

Julio Explains Thesis 3: Steve cited correctly what is on page 261(a page which seems to have miraculously reappeared in his copy of the book :-)), but he did not cite correctly what is on page 263 (which, again miraculously, seems to have got renumbered or whatever). The passage that he attributes to page 263 is actually on pages 262-263, a bizarre incoherence for such an erudite man as he claims to be... Anyway, I will cite now, correctly, what is on page 263 and what really refers (directly and clearly enough, even for someone as dumb as myself, but not for anyone dumber than me ;-) - a debate between me and Steve might as well be called "Dumb & Dumber 3 :-) :-)) to where the laws of physics came from (note that the extract presented by our erudite contender simply does not have any mentioning whatsoever to "laws of physics" - These erudite guys...). Page 263: "So we appear to have good evidence for a universe that came about spontaneously, without cause, from nothing. The laws of physics also came from nothing. The structure of the universe emerged from nothing." Therefore, our backyard Pythagoras' conclusion that "one has little to do with the other" will not hold water. This "laws-of-physics-as-human-invention stuff" is quite similar to what Stenger says on pages 66 and 73 (time: a human invention; space: another human invention). What I am demanding, or better, requesting from Stenger here is a stricter coherence in his use of terms and in his use of ideas. Possibly, both assertions are correct in the right context or thread of reasoning (time as a human invention and time as a human discovery; the same for the laws of physics or for space, etc). But to jump from one thread of reasoning to the other so loosely is not rigorous scientific description, but rather monkey business (or gorilla business).

Thesis 4: He delivers a staggering non-sequitur. If he isn't a physicist, then how does he know who's the best? Well, let the reader decide. At any rate, based on what I've seen on Amazon, the voting button decides what's true anyway.

Julio Explains Thesis 4: These Erudite Pythagorases... Non-sequitur means "it doesn't follow." So the question is: what does not follow from what I said? I just pointed out the difference in viewpoints (between Ilya Prigogine, who received a Nobel Prize for his contributions in thermodynamics, and Victor Stenger, who received the Grampa Prize in the Honolulu Elementary School Science Fair - Kindergarten Division - for proving the ingenious axiom "a match will catch") and said I would not take sides.

Sleep well for now, Pythagoras.

In reply to your post on Jun 29, 2009 4:56 PM PDT
Last edited by the author on Jun 29, 2009 4:58 PM PDT

[Steve Thomas](#) says:

Julio,

You're in good form, my man. We have reached somewhat of an impasse here, for clearly much of what I wrote and the reason I wrote it seems to have escaped you. To be quite frank, Julio, I was being tongue-in-cheek and I wrote it rather late at night after numerous

glasses of lovely red wine. However, you are either being utterly pedantic or maybe you failed - perhaps for cultural reasons - to correctly interpret my jab. To put into layman's terms, I was poking some fun at you. I said you were in good form because there isn't anyway in which I can possibly respond to everything written here, but I will point out a couple of things:

1. Nowhere did I make the claim that MWI isn't deterministic, I merely informed the readers what Stenger said in regard to Bohm's theory. You're pulling out white rabbits, Julio.
2. Do you really think that you need to inform me what a non-sequitur is? We both know probably not. However, if you go back and read what you wrote, then your conclusion doesn't follow from your premises.
3. Did it occur to you - perhaps because you're in SA and I'm in NA - that we have slightly different copies? I can assure you that the pages cited are the correct ones.
4. Lastly and perhaps most important, Julio - this is why I wrote the follow up paragraphs; you take yourself way too seriously. This is evidenced by this little bit:

"Firstly, let me begin my erudite analysis by posing a question. Is it even possible for one to give zero stars?" That is a good question. In principle, if we use "stars," this means that zero is plural. Then you seem to be suggesting that we use "star" (zero star). What are you implying? That zero is singular? How can it be that NOTHING is singular? Singular refers to ONE. Anyway, I thought that you were about to talk of something really interesting and relevant.

Sadly, my man, you took all of what I wrote far too seriously when, in fact, I was merely poking some fun at you. As I noted, you want to refute every bit of every statement, yet what you fail to realize is that this reveals your rather sophistic nature. Perhaps you should drink a glass of wine or two and go back and reread what I wrote. When you posed the question, "What are you implying? That zero is singular?" No, Julio, even stupid "little me" can see the universe of difference between zero and one. I knew posting all of this that I wouldn't dislodge any particular disbelief you hold, but I didn't realize that you'd have tried to refute tongue-in-cheek musings.

This was my point Julio: if you want to be taken seriously then you have to behave seriously. You do what the creationists do, merely refute. However, you possess the same "toss the baby out with the bathwater" syndrome that creationists do; which is, "If I successfully refute the minutia then I've successfully refuted the argument." Which, by the way, Julio, clearly you haven't.

