**HOW TO, AND HOW NOT TO, ARGUE AGAINST SKEPTICISM**

**The Scientific Method “Here are the facts,**

**what conclusions can we draw from them?”**

**The Irrational Method “Here is the conclusion,**

**what facts can we find to support it?”**

**I’ll give you arguments against skepticism**

**Einstein**

**christians want to claim him because of his mental stature.**

**appeal to authority.**

**but it’s not needed because it doesn’t matter what his religious beliefs were.**

**he was a physicist; not a theologian nor a philospher.**

**Hitler**

**he was a devout catholic. the evidence its volumninous. give it up.**

**besides, if you are so desperate to point to an evil atheist, use Stalin.**

**But irrationals want to go with the biggest rep as was the case with einstein.**

**others**

**extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof.**

**Methusalah generational error: used 900 per generation rather than 100.**

**why do I tell you how to defeat skeptical arguments, because by learning critical thinking skills you are more likely to become one yourself.**

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**arguments that really make you look stupid (so don’t use them):**

**god made evolution to trick people and test their faith.**

**that also applies to geology, physics, astronomy, archaeology, and most other sciences.**

**god has always been here = “get-out-of-jail-free” card**

**switch the burden of proof to the person who dares to question your belief.**

**and any of the logical fallacies for that matter.**

**you can’t redefine words to make them mean what you want them to mean.**

**examples:**

**science is not faith.**

**dr. Phil redefining ‘father’.**

**NEWS ITEMS FROM AROUND THE WORLD**

**TANZANIA**

**In a similar story to the one reported earlier about ‘penis-stealing in the congo,’ witchcraft is again responsible for numerous murders in africa.**

**Believing these idiot witch doctors, people have been hunting down people stricken with albinism and killing them so that they can take certain body parts which they are told have magical powers. This is the exact same thing that is done to the hapless rhino which is killed just to get the horn, so that men who don’t want to pay for viagra can get bigger erections. Only now, in addition to rhinos, they kill people.**

**Let me read the story as it appeared in the newsletter, the Rationalist International.**

**Tanzania: Albinos are hunted and mutilated to trade their “magical” organs**

17 year old Vumilia Makoye was having dinner with her family, when two men with long knives forced their entry into the house, overpowering her mother Jeme, who tried to stop them. Then everything happened very fast. Jeme and the rest of the family watched helplessly, how the intruders grabbed Vumila, sawed off her legs above the knee and vanished with them. The legless girl, lying in a pool of blood, died soon.

 Vumila was an albino. Albinism is an inherited hypopigmentary disorder, characterized by lack of the pigment melanin in eyes, skin and hair. As a result, the eyes are red and the skin is pinkish white and extremely sensitive to sun. In Africa, only one out of 3000 newborn is an albino. They suffer a lot of medical problems, and most of them die of skin cancer before reaching the age of 30.

 It is a common belief in sub-Saharan Africa that albinos carry magical powers. They are shunned and socially stigmatized. But recently in Tanzania, superstition has taken a horrible turn. Witch doctors started claiming that magical potions, using skin, hair, bones, genitals, tongues or limbs of albinos as ingredients, bring wealth to their customers. Since then, albinos are hunted. According to official reports, 19 albino people, including children, have bee killed and mutilated for trade of body parts. Other sources speak of more than fifty victims. Police officials believe that the albino killings have been inspired by Nigerian movies about witchcraft.

The authorities are developing lists of albinos and try to protect them systematically by watching their houses and escorting albino children to school. President Jakaya Kikwete ordered a crack down on witch doctors and organ traders. In an effort to eliminate discrimination, he recently appointed the first albino member of parliament.

 The superstition does not stop at the borders. In Kenya, an albino woman was found in late May with her eyes, tongue and breasts torn out. Albino skin is reportedly sold in Congo, too.

[**Texas court approves traumatic exorcisms**](http://scienceblogs.com/pharyngula/2008/06/texas_court_approves_traumatic.php)

Category: [**Religion**](http://scienceblogs.com/pharyngula/religion/)

Well now…if you've had a hankerin' to torture, abuse, and do who knows what else to people at your whim, here's what you do: move on down to Texas and set up a religion. [The Texas Supreme Court just ruled on a case](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/25423465/) in which a young woman was subjected to extreme distress and restraint during a church-run exorcism (isn't that insane enough right there? An exorcism in 21st century America?), and they threw the previous judgment against the church out. Why? Because holding a church liable for psychological damage "would have an unconstitutional 'chilling effect' by compelling the church to abandon core principles of its religious beliefs."

