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**Argument # 5: The "anecdotal evidence is invalid" argument.**

**Typical usage: "All that we have to support paranormal claims is anecdotal evidence, which is unreliable and not valid evidence for paranormal claims."**

**Corollary: "Anecdotal evidence is worthless as scientific evidence."**

**The "anecdotal evidence" classification is one of the main categories that skeptics put paranormal evidence into in order to dismiss it. (Another category being the "unreplicable / uncontrolled" group that scientific experiments supporting Psi are often put into). Skeptics who use this argument often claim that the evidence we have for paranormal claims is largely anecdotal and therefore worthless as scientific evidence. They claim that anecdotal evidence is invalid because it is largely untestable and subject to error. Some skeptics will even go so far as to say that anecdotal evidence is zero evidence. Not surprisingly though, skeptics tend to quote anecdotal evidence when it supports their side! (another double standard)**

**WINSTON, YOU CAN’T JUST MAKE A VAGUE ACCUSATION. IF YOU HAVE THE NAME OF A SKEPTIC WHO DID THAT, THEN GIVE US THAT NAME AND WHAT THE EVIDENCE WAS. OTHERWISE, HIT THE ROAD.**

**Therefore it appears that classifying evidence as "anecdotal" is simply a dismissal tactic to try to discredit evidence that skeptics can’t explain away.**

**WINSTON, CLASSIFYING EVIDENCE AS “ANECDOTAL” HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH DISMISSAL TACTICS. EITHER EVIDENCE IS ANECDOTAL OR IT IS NOT.**

**One of the ways that skeptics dismiss anecdotal evidence is to classify witnesses as either mistaken, lying, or hallucinating.**

**WINSTON, THE WITNESSES DO NOT HAVE TO BE MISTAKEN, LYING, OR HALLUCINATING. IF THE EVIDENCE IS ANECDOTAL, THERE IS NO WAY TO VERIFY IT. THAT DOESN’T MEAN IT DIDN’T HAPPEN, IT JUST MEANS THAT UNTIL CORROBORATING EVIDENCE IS PRODUCED, ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE ALONE IS INSUFFICIENT TO ESTABLISH THE FACT.**

**This again reflects bias and pre-judgment on their part.**

**STICKS AND STONES WINSTON.**

**Skeptics don’t really know that a claimant must fit one of the above categories, they simply put them there to keep their mental model paradigms intact.**

**WINSTON, WHY WOULD THEY DO THAT? IF BIGFOOT EXISTED AND SHOWED UP IN ALBUQUERKE, WHAT BENEFIT WOULD SKEPTICS GAIN BY DENYING ITS EXISTENCE?**

**THAT IS NOT HOW SCIENCE WORKS WINSTON. WHEN EVIDENCE IS PRODUCED THAT PROVES THE EXISTENCE OF SOMETHING OR PROVES THE VALIDITY OF A THEORY, THEN THAT BECOMES SCIENCE. THERE IS NO BENEFIT IN DENYING REALITY.**

**This is further evidenced by the fact that many skeptics will continue to insist on one of these three categories even when they are shown to be either impossible or too unlikely to consider. This reflects cynicism rather than true skepticism.**

**WINSTON, YOU HAVEN’T GOT A CLUE TO THE MEANING OF TRUE SKEPTICISM.**

**While it may be true that paranormal evidence is largely anecdotal in nature,**

**WINSTON, “MAY BE TRUE?”**

**that by no means makes them worthless or untrue.**

**WINSTON, WE AGREE. ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE PROPERLY SUPPORTED BY CORROBORATING EVIDENCE CAN HAVE VALUE AND MAY TURN OUT TO BE TRUE. LACKING THAT CORROBORATING EVIDENCE, ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE REMAINS ON THE SHELF UNTIL SUCH TIME AS IT CAN BE CORROBORATED.**

**Not only is anecdotal evidence mostly reliable with regard to everyday things,**

**WINSTON, HOW CAN YOU PROVE THAT ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE IS MOSTLY RELIABLE. BY ITS VERY NATURE, IT IS UNVERIFIABLE. IT IS ONLY RELIABLE TO SOMEONE WHO WANTS TO BELIEVE IT. WE CALL THAT CREDULITY.**

**but it’s reliability can further be measured based on several factors. Consider the following.**

1. **The main problem with the "anecdotal evidence is invalid" argument is that anecdotal evidence IS in fact mostly reliable with regard to everyday mundane things.**