Your post: Jun 30, 2009 8:37 AM PDT
Last edited by you on Jun 30, 2009 8:41 AM PDT

Julio C. S. Barros says:

Thesis 5: He only distorts Gosmani's words on pages 38 and 39? Hey, who's Gosmani? Oh I get it, he meant "Goswami," now that's better. Please don't doubt our hero just yet; he's getting to the good stuff. Well then, only on pages 38 and 39, he must get them right on every other page; that's got to be good enough, eh? For the life of me, I fail to understand how one could confuse a Cartesian perspective with a pantheon. But, I keep wondering where our protagonist learned to read and think... Maybe on Ipanema Beach? No, I know what he'd be thinking about if he learned to think there...

Julio Explains Thesis 5: Thank you, Steve, for the correction. I always get wrong these religious names: Gosmani vs Go-Swami (Hindu Priesthood), Condom vs Cohen (Jewish Priesthood). But you did not make your point clear above. So we do not know who confused Cartesian perspective with a pantheon. Anyway, it does not matter, because there is no Cartesian perspective involved, nor is there any pantheon. My point in this "Thesis 5" (as Steve put it) is to show a moment of unbelievable lack of competence from the part of Vic Stenger about philosophical concepts; he is misusing and misunderstanding the term "solipsism" (as he did before with "epiphenomenon"). Also, on page 39, he seems to be doing the very same thing that he often says he does not like people to do to him; he is "putting on Goswami's mouth" words that Goswami did not say (or at least that Stenger has not shown Goswami to have said). On page 39, Stenger says "...Goswami teaches that the

universe is all in `our' heads, where `we' are the totality of universal consciousness. And how does he know this? Because quantum mechanics says it is so." Now, whether Goswami is a pseudoscientist or not does not matter. What matters is that Stenger is presenting himself as a true scientist (as a good option for those who want to let go of their Quantum Gurus), and not as a pseudoscientist or a pseudothinker or a pseudoskeptic, etc. Now, where did Stenger show that Goswami thinks that "quantum mechanics says it is so"? Nowhere. Stenger simply did not show it at all. Quite on the contrary, Stenger says, on page 37, that Goswami advanced an idealistic-monistic interpretation of quantum mechanics. We do not know, by what Stenger presented, if Goswami considers this interpretation THE ONLY POSSIBLY CORRECT interpretation. Often scientists do entertain the possibility that alternative interpretations of theories may be correct (that is precisely my case). Further, on page 36, Stenger himself says that "Goswami's monism, which he says is drawn from both the Hindu school of Advaita Vedanta as well as Theosophy".... So it is not quantum mechanics that says so (i.e. at the very least it is a combination of things that says so, be it right or not). In short: Stenger is burning Goswami without the proper trial. And what about the issue solipsism vs true Goswami's view? Solipsism is the view that only my mind exists; whereas Goswami's view, as presented on page 38, seems to be of the panpsychist-panteist sort. Yes, in this view there is indeed many minds. I usually call this Brahmanist Panpsychism. This view was held by late physicist Erwin Schroedinger. Let's quote Stenger's book, page 38: "Goswami's monism, which he says is drawn from both the Hindu school of Advaita Vedanta as well as Theosophy, claims that the universe is not composed of matter at all but of a `universal consciousness.' As Goswami puts it in his Bleep interview: `The material world around us is nothing but possible movements of consciousness. I am choosing moment by moment my experience.' Goswami notes that the `You' in `You Make Your Own Reality' is not the individual `you' exercising his or her free will, but the collective You (or `I') of an all-pervasive cosmic consciousness that connects all minds throughout the universe at speeds faster than the speed of light." I (Julio) myself consider Brahmanistic Panpsychism as the best alternative we have, and I direct Steve to my two articles below, for an in-depth discussion of these matters:
http://www.criticandokardec.com.br/materialism_is_dead.htm
http://www.criticandokardec.com.br/essay_on_conscious_water.htm

Your post: Jun 30, 2009 8:37 AM PDT
Last edited by you on Jun 30, 2009 9:19 AM PDT

Julio C. S. Barros says:

Thesis 6: Did you notice that our dear hero fails to tell us anything in thesis 6? I guess thesis 6 isn't a thesis after all, but rather an inane rambling... Ok, great, but what did all these Dali-philos dudes say?

