

## The Grubbies Growl and Grumble-Pt.1

Written by James Randi  
Friday, 01 March 2013 09:00

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There exists an online discussion forum titled “Parapsychology and alternative medicine forum” focused on the Skeptiko podcast, which has previously featured JREF president D.J. Grothe as a guest, [where the interview focused on the JREF’s Million Dollar Challenge](#) . On this forum, there is a lengthy discussion [about me and the JREF](#)

. As we might expect, I seem to be the classical “thorn in the side” for them, a convenient focus for their ire and their fear.

I’ve selected the first two full pages of their complaints, criticisms and comments, and over the next week or so, I’ll make my observations on them, correcting the spelling grammar, and punctuation – for clarity – and removing any names found there.

Since I found that the first 14 items I came upon flaunt most of the misconceptions held about me and the Foundation, dealing with those just may clear the air a bit in this respect. These items are taken in the order they came up on the site. There are 14...

“MDC” refers to the James Randi Educational Foundation – JREF’s – Million Dollar Challenge. So here goes, no holds barred, as they say. We’ll handle the first 8...

James Randi is a key figure in atheist-materialist ideology. Look at YouTube comments accompanying unusual phenomena and it won’t be long before someone claims the subject is bunk because Randi’s MDC is still intact. The conjurer’s invitation is a central motif of skepticism and as such, it – and he – deserve scrutiny.

Oh, that’s been claimed many times already, I assure you, but that’s only a good indication – not any sort of proof – that there are no paranormal powers. The JREF doesn’t ever try to prove negatives such as the non-existence of the supernatural; we only challenge those claims and hold out the prize to invite the Believers to prove their claims. And yes, I certainly need, and welcome, scrutiny.

“Skeptic” and “debunker” aren’t closely-defined terms, but the latter suggests someone for whom any alternative explanation is sufficient, no matter how improbable, so long as it involves reductionism.

Well, I’ve never accepted the designation “debunker,” because that would imply that I enter an investigation with the presupposition that what I’m about to witness or examine doesn’t exist, or is a fraud. Mind you, I tend to suspect that, but I’m always bound to the rules: the evidence speaks, and cannot be ignored. If it proves the claim, the prize will be awarded. Any person who doubts the existence of the million dollars, is invited to request proof, which will be provided via email, a personal letter, or any other specified means.

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Of course he [Randi] is not a skeptic in the true sense of the word. He is only skeptical about anything which lies outside the current scientific paradigm. That is not skepticism but ideology. Whatever claims of personal integrity he had were totally destroyed by him harboring for years in his home an illegal alien who was his lover and was using false identification belonging to another man.

No, I'm skeptical about anything that appears to fly in the face of reason. It may prove to be real, and would then be embraced by "the current scientific paradigm." As for my partnership, there was no "harboring" involved, and that's a matter that is being handled, thank you. With recognition of alternate lifestyles becoming better and more easily accepted, we look for a reasonable resolution of the matter. And no, this poster's introduction of this situation is not a problem for me, it's simply a rough part of my life, and I have to see it through. What I did was to save a life that is very dear to me, and I have no shame about it, at all. Any decent human being would have done the same. Now, it may have been a move to question my character, but it's true, so I've no objection. Moving right along...

I'd like to ignore Randi too, but sometimes you have to stand up against the kind of attacks he does against people whose only "crime" is having psi experiences. He is dishonest. He will break the law when it suits him. And he discriminates against and tries to censor a particular segment of society based on who they are. He has even formed an organization to facilitate these actions. So long as Randi attacks us, we have to fight back.

Okay, this really puzzles me. My "attacks" are not, and never have been, against persons who believe they've had a paranormal experience. I and my Foundation have been fighting the swindlers who perpetrate these frauds and take advantage – financial and emotional – of those who don't know any better. We at the JREF fight misinformation and put up the Million Dollar Paranormal Challenge as an indication of our belief and purpose. We're the "good guys," and we're proud of it. Hey, we're on your side, pal! No "censoring," ever, but lots of discussion, reasoning, and assistance. No "attacks," either, since we only go after The Bad Guys. If you're one of those, beware, but if you're one of those who just want to know more, get in touch...

The problem here is that Randi's challenge constitutes the only game in town for measuring the claims of psychics. The fact that it is totally rigged, is beside the point. It is a niche that is being exploited. There is nowhere else to turn.

That sound you hear is my growl. We get this "rigged" accusation thrown at us so often, but when I respond by simply asking for one example of this, you can hear the crickets... Anyone

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can read the rules, and it's clear: there's no way any "rigging" can possibly be done! So, we are patiently waiting. Anyone who believes they have paranormal abilities care to respond...?

I would love to be able to ignore the atrocities of the leadership of my specific ideology. Unfortunately, that's not exactly honest. Maybe the whole Randi thing will end when the skeptical community decides to force him to step down. Wasn't it Dawkins who was trying to get the pope arrested for crimes against humanity? Start a petition to force Randi to step down. When he does, we'll shut up about it.

And how do you suggest that I be "forced" to "step down"? Yes, it was Richard who suggested the pope be arrested, and the Holy See of course ignored this, because they're the gang in charge. I applauded the suggestion, while knowing that though Richard was right, he was up against forces he could not – unfortunately – budge. Can you imagine the future of any official who might have stood on his side? I welcome a petition, though I can't imagine to whom it would be presented... And what are my "atrocities," please?

...it's the skeptics' fault that the proponents keep bringing up Randi. It couldn't possibly be that the proponents simply cannot stop gnawing the bone.

Sorry, I don't follow this one... Moving on to #8...

The MDC is not Randi. That is, the validity/usefulness of the Challenge is not the same thing as "is this person a dick?" And I have no responsibility to the skeptic movement, so it's not up to me to throw anyone under the bus.

Imagine George Takei's voice here: "Oh, my!" Folks, if the MDC were a fake, and if I were what this commenter designated, I think I'd voluntarily jump under the bus rather than struggle along in a community that so reviles me. Tell ya what, folks: just find a psychic, any psychic, who has the guts to show up for the MDC – at the next [AmazIng Meeting](#), for example. (You can see our live MDC event from last year, featuring Banachek and many others, [here](#)

.) Let said psychic snap up the prize, thereby making me enter a bout of terminal teeth-gnashing, and prove your point! With the literally thousands of "psychics" out there, where are they?

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Beats me...

More next week, or maybe sooner!

***James Randi is the founder of the James Randi Educational Foundation.***