**WINSTON, ALL WE NEED TO SEE IS PROOF. ANY PROOF. YOUR INTENSE DESIRE FOR IT TO BE TRUE IS NOT PROOF.**

**Most of the stories and things I hear about tend to check out.**

**WINSTON, WHAT THE HELL DOES THAT MEAN - “TEND TO CHECK OUT?”**

**If a tourist who visited France described the details of the Eiffel Tower to me, I could easily check it out by looking up books or brochures on it. When I hear that there is a sale going on for something at the local store, it is validated if I go and check it out. Once, when I heard that a new Star Wars movie was coming out, a year later the movie Star Wars The Phantom Menace came out. When I hear secondhand that something happened on the news, all I have to do is to turn on the news later and what I heard will be verified, often with regard to specific details such as names, number of victims, price hikes, etc. So we do see that anecdotal evidence is reliable in general.**

**WINSTON, THE EXAMPLES YOU GAVE WERE NOT ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE. IN EACH CASE YOU WERE GIVEN INFORMATION THAT YOU COULD VERIFY AS TO WHETHER OR NOT IT WAS TRUE. JUST BECAUSE I TELL YOU SOMETHING, THAT DOESN’T MEAN I’M PROVIDING YOU WITH ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE.**

**My experience has shown that over 90 percent of things I hear about check out later on.**

**WINSTON, THAT MEANS THAT PEOPLE ARE LYING TO YOU 10% OF THE TIME. IF I WERE YOU, I WOULD START HANGING AROUND A MORE RELIABLE CROWD.**

**Now since anecdotal evidence is reliable and trustworthy for the MOST part with regard to everyday things, why should it be any different for paranormal phenomena just because it lies outside the skeptics’ belief system?**

**WELL WINSTON, THE REASON WHY IT IS DIFFERENT IS BECAUSE WHEN PEOPLE TRY TO “CHECK IT OUT” IT NEVER “CHECKS OUT.”**

**With skeptics, what is mostly reliable suddenly becomes worthless zero evidence. This is because this argument is a dismissal tactic, used by pseudo-skeptics who prefer to lump all paranormal claims into the small percentage of instances that anecdotal evidence is mistaken or fraudulent.**

**WINSTON, I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN. I STAY AWAY FROM THOSE PSEUDO-SKEPTICS MYSELF.**

1. **Anecdotal evidence is dependent upon perspective. My firsthand direct experiences are anecdotal evidence to others, while their direct experiences are anecdotal to me too.**

**WINSTON, THAT’S WHY IT IS ALWAYS A GOOD IDEA TO BE ABLE TO BACK UP WHAT YOU CLAIM WITH FACTS.**

**Therefore, whether something is anecdotal or not depends on whether or not you are the experiencer, rather than on it being true or false.**

**WINSTON, IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH WHETHER OR NOT IT IS TRUE OR FALSE. THE TRUTH OF ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE IS NOT KNOWN, UNTIL AND IF, IT CAN BE CORROBORATED.**

**Obviously, just because something happens to someone else doesn’t mean that it’s false.**

**WINSTON, THAT WAS STUPID EVEN FOR YOU.**

**This is not to say that what everyone says is true, but that just because my firsthand experience is anecdotal to someone else does not diminish its validity, especially if I am telling the truth.**

**BUT WINSTON, WITHOUT SUPPORTING EVIDENCE, HOW WOULD ANYONE KNOW WHETHER OR NOT YOU ARE TELLING THE TRUTH? YOU JUST EXPECT US TO BELIEVE YOU BECAUSE YOU ARE A NICE GUY?**

**Of course, since closed-minded skeptics tend to prefer any explanation rather than a paranormal one, they will consistently use this dismissal tactic.**

**WINSTON, YOUR TERM “CLOSED-MINDED SKEPTICS” IS AN OXYMORON. IF A PERSON IS CLOSED-MINDED THEN THEY ARE NOT A SKEPTIC.**

**3) Important variables increase the reliability of anecdotal evidence. The degree of reliability of anecdotal evidence can usually be measured by variables such as:**

**a) The number of eyewitnesses.**

**b) The consistency of the observations and claims.**

**c) The credibility of the witnesses.**

**d) The clarity of and proximity of the observation.**

**e) The state of mind of the witnesses.**

**WINSTON, I AGREE THAT ALL FIVE OF THOSE VARIABLES DO ADD TO THE WEIGHT OF THE ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE.**