Julio Explains Thesis 6: Well, Steve, first of all what these Dali-philos dudes say is that, if science show their religion to be wrong in some fact, they will change their religion accordingly. This is far better than the Steve dudes who refuse to look even at the very factual evidence proving that Stenger often often often commits terrible (unacceptable) mistakes. The other thing that the Dalai says is that, quoting Stenger's book (page 53): "...according to the Dalai Lama Buddhism goes one step further than science. It also involves `contemplative investigation' and the `introspective examination if experience.'" Most likely Stenger meant "examination OF experience," and not "examination IF experience" (that would not make sense). But continuing: "So while the Dalai Lama is willing to accept the authority of science in its own area of external, objective observation and analysis, he clearly believes that Buddhist meditative practices open up another channel to truth beyond sensory observation. This is similar to the channel of revelation in other religions. As I have previously argued, if such a channel existed we should have evidence for it." Well, Stenger does have some good points in this above. The "Holy Channel" does seem to have some malfunctioning... But besides using this channel (which, in the bottom line, merely amounts to: Subjective Experience!) to get truths about the objective world, this channel (i.e. Subjective Experience) can be used, and is used (by the Dalai Lama, by philosophers, and by many of us too), to gather information about the mind's inner life itself. Take for example the studies (even by materialists like Susan Blackmore) of out of the body experiences, of lucid dreaming and of altered states of consciousness. Or, the link below:

<http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/imp/jcs/1999/00000006/F0020002/1172>

And the position of the Dalai Lama, as reported by Stenger, is very clear that if science shows that Buddhism went wrong in its interpretation of reality due to this use of the "inner channel" (or subjective experience), science, good science, will have the last word (a nice

example might be the idea that people do have spirits that truly get out of their bodies during out-of-the-body experiences; this can be refuted by science, and some claim this has been refuted indeed).

Your post: Jun 30, 2009 9:34 AM PDT
Last edited by you on Jun 30, 2009 9:34 AM PDT

Julio C. S. Barros says:

Thesis 7: The evil Dr. is lying again. I wonder if this is the lie, "He [Goswami] claims that evidence for special powers of the mind can be found in psychic studies such as mental telepathy (extra-sensory perception, or ESP) and mind-over-matter... However, Goswami is forced to acknowledge, "Telepathy has not yet been recognized as a scientific discovery" (Stenger 176). Stenger, darn you, stop lying!

Julio Explains Thesis 7: It is God Damm obvious that telepathy has not yet been recognized as a scientific discovery. And as I said, even if I were the Emperor of Science I would be careful in labelling it as something proved without a good theory for explaining it or without a good use for it (so far it is unusable) or without overwhelming results (the experimental results are good, but not overwhelming). But note that we have two things involved in this "thesis 7": first, the analysis of the results of the parapsychological research. Second, the lies that I claim (and that I prove) that Stenger says about the parapsychological research. All I want is that Stenger report faithfully the results of parapsychology research. After he has done so, he can apply to it any interpretation that he chooses. I have seen, and debated with, honest parapsychological researchers who claim that, thus far, there is NOT enough evidence to claim scientifically that telepathy exists. I disagree. But I highly respect THIS KIND OF STAND. This kind of stand; not Stenger's...

I will stop for today.
Best Wishes,
Julio

Comments

Steve Thomas says:

[In reply to your post](#) on Jun 30, 2009 11:55 AM PDT

Julio opined that, "All [he] want[s] is that Stenger report faithfully the results of parapsychology research." Julio, he has, science has rejected the notion of telepathy because the preponderance of hte evidence tells us it doesn't exist. Are you suggesting that it does?

Julio C. S. Barros says:

[Your post](#): Jun 30, 2009 5:55 PM PDT
Last edited by you on Jun 30, 2009 6:01 PM PDT

Before I reply to any further comments, I will "explain" the remained so called "thesis," from # 8 to # 11.

Thesis 8: This is a wild assertion, so our dear hero will have to elucidate before we can examine his thesis any further.

Julio Explains Thesis 8: my position is that free will does not and cannot exist. Neither in deterministic systems (like the theories of relativity or the bohmian and multi-worlds versions of quantum mechanics), nor in random systems (as in several versions of quantum mechanics). (by the way, there is a third alternative, which is "systems that are a combination of determinism and randomness"; free will does not and cannot exist in such systems as well...). Even God Himself (if he exists...) does not and cannot have free will.

This is my position. I may be wrong. I came to think this way after quite laborious "Gedanken experimentation," so to speak. So I do not object to Stenger's being for or against the position that free will exists (I think he didn't even take sides on that issue, actually). What I think is that one cannot talk about such topic (even without taking sides) in a book like this (i.e. Stenger's book "Quantum Gods") without detailing a systemic analysis of the putative free will dynamics. Stenger just threw the concept. And, to be sincere, that is basically what I see almost everybody doing when they talk about such issues. So Stenger is just average in this regard. Ordinary. But I think we, his readers and members of his society (in world-wide terms), deserve and should demand more from him than being merely ordinary. After all, he is the one who wants to be the slayer of other people's belief-system paradigms. If he thinks he has something better to offer, then, Stenger, come up and show this something that is better. "Ordinary" is not "Better." As to causation, my position is kind of similar, that is, I have often warned scientists and philosophers that this issue must be dealt with in a deeper level. Causation is a concept that works quite well from an intra-paradigmatic perspective and praxis (I used it often). However, when we are dealing in trans-paradigmatic endeavors (as is the case in this book by Stenger), we need to discuss deeper what is meant by causation and what are the limits of this concept. I, for one, consider causation a belief and not a fact.