Damn right it would. Holding religion accountable for the stupidity perpetuated by it certainly should send a shiver down the spines of hordes of witch-doctors and mullahs and priests and other such folk with a vested interest in superstition.

The [court ruling basically says](http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/religion/stories/MYSA062708.EN.church.exorcism.46415f9e.html) that because this church carries out this practice all the time, and because adherents of the religion accept it, it's OK to pin people to the floor and scream at them for a few hours.

The Supreme Court, in a 6-3 opinion, said the church's exorcism sessions were a matter of church doctrine and were thus subject to certain — though not absolute — First Amendment religious protections.

"The laying of hands" and the presence of demons are part of the church's belief system and accepted as such by its adherents," the ruling said in part. "These practices are not normally dangerous or unusual and apparently arise in the church with some regularity. They are thus to be expected and are accepted by those in the church."

Hello, world. In the United States, it is not considered unusual to accuse teenagers of being possessed by demons, and we subject them to frightening magic rituals to cast out such satanic forces with some regularity. Do not be alarmed. We also have nuclear weapons and sophisticated delivery systems. But I repeat…do not be at all alarmed.

One of the lawyers for the church noticed a key point of this ruling — it's too bad he thinks it is a good thing.

"The key point of this ruling is that we don't have a right to have our standards of reasonableness foisted upon some other religion," Dallas attorney David Pruessner said. "None of our religious beliefs can be examined when they are emotionally disturbing to other people."

**No religious beliefs are to be examined critically**, no matter how disturbing they may be. That's the way things work down in Texas, I guess. Oh, but he hastily adds…

Pruessner said no one should think Friday's ruling would give protection to a church leader accused of abusing a child.

Except that that is exactly what happened in this case: the victim of this church-endorsed abuse was 17 at the time, and the church has now gotten off scot-free, held not culpable for their insanity, and told that they can keep on doing it with the protection of the law…and they've been informed that any weird religious belief is "normal".

I would suggest a well-known compromise, one that has been violated by the Texas court decision. You are free to *believe* whatever wacky nonsense you want — you can believe moody teenagers are possessed by demons, and you can believe that cutting out the hearts of virgins will guarantee that the sun will rise tomorrow, and you can even believe that barbecued babies are especially delicious — but you are not free to *act* on those beliefs in a way that infringes the rights of other people. The Texas court, in its zeal to protect religious beliefs, has gone too far and has endorsed the right of a church to do harm in the name of their god.

**Benjamin Franklin**

[January 17](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/January_17), [1706](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1706) – [April 17](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/April_17), [1790](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1790) 84 years.

[[O.S.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Style_and_New_Style_dates) [January 6](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/January_6), [1705](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1705)] julian calendar

He was one of the [Founding Fathers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Founding_Fathers_of_the_United_States) of the [United States of America](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States).

Franklin was a leading [author](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Author), [scientist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientist), [inventor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inventor), [politician](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politician), and [diplomat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diplomacy).

As a scientist he was a major figure in the [Enlightenment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Enlightenment) and the [history of physics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_physics) for his discoveries and theories regarding [electricity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electricity). He invented the [lightning rod](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lightning_rod), [bifocals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bifocals), the [Franklin stove](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franklin_stove), a carriage [odometer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Odometer), and [a musical instrument](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glass_harmonica#Benjamin_Franklin.27s_armonica).

He formed both the first [public lending library](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_library) in America and first [fire department](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fire_station) in Pennsylvania. He wrote and published [*Poor Richard's Almanack*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poor_Richard%27s_Almanack) and the [*Pennsylvania Gazette*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pennsylvania_Gazette_%28newspaper%29). He played a major role in establishing the [University of Pennsylvania](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Pennsylvania) and [Franklin & Marshall College](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franklin_%26_Marshall_College) and was elected the first president of the [American Philosophical Society](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Philosophical_Society).

He was an early proponent of [colonial unity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirteen_Colonies) and as a political writer and activist he, more than anyone, invented the idea of an American nation[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_franklin#cite_note-0) and as a diplomat during the [American Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Revolution), he secured the [French alliance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franco-American_relations) that helped to make independence possible. Toward the end of his life, he became one of the most prominent [abolitionists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abolitionism#United_States).

**"Lighthouses are more useful than churches."**