**Here is a further elaboration on the variables that determine the degree of reliability of anecdotal evidence, and how they have been more than adequately met for many paranormal phenomena.**

1. **The number and amount of eyewitnesses, testimonials and claims. The more eyewitnesses and testimonies there are, the greater the weight of evidence. If one person told me something amazing, I’d doubt it. But if a considerable number of people told me the same thing including people I know and trust, then I might think that there could be something to it. To put it simply, something is MORE likely to be true if a lot of people can attest to than if no one attested to it.**

**WINSTON, THAT WAS EXCELLENTLY STATED.**

**This criteria is definitely met in the case of psychic phenomena and divine experiences.**

**WINSTON, YOU WERE DOING SO WELL. YOU WERE AT THE TEN, THE FIVE, THE ONE, AND THEN ….. FUMBLE!**

**Surveys show that two-thirds of Americans claim to have had psychic experiences (mostly in the telepathic area) which is a significant number ranging over two hundred million in this country, not counting the rest of the world!**

**WINSTON, THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT YOU GET WHEN YOU LIVE IN A SOCIETY DEVOID OF CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS. PEOPLE NEED TO LEARN MORE ABOUT PSYCHOLOGY AND HOW THE BRAIN FUNCTIONS.**

1. **The consistency in the observations and claims of witnesses. The consistency in the reports we get is also significant. If people were lying or hallucinating, then it is unlikely for there to be consistency in their claims.**

**THAT’S NOT TRUE WINSTON. WHEN WE ENTERED THE SPACE AGE DECADES AGO PEOPLE SUDDENLY STARTED GETTING ALIEN VISITATIONS FOR THE FIRST TIME. THE REPORTS OF HOW THE ALIENS LOOKED WAS CONSISTENT. IT WAS ALSO CONSISTENT WITH HOW THEY LOOKED ON TV AND IN MOVIES.**

**Of course, consistency in observations and experiences does not mean that what was perceived was really what occurred, but it helps rule out fraud for the most part and points us in the right direction. This criteria is also met for some paranormal phenomena. In multiple witness sightings of ghosts and UFO’s for instance, there are accounts of several or more people witnessing the same thing and describing the same details.**

**WINSTON, THERE IS NOTHING UNUSUAL WHEN MANY PEOPLE OBSERVE AN UNIDENTIFIED OBJECT IN THE SAME PLACE. THEY SIMPLY DON’T KNOW WHAT IT IS.**

**Even more striking is consistency among people who don’t know each other nor live near one another. For example, in the case of NDE’s, we have great consistency among experiencers in the form of seeing their body below them, moving through a tunnel, going to a great light of love that some call God, going through a life review, returning with permanent life changes, etc.**

**WINSTON, YOU JUST SHOT DOWN YOUR OWN ARGUMENT: FIRST YOU CLAIM “GREAT CONSISTENCY,” THEN YOU GO ON TO LIST AN ARRAY OF DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES.**

**Of course, skeptics see this consistency as supporting their side because they see it as pointing to the similar brain structure that we humans have, which shuts down in a way that produces similar NDE’s.**

1. **The credibility of the witnesses. The credibility of those making the reports and claims is also significant. Factors that influence credibility include integrity, character, whether they’ve been known to lie before, education and expertise, mental stability, how well we know them personally (obviously you would place more value in the claim of someone you know and trust as opposed to a stranger), etc.**

**WINSTON, GOOD POINT.**

**We definitely have anecdotal evidence from this group for various paranormal/psychic phenomena. That is indisputable. Doctors and scientists of esteemed reputations have attested to miracles or paranormal phenomena. Trained radar personnel and Air Force observers have observed UFO’s both on radar and in the sky.**

**WINSTON, A UFO IS JUST AN “UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECT.” WHAT YOU MEAN TO IMPLY IS THAT THEY ARE ALIENS.**

 **Accomplished quantum physicists have found quantum evidence that make psychic phenomena more plausible, such as the discovery that particles behave differently when observed as opposed to unobserved, the nonlocality and connectedness of twin particles that are split, etc.**