Thesis 9: Hey dear hero, isn't there a universe of difference (say, I made a physics funny) between proving something beyond a reasonable doubt and proving it beyond any doubt? By the way, I am not doubting you about doubting but rather just doubting, huh? I suppose the preponderance of the evidence doesn't mean anything anyway.

Julio Explains Thesis 9: basically it comes down to the problem of "Is absence of evidence evidence of absence?" I agree with Stenger. The answer, basically, is Yes. But for that we have to decide what amount of absence will be considered as appropriate. If Obama is not at the Oval Room right now, it does not mean, necessarily, that the presidency is vacant. "God must be detectABLE." Granted. "God should already have been detectED by now." Why? A most ubiquitous fundamental force, namely electromagnetism, was only detected a couple of centuries ago. And at the very turn of the century (twentieth -> twenty first) we came to discover that more than seventy percent of what there is was, until that time (almost "yesterday," from the vantage point of the history of science),... undiscovered! (Dark Energy). So, yes, I think people are justified in rejecting (if they want to) the belief in God after so much not-finding. But I do not think SCIENCE is already justified in rejecting the possibility of God-like phenomena in the universe. We can reject Zeus atop Mount Olympus. But we cannot go too much further than that.

Your post: Jun 30, 2009 5:56 PM PDT

Julio C. S. Barros says:

Thesis 10: Actually, he admits this on several pages, so? He also says this, "Nothing I have said conflicts with existing physics. No one has pointed to a single error in the mathematics presented in the "Comprehensible Cosmos" (page 260). Say, could it be that our "guru" is actually basing his hypothesis on evidence rather than air? No, then this would mean that our hero is incorrect and I could never believe that.

Julio Explains Thesis 10: actually I would very much like to hear a few physicists on that. I am pointing the readers' attention to this fact: Stenger has had some of his interpretations labeled as non-mainstream. Are his interpretations worthy of being called ridiculous? Are they of possible value? Are they sober, but quite unlikely to be correct? I just cannot tell. He says "Nothing I have said conflicts with existing physics." Ok. But, as Stenger himself acknowledged, a God that acts through the indeterminacy of quantum mechanics does not conflict with existing physics. Yet that is not a scientific argument for saying that God exists. So, again: I would like to hear physicists on that.

Thesis 11: Indeed, hero, he does say what you suggest, but he also says this too, "Furthermore, macrosystems are not all chaotic and those that are involve time delays, so this option is not always available" (Stenger 243). Could it be that the evil Dr. is perhaps claiming that not all events would have a predetermined outcome? Indeed, on page 243, that's exactly what he says...

Julio Explains Thesis 11: I said: "However, on page 243, the whole miraculously is not the sum of its parts anymore... For even if God Almighty controls all the particles of a system, that would still not guarantee a predetermined outcome on the macroscale." And Steve

replied that Stenger also said that "Furthermore, macrosystems are not all chaotic and those that are involve time delays, so this option is not always available." But the problem, erudite Steve, is that Stenger said the phrase I mentioned AFTER he said the phrase you mentioned! Let's see the whole passage, beginning with what you mentioned [afterthought: I decided to reproduce the whole paragraph, so that the reader can have a better picture]: "We have studied the attempts by Christian theologians to use quantum mechanics and chaos theory to provide a place for a deity's intervention in the world without violating his own laws of physics. We found that this was not viable. Even if God were to utilize these phenomena in ways that were undetectable to humans, he would still be violating the laws of physics in the process. Furthermore, macrosystems are not all chaotic and those that are involve time delays, so this option is not always available. To have full control over all events God would have to manage the motion of every fundamental particle in the universe in a nanosecond-by-nanosecond basis. I suppose, being omnipotent, he could do that. But I get the impression in my reading that most theologians would not be happy with that solution. Furthermore, such micromanagement would still not guarantee a predetermined outcome on the macroscale." Note that the phrase that I used ("For even if God Almighty controls all the particles of a system, that would still not guarantee a predetermined outcome on the macroscale") quotes a passage where Stenger is referring to quantum mechanics, whereas the phrase that Steve quoted refers to a passage where Stenger is referring to chaos theory (which DOES NOT belong to quantum mechanics, but to classical physics instead). Note also that Stenger is referring to God HAVING FULL CONTROL OF ALL EVENTS. Note also that Stenger, childishly, confuses "God violating the laws of physics" with "God violating HIS OWN LAWS of physics." Sorry, Stenger, for being so blunt, but that is stupid. Note also that now the problem is not if the option is viable or not scientifically, but rather, if "theologians will be satisfied"... Come on, Steve-Stenger. Show some brightness of the mind.

I will have to be two days off, and only after this time will I be able to comment on further replies. Sorry.

Best,
Julio
-

Your post: Jul 3, 2009 6:09 AM PDT

Julio C. S. Barros says:

First of all, I would like to thank Steve for stimulating me to make a deeper explanation of the topics that I presented in my review.

