

## Logic Is Not Occultism

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Criticisms (DeMille, 1984; Paper, 1984; Sebald, 1984) of an earlier article by Kootte (1984) in which it was argued that DeMille has failed to prove Castaneda's work to be fiction are refuted. Simply dismissing anomalous phenomena and attempting to place the author in the untenable position of anti-science through the use of false assertion and ad hominem attack, my critics reveal their own biases and delusions.

In response to critical book reviews (Covello, 1981; Merkur, 1981) of Carlos Castaneda's *The Eagle's Gift* (1980) wherein the authors espoused the belief that Castaneda's work was fictional, I wrote a critical review of Castaneda's critics (1984), pointing out fallacies and challenging their assumptions. Each reviewer had cited Richard DeMille (1980) as having proved (sic) that don Juan was a hoax. Therefore, much of my article focused on DeMille's work. Hans Sebald, a contributor to DeMille's *The don Juan Papers*, DeMille himself, and Jordan Paper have chosen to respond. While I am aware that "a new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents" (Planck, 1949, p. 33), I believe a response on my part is called for.

DeMille's rebuttal presents yet another account of meeting Castaneda. He has Castaneda confide in him that "it is an honor—an honor—that anyone writes about me, even if he says my books are crap" (p. 225). Castaneda then gives DeMille "a joyful smile, which on that occasion I [DeMille] took to express a feeling of inventive power, though not of deceptive superiority, since he surely knew I was playing the don Juan game with him and did not believe a word he was saying" (p. 225). Assuming DeMille actually met Castaneda, he should realize that "a joyful smile" may have many meanings other than "a feeling of inventive power." DeMille's conclusion appears to be a delusion rather than a valid inference.

DeMille goes on to argue that Castaneda's "Amerindians are not enough like the Amerindians we already know to be credible" (p. 224). As I have pointed out before (Kootte, 1984, p. 101), this is a type of argumentum ignorantiam and presupposes that our knowledge is complete. There are certainly other examples in anthropology that have gone against expectations.

For example, certain practices in Tibetan Buddhism or Lamaism are far different than what one could predict from a knowledge of Theravada or Zen Buddhism (e.g., eating meat, drinking alcohol, belief in transmigration of souls; see David-Neel, 1932; Evans-Wentz, 1927/1960; Govinda, 1960). Would DeMille have argued that David-Neel's Tibetans were not enough like the Buddhists we already knew?

Sebald's letter (1984) simply contradicts my assertion that DeMille has not proved Castaneda to be a hoaxer, and then proceeds to call me an occultist in a variety of ways. Indeed, the major difficulty with the acceptance of Castaneda's work seems to be that it is more applicable to parapsychology than to cultural anthropology. The history of science can be viewed as a fight against superstition and ignorance. Most scientists are extremely skeptical (as they should be) when it comes to the supernatural or psychic. Despite such skepticism and the exposure of charlatans, psychic phenomena continue to present themselves for study. DeMille and Sebald simply deny the existence of anomalous phenomena just as the French Academy denied the existence of meteorites because there are no rocks in the sky. In other words, to DeMille, Castaneda's experiences are simply unbelievable.

When it comes to parapsychology and the phenomena that it studies, it seems there are three types of people: (1) true believers—those who believe despite the evidence; (2) disbelievers—those who won't believe despite the evidence; and (3) those who are willing to believe given sufficient evidence. Ideally scientists will fall into the latter group, their working paradigms guiding their vision, rather than blinding them. While Sebald would consign me to the true believer category, he reveals himself to be a confirmed disbeliever. He seems outraged at my use of the word "spirits," proclaiming that I had "revealed my true colors" (p. 385), while in fact I did not imply that I believed in spirits, only that don Juan and possibly Castaneda do.

Sebald asserts that if Kootte "insists on a scientific empirical and objective basis of his defensive pursuits, I fault him with gross confusion between the scientific approach and the speculative-occult-supernatural approach" (p. 385). Sebald apparently thinks that science must be empirical and materialistic to be science. In fact, I consider my earlier article an exercise in the non-empirical science of logic (Hemple, 1966). While Sebald accuses me of confusing science and occultism, I fault him with confusing logic and emotionalism. For how else am I to understand his ranting response.

Apparently unable to refute my arguments, my opponents have used mistaken interpretations and false accusations in an attempt to place me in the indefensible position of anti-science. DeMille accuses me of placing "the burden of proof on the community of scientists, rather than on Castaneda" (p. 224). On the contrary, I place the burden of proof for a hoax on DeMille, rather than on Castaneda and his doctoral board. In the same vein, Sebald asserts that I find "occult happenings to be true until proven wrong" (p. 385).

I have never held such a belief.

These tactics are carried to greater lengths by Paper. He would have his readers believe that I argue that "cultural comparisons are inherently anti-science, that knowledge is not built on previous knowledge, and that there are no viable non-personal methods for acquiring scientific understanding" (p. 502), while I "implicitly denied the validity of the social sciences, and . . . chose faith over reason" (p. 501). Of course I will not defend such beliefs, as they are not mine.

Perhaps Paper's distortions are not deliberate, but simply a result of inattentive reading, for he also claims that I present Castaneda as the "epitome of a 'scientist'" (pp. 501-502) and as the "first Western scholar" (p. 503) to undergo shamanistic initiation. In fact I only referred to Castaneda as "perhaps the best known" anthropologist/shaman (Kootte, 1984, p. 99). Another indication that Paper misread my article is his surprise "that Kootte and others find remarkable that parts of Castaneda's work read like the once popular translations and essays on Zen, Taoism, tantric Buddhism and Hinduism, etc." (p. 503). For I quoted Jung (1938) and Furst (1977) to indicate that there is nothing surprising about finding similarities between Amerindian, oriental and European thought. In fact, it is DeMille who finds such similarities unexplainable except as plagiarism.

My opponents seem to think that there can only be two positions. Either Castaneda is a hoaxer, or don Juan is heir to the secret magic of the Toltecs and really performs miracles. There are other positions. Perhaps don Juan is sharing an entirely delusional system through a process Castaneda called "special consensus" (Castaneda, 1968). There is evidence for the possibility of shared delusions (e.g., folie à deux, crowd behavior, adolescent gangs, etc.). Perhaps Castaneda misunderstands don Juan and is not presenting his system accurately. Perhaps don Juan is the hoaxer and Castaneda is innocent. All these are possible, but as there is no evidence of a hoax, there is no reason to doubt the judgment and integrity of Castaneda's doctoral board.

Although DeMille says nothing to justify his rebuttal's title, *Occultism is Not Science*, I agree with the statement. The goal of science can be seen as bringing to light that which had been occult or hidden; therefore, occultism is a worthy subject of study for social scientists. Occultism is not science, but neither is DeMille's venture into ad hominem and fiction. Should DeMille and his supporters turn out to be correct in their suspicion of Castaneda, I must credit their intuition; for as I have shown (Kootte, 1984) their arguments are fallacious, spurious and unconvincing.

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