**WINSTON, QUANTUM MECHANICS DOES NOT MAKE PSYCHIC PHENOMENA MORE PLAUSIBLE. THE READER SHOULD GO TO MY WEBSITE AT “THESKEPTICARENA.COM” AND CLICK ON THE LINK TO “QUANTUM PHYSICS” FOR AN EXPLANATION BY PHYSICIST VICTOR STENGER.**

**Prominent Psychiatrists such as Dr. Brian Weiss, author of Many Lives, Many Masters, have discovered and documented clinical evidence that past life memories are real and can be verified.**

**WINSTON, IF THEY COULD HAVE BEEN VERIFIED THEY WOULD NOW BE “ACCEPTED SCIENCE” - THEY ARE NOT.**

**I AM NOW GOING TO SKIP OVER HIS POINTS D, E, AND F, DUE TO TIME CONSTRAINTS. THEY WERE BORING ANYWAY.**

**It is apparent that closed minded skeptics aren’t looking for evidence, but ways to shut it out to protect their views.**

**WINSTON, THAT WAS A PERFECT DESCRIPTION, BUT NOT OF A SKEPTIC, BUT AN IRRATIONAL.**

**LET ME GIVE YOU A DEFINITION:**

**A RATIONALIST SAYS, “HERE ARE THE FACTS, WHAT CONCLUSION CAN I DRAW FROM THEM?”**

**AN IRRATIONAL SAYS, “HERE IS THE CONCLUSION, WHAT FACTS CAN I FIND TO SUPPORT IT?”**

**WINSTON THAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A SKEPTIC AND AN IRRATIONAL. YOU CONSISTENTLY REVERSE THEM. BUT NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES YOU MISREPRESENT THE TRUTH IT WON’T CHANGE THE DEFINITION.**

**After all, if they’re really looking for evidence, then why would they shut it out every time it comes up?**

**WINSTON, THEY WOULDN’T.**

**Even arch skeptic Bob Carroll of The Skeptics’ Dictionary (http://www.skepdic.com) says that while anecdotal evidence may not be proof, but it helps point us in the right direction.**

**WINSTON, YOU SHOULD LISTEN TO “ARCH-SKEPTICS.”**

**This isn’t saying of course, that we should believe every anecdotal claim out there. That would be foolish. This is just saying that just because an anecdotal claim doesn’t fit one’s world view, doesn’t mean that it must be due to mistake, fraud or hallucination. The bottom line here is that although lots of people saying something doesn’t mean it’s true, it makes it MORE likely to be true compared to if no one at all said it was true.**

**WINSTON, YOU’RE TALKING STUPID AGAIN.**

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**SCIENCE SEGMENT**

**Dolly** was a ewe that was the first [animal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animal) to be [cloned](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cloning) from an adult [somatic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somatic_cell) [cell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cell_%28biology%29), using the process of [nuclear transfer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuclear_transfer). She was cloned at the [Roslin Institute](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roslin_Institute) in [Edinburgh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edinburgh), [Scotland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland). She was born on [July 5](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/July_5), [1996](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1996) and she lived until the age of six.

The cell used as the donor for the cloning of Dolly was taken from a [mammary gland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mammary_gland), and the production of a healthy clone therefore proved that a cell taken from a specific body part could recreate a whole individual. More specifically, the production of Dolly showed that mature [differentiated](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cellular_differentiation) [somatic cells](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somatic_cell) in an adult animal's body could under some circumstances revert back to an undifferentiated [pluripotent](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pluripotent) form and then develop into any part of an animal. As Dolly was cloned from part of a mammary gland, she was named after the famously [busty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Busty) country western singer [Dolly Parton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dolly_Parton).

 Birth

The [cloning](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cloning) process that produced Dolly.

This used the technique of [Somatic cell nuclear transfer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somatic_cell_nuclear_transfer), where the [cell nucleus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cell_nucleus) from an adult cell is transferred into an unfertilized [oocyte](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oocyte) (developing egg cell) that has had its nucleus removed. The hybrid cell is then stimulated to divide by an electric shock, and when it develops into a [blastocyst](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blastocyst) it is implanted in a surrogate mother.

In the previous year, the same team had produced cloned sheep from embryonic cells, but this was not seen as a breakthrough since adult cloned animals had been produced from embryonic tissue as long ago as 1958, using cells from a frog.

Dolly was the first clone produced from a cell taken from an adult animal. However, this cloning process is still highly inefficient, with Dolly the only lamb that survived to adulthood from 277 attempts. She is also recognised as one of the major stepping stones in the development of modern biology.