Steve has added: "This was my point Julio: if you want to be taken seriously then you have to behave seriously."

Rest assured, Steve: I do not want to be taken seriously by people like you. But, just to make clear my point, I must stress that by "people like you" I am NOT referring to Victor Stenger. Nor am I referring to the typical avoid-L member (Stenger's weblist). Nor am I referring to the typical atheist-materialist-skeptical activist. All these people that I cited in these last three phrases have voluminous virtues. In short, they are not the "people like you." Steve's attempt to play the ROBIN hood in the BROWN forest (huh, Steve... ;-)), thus, could only have gone bust.

Lastly, Steve asks: "...science has rejected the notion of telepathy because the preponderance of the evidence tells us it doesn't exist. Are you suggesting that it does?"

Steve, all I can tell you is that the preponderance of the evidence tells us that telepathy TRULY EXISTS. I can list lots of reasons why mainstream scientific establishment rejects this, though. And many of these reasons are NOT of the "conspiracy" sort. Instead, they are of the "socially responsible and mature" sort. Remember that I myself, if I were the chief editor of Nature scientific journal, would NOT step up and say that telepathy has been proved. And the reason why I would not do it is not because of fear of losing my position or fear of being laughed at. Yet, the preponderance of the evidence tells us that "telepathy" exists.

When I joined Victor Stenger's weblist the last time to challenge Vic over the numerous mistakes in his failed "God, the Failed Hypothesis," one thing that I decided was NOT to discuss parapsychology with those guys. Yet, THEY lured me into that. Especially one

named William Jeffreys, who happens to be a highly distinguished astrophysicist (led Nasa's effort to fix the Hubble Telescope - check it out at wikipedia!) and highly skilled statistician. Another one was Brent Meeker. It seems, by what I witnessed at that weblist (filled with high quality physicists), that Meeker is a highly skilled physicist too. I ended up accepting their luring and confronted them over the Ganzfeld results (for telepathy). I have all the emails concerning this incident. Both Meeker and Jeffreys were terribly defeated. I was able (believe it or not) to beat Jeffreys in... Statistics! (picture that...: me, a no one in statistics, with feeble basic knowledge on that. Jeffreys a true Demigod on this subject. How come I could defeat him on that? Simple. I was being honest towards the facts. He was not. And, to his disgrace, I knew the true story, and I knew he was lying. As to Brent Meeke, you already read my letter to Zannelli in his book review of Quantum Gods).

We all know, Steve, that you will NEVER ask me to see the proof (the pdf documents, the emails, the scientific journal articles, the mp3 files with James Randi's voice lying dishonestly, etc) of what I say. We all know, Steve Brown, that you will NEVER join Vic Stenger's weblist to check the validity of the factual things that I have advanced.

Sleep well, then. With your wine. And with your beliefs. They are far more sacred than you yourself dream of. And I, believe it or not, respect them dearly.

Very Best Wishes,
Julio Siqueira
julioobsiqueira@terra.com.br
<http://www.criticandokardec.com.br/criticizingskepticism.htm>

In reply to your post on Jul 8, 2009 4:38 PM PDT

Steve Thomas says:

"Steve, all I can tell you is that the preponderance of the evidence tells us that telepathy TRULY EXISTS." A mighty claim indeed, prove it. I am asking to see your evidence!

Your post, in reply to an earlier post on Jul 8, 2009 7:35 PM PDT
Last edited by you on Jul 9, 2009 3:10 AM PDT

Julio C. S. Barros says:

You will have to do a lot of reading. Are you ready for it? I can provide this all to you...

Some years ago, I had two debates with a very honest Brazilian skeptic. He is a doctor, a very serious and well informed one. And he is an atheist materialist. Also, he is engaged in organized skepticism in Brazil. Ok, the first debate was over homeopathy. I already had a very clear and incisive anti-pseudoskepticism stand in internet forums then (in Brazilian ones). Understandably (but not excusably...), I entered this first debate with a quite preconceived and prejudiced attitude. I was sure that homeopathy was, most likely, another perfect example of a true phenomenon unduly and dishonestly put down by the so called "skeptics." I went text after text "together" with him into the very basis (and basics) of homeopathy, into the way that the purported "homeopathic drugs" were manufactured (with zero active principle, and Oh Holy Lord, never could I have dreamed of it, but hey, who knows, it might work just as well...), and... into the medical trials investigating the "effects" of homeopathic drugs. Well, to put it short, I was stunned. There was simply no evidence whatsoever for the effectiveness of homeopathy. I was so shocked (and, I must add, embarrassed), that I wrote a full report acknowledging my "mistake." And I keep it to this day in my own website. It is at the link below:

<http://www.criticandokardec.com.br/homeopatia.htm>

Then came the second debate. And it was over telepathy in experiments using the Ganzfeld protocol. I cannot say that my contender doctor was *convinced* that telepathy exists. As a matter of fact, this isn't even necessary. What he was convinced of is that the protocols (i.e. the experiment procedures) were very robust indeed, and that the results were interesting. As true scientists will put it, there seems to be an anomaly going on in these experiments.

