



A WORD FROM THE PUBLISHER

t the dawn of the 21st century, 19th-century 'reductionism' is still dancing its strange kabuki dance on today's public stage.

This archaic philosophy, also known, ironically, as logical positivism, promoted materialism and doctrines such as social Darwinism, behaviorism, Marxism, phrenology (a system claiming character can be understood by measurements of the skull) and many other discredited notions, which once insisted the universe could be explained in simple terms fully transparent to conventional science. To its exponents, the cosmos

worked something like a giant pinball machine with objects colliding and careening about in ways which were inherently understandable to the science of the day. The logical positivists, of course, had little use for metaphysics, spirituality, or invisible forces in general and they certainly would not have cared much for quantum physics. Long written off by more discriminating minds as naive, at best, the reductionist conceit was largely replaced by somewhat deeper and more subtle notions, promoted by thinkers such as Jung or Einstein. Nevertheless, like Count Dracula, the militant reductionist way of thinking has clung stubbornly to a twilight existence.

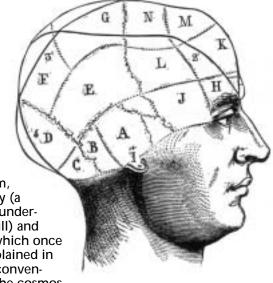
Today it still maintains considerable sway over much of academia, politics, and the media. From Robert Park, to Paul Kurtz and the "amazing" Randi, the more outspoken of the breed have set themselves up as professional 'debunkers' pretending to expose 'fallacies' and 'quackery' which threaten their most cherished assumptions. Their task is aided, in no small measure, by widespread public ignorance of the actual facts involved. Other, more subtle preachings of this primitive belief system can be found in current science news.

Research community findings purportedly explain away the evidence for concepts which are anathema to the materialist reductionists—e.g., belief in the paranormal is said to arise solely out of genetic predisposition, near-death experience is a brain anomaly, God is a sub-atomic particle, etc.

Self-styled skeptic Michael Shermer, author of *Why People Believe Weird Things*, argues in a piece for *Scientific American* that "Smart people believe weird things because they are skilled at defending beliefs they arrived at for non-smart reasons." By "weird," Mr. Shermer is referring to notions with which he disagrees or is incapable of understanding, and since "smart people" admittedly espouse them, he has been forced to find a way either to trash them or to own up to his own failings. Not surprisingly, he has chosen the former.

Like a slow-witted child, the unrepentant reductionist has deduced that the cart is propelling the horse—not the other way around.

All of this leads quite logically and positively to publications such as this.



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