Life

Dolly lived for her entire life at the Roslin Institute. There she was bred with a [Welsh Mountain ram](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welsh_Mountain_sheep) and produced six lambs in total. Her first lamb called Bonnie, was born in the spring of 1998. The next year Dolly produced twin lambs, and she gave birth to triplets in the year after that. In the autumn of 2001, at the age of five, Dolly developed [arthritis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthritis) and began to walk stiffly, but this was successfully treated with [anti-inflammatory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-inflammatory) drugs.

Death

On [February 14](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/February_14), [2003](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2003), Dolly was [euthanised](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animal_euthanasia) because of a progressive lung disease. A [Finn Dorset](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finnish_Dorset_%28sheep%29) such as Dolly has a life expectancy of around 12 to 15 years, but Dolly lived to be only six years of age. A post-mortem examination showed she had a form of lung cancer that is a fairly common disease of sheep and is caused by the [retrovirus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Retrovirus) [JSRV](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/JSRV).Roslin scientists stated that they did not think there was a connection with Dolly's being a clone, and that other sheep in the same flock had died of the same disease. Such lung diseases are a particular danger for sheep kept indoors, and Dolly had to sleep inside for security reasons.

However, some believe a contributing factor to Dolly's death was that she could have been born with a genetic age of six years, the same age as the sheep from which she was cloned. One basis for this idea was the finding that Dolly's [telomeres](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Telomeres) were short, which typically is a result of the aging process. However, the Roslin Institute has stated that intensive health screening did not reveal any abnormalities in Dolly that could have come from advanced aging.

Legacy

After cloning was successfully demonstrated through the production of Dolly, many other large mammals have been cloned, including [horses](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horse) and [bulls](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cattle).

Cloning may eventually become a viable tool for preserving [endangered species](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Endangered_species) and could be important in the future production of [transgenic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genetically_modified_organism) livestock. However, animal conservation professionals point out that cloning does not alleviate the problems of loss of genetic diversity ([inbreeding](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inbreeding)) and [habitat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Habitat_%28ecology%29), and so must be considered an experimental technology for the time being, and all in all would only rarely be worth the cost, which on a per-individual basis far exceeds conventional techniques such as [captive breeding](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Captive_breeding) or [embryo transfer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Embryo_transfer).

The attempt to clone [argali](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Argali) sheep did not produce viable embryos. The attempt to clone a [banteng](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banteng) bull was more successful, as were the attempts to clone [mouflon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mouflon) (a form of wild sheep), both resulting in viable offspring.

In [2005](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2005) a [dog](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dog), [Snuppy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snuppy), was cloned by [Korean](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korea) [stem cell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stem_cell) researcher, [Hwang Woo-Suk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hwang_Woo-Suk).

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**THE ARENA ABROAD**

**Romania: Crucifixes in schools are ok, rules Supreme Court**

In Romania it is thumbs down for secularism: Schools just got the blessings of the Supreme Court for keeping all those religious symbols intact that adorn their classrooms. The decision overturned last year’s appeal court ruling that religious symbols had to be removed from schools as they were discriminating against atheists and people of other faiths. The Roman Orthodox Church celebrates the judgment. Today, the bishops count about 80% of the country’s population among their sheep. The former communist country is observing a religious revival.

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**SKEPTICAL QUOTES**

**C.F. Volney (February 3, 1757 - April 25, 1820) 63 years**

**Constantin François de Chassebuf,** [**comte**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comte) **de Volney () was a** [**French**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France) **philosopher, historian, and politician.**

**In 1795 he undertook a journey to the** [**United States**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States)**, where he was accused (1797) by** [**John Adams**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Adams)**' administration of being a French** [**spy**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spy) **sent to prepare for the reoccupation of** [**Louisiana**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louisiana_%28New_France%29) **by France. Consequently, he was forced to return to France in 1798.**

**HIS QUOTE:**

**"You dispute, you quarrel, you fight for that which is uncertain, that of which you doubt.**

**O men! Is this not folly? ...**

**We must trace a line of distinction**

**between those that are capable of verification,**

**and those that are not,**

**and separate by an inviolable barrier**

**the world of fantastical beings**

**from the world of reality;**

**that is to say, all civil effect must be taken away from theological and religious opinions."**