It is the kind of serious research, with results, that deserves to appear in prestigious scientific journals like Nature and Science. It should not appear as "Telepathy Exists," but rather as something like "The Statistical Anomaly Suggestive of Telepathy in Ganzfeld Experiments Keeps Defying All Known Explanations." That is it. And that is a lot... This has nothing to do with life after death or God. As a matter of fact (as skilled and well informed parapsychologists know very well), if something like telepathy exists, the "evidence" for the afterlife becomes much much *less* reliable. But I must confess that Vic Stenger seems to be right in his fears that proving things like telepathy would make some people claim that this shows the Almighty One has Heaven waiting for the Pious.

So, in this battle that involves shifts in power and possible shifts in the strongholds of religions, and etc, there has been a massive growing of lore of all types. One such lore is that *parapsychology* is bunk. Even James Randi has friends that are parapsychologists, like Stanley Krippner. (<http://www.randi.org/jr/082302.html>). Another lore is that there are no results, and that they have not been replicated. The results are modest. The replication is rather problematic. But there is something there (we use the term "anomaly" for that). And this something *seems* to be telepathy, in the case of the Ganzfeld experiments; and it *seems* to be psychokinesis, in the case of the ingeniously devised micro-pk experiments. If Ganzfeld results were to be rated as at a "100" level, then, arguably, the micro-PK results might be rated as somewhat less than "10" (consider "300" as the threshold for *overwhelming scientific evidence* - these numbers are informal values "coined" by me now). Carl Sagan, in The Demon-Haunted World, also pointed the reader's attention to the so called evidence for reincarnation (coming from case studies like those investigated by late Ian Stevenson). I am a believer in reincarnation, and I read a lot about the cases studied by Stevenson, and, using my "backyard" evidence scale, I wouldn't grant more than number "1" to this "evidence." Yet, skeptic Sagan put the three phenomena in the same line (telepathy, psychokinesis, and reincarnation). I do not count that *for* reincarnation, but *against* Sagan...

So, when it comes to talking about the psi research (parapsychological research), Victor Stenger is utterly uninformed in this. He keeps insisting in talking about it, though. Solely driven by the nodules of dishonesty that he has in his soul (or in his mind, if you will).

So the evidence that I present to you is this: the Results (arguably modest) of the Ganzfeld Experiments. The Claim is this: Nothing Explains What Keeps Happening in These. My Request, as a Citizen of the World, is This: organized skeptics worldwide (Stenger included) must stop lying about this, and must encourage scientific journals to talk about it responsibly and boldly.

Best Regards,
Julio
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In reply to your post on Jul 9, 2009 4:47 PM PDT
Last edited by the author on Jul 9, 2009 4:48 PM PDT

Steve Thomas says:

Julio,

The one problem with being a skeptic is that people often conflate cynicism with skepticism, but I think we both can agree that they're entirely different perspectives - one is pessimistic and the other is merely doubtful. As such, people mistakenly believe that skeptics take some sort of sinister pleasure from trouncing other people's beliefs, but nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, I think it'd be a much more interesting and exciting world if, in fact, all of these intriguing psychic powers existed, but the preponderance of the evidence shows otherwise. What I find so frustrating about our exchanges, Julio, is that there never seems to be any forward movement. I keep telling you that you're appealing to mystery and you keep telling me that I am a blind skeptic.

As I keep telling you, simply because we cannot presently explain something doesn't mean that it doesn't have an explanation. Thus your comment, "The Claim is this: Nothing Explains What Keeps Happening in These." Are you suggesting then that the only explanation is psychic powers? Surely you must see the folly in taking this line of thinking? The reason science journals have stopped talking about telepathy is simply for the fact that they've moved on; there's nothing there, Julio. As Karl Popper noted, "Logically, no number

of positive outcomes at the level of experimental testing can confirm a scientific theory, but a single counterexample is logically decisive: it shows the theory, from which the implication is derived, to be false." I am not suggesting that there's a counterexample here, but you seem to be saying the opposite: "We haven't found a counterexample, so therefore telepathy exists." If so, this is the old canard that "absence of evidence isn't evidence of absence," and we both know that science doesn't work like this.

Having said all of that, I was already aware of the Ganzfeld experiments and they are interesting indeed, but hardly conclusive of anything. Have you seen any of the video footage? It goes something like this: an observer is looking at a screen and she's seeing the left-front headlight of a Volkswagen Beetle, and around the yellow paint job and light are red and blue flames. The test subject is sitting there - much like a psychic groping for information - and saying random things such as: "I see circles, concentric circles, colors, round, etc." Goodness Julio, if I spoke long enough and said enough things I could make some guesses as to what you're thinking. Nevertheless, this doesn't explain the spike in the experimental data yet again many researchers have called the controls into question.

As far as the email exchange, I cannot read it, for my Portuguese is, for all intent and purpose, non-existent. So, I do not wish to continually rain on your parade, but I remain unconvinced about your claims pertaining to telepathy, Julio. What I usually find with people who make fantastic claims is that they allow their biases to cloud experiential outcomes. In layman's terms, they see what they expected to see, and this could be explained by what's referred to as the Psi Assumption:

"The assumption that any statistical deviation from chance is evidence for telepathy is highly controversial, and often compared to the God of the gaps argument. Strictly speaking, a deviation from chance is only evidence that either this was a rare, statistically unlikely occurrence that happened by chance, or something was causing a deviation from chance. Flaws in the experimental design are a common cause of this, and so the assumption that it must be telepathy is fallacious. This does not rule out, however, that it could be telepathy." (Wiki).

In the end, I do not see this as proof, merely interesting data, but no one seems to ask the obvious. If telepathy really exists, then why can't people simply read your thoughts and be open and accurate about it. Why can't I simply say to you, "Julio, this is exactly what you're thinking..." However, the "mind reading" is always clouded in vagaries and guesses, and this alone renders the whole concept very questionable indeed. As I said, I remain unconvinced, sorry.

Your post, in reply to an earlier post on Jul 13, 2009 7:04 AM PDT

Julio C. S. Barros says:

Hi Steve,

I added some reflective notes after your comments below:

"What I find so frustrating about our exchanges, Julio, is that there never seems to be any forward movement. I keep telling you that you're appealing to mystery and you keep telling me that I am a blind skeptic."

I do not feel as frustrated as you seem to be. And I do not feel myself as a mystery-appealer (at least not too much), or you as a blind skeptic (at least not too much...). And important moves forward have been achieved, imho. From both of us. One may say that we have not managed to convince each other. But that, for me, is the least important goal in a scientific debate. The goals that I consider to be the most important are, to a great extent, being achieved. Civility. Openness to what the contender is saying (that is, reading and listening at least, instead of downright dismissal). Respect towards the contender.

"`Thus your comment, "The Claim is this: Nothing Explains What Keeps Happening in These." Are you suggesting then that the only explanation is psychic powers?' "

If I claimed that, I would be advancing a theory. And the question, then, would be: is this theory good enough? That is what "skeptics" (i.e. true scientists) point out: this theory (for

example, telepathy) is not yet a good one. It is so bare that almost everybody (even me!) agrees that it is not a theory. It might be better described as a *sketch* of a *preliminary* *framework*. But it is a possibility worthy of respect. Alternatives might be true as well. Perhaps there is some aspect in statistics that we do not fully understand, that is, a flaw in our current knowledge of mathematics and statistics. Anyway, whatever the cause, what lies below the Ganzfeld statistic anomaly is of great interest to Science. That is what the scientific community must be told. And that is what pseudoskeptics (like CSICOP et al - Vic Stenger included) are preventing at all costs the scientific community to have access to.

"The reason science journals have stopped talking about telepathy is simply for the fact that they've moved on; there's nothing there, Julio."

There's nothing there. Well, that seems a little bit dogmatic for me, imho.

"you seem to be saying the opposite: `We haven't found a counterexample, so therefore telepathy exists.' If so, this is the old canard that `absence of evidence isn't evidence of absence,' and we both know that science doesn't work like this."

The workings and interests of science are numerous, intricate, and highly intertwined with the other interests of humans and of society. I wouldn't say that "science doesn't work like this", for instead sometimes it actually might... My claim, and I want to state it here precisely, is that:

The following phrase is worthy of all scientific respect and worthy of being supported by the most prestigious scientific journals (like Nature and Science) and by the most influential scientific institutions worldwide (like US NAS, etc): The statistical anomaly in experiments using the tight ganzfeld protocol has defied for decades all possible explanations thus far advanced, and is suggestive of telepathy-like activity between pairs of individuals.

This above is the claim that I, if I were the "Emperor of Science," would advance. But I would include lots of warning notes...

"I was already aware of the Ganzfeld experiments and they are interesting indeed, but hardly conclusive of anything."

Well, I think they are conclusive of so many things... But for now, the most important thing to point out is that you do not seem to know well how the experiment (with Ganzfeld protocols) works, that is, how it is performed and what is the "interesting" result (statistical anomaly) that comes from it. What you described (video, Volkswagen, etc) is the FIRST part of the experiment. That is the free-response part. What is interesting and more conclusive is the SECOND part, or the forced-choice part. That is where the statistical anomaly is. That is the true core and the true nature of the debate concerning Ganzfeld (the part that you mention is NOT the source of the debate - it is mostly left out of the debate). For an accessible introduction to this debate and its relevance, you may take a look at the links below, the first one is from Skeptic's Dictionary (and you might feel more comfortable with it), and the remaining are from myself vs Brent Meeker and William Jefferys in Vic Stenger's weblis, avoid-L:

<http://www.skepdic.com/ganzfeld.html>
http://www.criticandokardec.com.br/01_avoidl_busting.pdf
http://www.criticandokardec.com.br/02_avoidl_busting.pdf
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http://www.criticandokardec.com.br/04_avoidl_busting.pdf
http://www.criticandokardec.com.br/ESP_interocular_traumatic_test.htm

I will continue in a few minutes or hours from now.

Best Regards,
Julio

Your post: Jul 13, 2009 8:01 AM PDT
Last edited by you 22 hours ago

Julio C. S. Barros says:

Continuing...:

"I do not wish to continually rain on your parade, but I remain unconvinced about your claims pertaining to telepathy, Julio."

Paredes are governmental business, and also the business of religions of all trades (even atheist-materialist religions, like the ones professed by some CSICOPers). Scientific "business," and also truly humanistic business, is more like a garden. Therefore, your "rain" is, and will always be, most welcome :-). As to your being "unconvinced," I must say that I would feel less "frustrated" if, instead, you had said: "but I (despite having read and carefully pondered over all that you recommended regarding this debate) remain unconvinced about your claims pertaining to telepathy, Julio." (anyway, I think I had not provided any link then. Nevertheless, you could have asked...).

"The assumption that any statistical deviation from chance is evidence for telepathy is highly controversial, and often compared to the God of the gaps argument. Strictly speaking, a deviation from chance is only evidence that either this was a rare, statistically unlikely occurrence that happened by chance, or something was causing a deviation from chance. Flaws in the experimental design are a common cause of this, and so the assumption that it must be telepathy is fallacious. This does not rule out, however, that it could be telepathy." (Wiki).

This piece above is perfect. What scientist could dare to go against it? But this is NOT what I have been talking about. And this is NOT what we have in Ganzfeld.

"In the end, I do not see this as proof, merely interesting data, but no one seems to ask the obvious. If telepathy really exists, then why can't people simply read your thoughts and be open and accurate about it. Why can't I simply say to you, `Julio, this is exactly what you're thinking...' However, the `mind reading' is always clouded in vagaries and guesses, and this alone renders the whole concept very questionable indeed. As I said, I remain unconvinced, sorry."

You have two assertions above:

A- If telepathy really exists, why can't people simply read your thoughts and be open and accurate about it?

B- The `mind reading' is always clouded in vagaries and guesses.

Your assertion *B* is highly questionable. There seems to have been instances of highly precise "mind reading." If you are interested in it (and you are not), I suggest an in-depth study of the medium activity of Mrs. Leonora Piper (psychologist William James' "White Crow"). I am not saying anything FOR her or AGAINST her here. I am just telling you that THAT is the place to go if you want to check the validity of your assertion. You would have to invest some years to study the evidence pro and con regarding her. And, yes, you might (and me too) come to the conclusion that it is all false evidence.

Your assertion *A* might be labeled, with all due respect, as naïve. The fact that telepathy exists (if it indeed exists) does not mean that it has to be what YOU demand it to be. For example, one might say: if Julio can see, why can't he read the morning paper? Well, the answer is, because Julio became kind of presbyopic due to aging (46 y.o. now), and cannot focus his vision early in the morning. The fact that Julio has vision does not mean that he has THE QUALITY AND THE INTENSITY of vision that you think he should. Similarly, why can't Julio see as well as owls do in the night? So, yes, it can be that telepathy simply does not exist; and, no, your restriction towards it is not warranted. However, your restriction is not invalid. I would attempt to rephrase it in more valid terms as this:

If telepathy truly exists, what exactly is its nature and function, its capabilities and limitations? In a word, what is its... biological role?

That is a good question indeed. For now, all we have is the statistical anomaly. But just because we still do not have the truly important things, it should not lead us to deny the fact that we do have already some interesting potentially-fruitful things.

I think that, for me, that settles the debate for now (ours and science's). In good science, there are no losers. We all are winners! Even if, in the long run, it turns out that the one who is right is... you, Steve.

Best Wishes, and Lots of Reading and Pondering,
Julio Siqueira

P.S.: believe it or not, I couldn't care less whether telepathy exists or not... But I do care enormously to the way this debate, in the scientific-establishment quarters, have been carried out thus far, and the amount of dishonest, agenda-filled, interest-vested pseudoskepticism in it.

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<http://www.criticandokardec.com.br/criticizingskepticism.htm>

In reply to your post on Jul 13, 2009 7:31 PM PDT

P. Fan says:

Paranoia. Thy name is Julio Barros.

Comments

Your post, in reply to an earlier post on Jul 14, 2009 6:31 AM PDT

Julio C. S. Barros says:

"Fan," this summer (so hot), you too, like rains in parades, are quite welcome! :-) :-) :-)

Julio
