

Review of: "Muddle and Method: The Post-Resurrection Appearances of Jesus in Focus"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Unlike the other work I've reviewed on this platform, I find this paper interesting and rather amusing in a quite positive way. It has a unique structure with clear qualities related to its eloquent voice, as well as the general disposition of the information.

Some conviction.

I find the argumentation method plausible and original; while it tackles weak arguments, it also approaches quite effectively the general structure of confirmation bias, precisely in the field of Christian religious studies.

Also, the tone is marvelous, and it'd be amazing to see its performance, for instance, on a panel or a congress.

But a general question remains for me. Why do I see there is a need to presuppose also a certain sense of superiority of the positive sciences approach over any humane usual recognition of matters such as truth, experience, or belief?

In short, as the phenomena of knowledge is linked to all (inter)subjectivities, how can we assure that many things — and even anything and everything — are not collective delusions? For instance, what does really happen in a day on Wall Street — where emotions are as strong as a delusion's, or many — or in an ER of any Western hospital?

Why would we consider delusions as 'non-supernatural explanations of a reality'? Have scientists that live themselves delusions become authorized by them? Or it's just the opposite, and they'd be immediately unauthorized. Because, as far as I know, the closest we've been to those explanations, in Jungian psychoanalyses, haven't had much of a positive endorsement in the academic or scientific mainstream field; and due to their reception, their place has become similar to the spiritual practices'.

So, why do we imagine that it would be more acceptable in many postmodern contexts to say "I've experienced an ASC" than "I have seen the Lord"?

Is it because we have tacitly accepted that we Christians have made bad things like awful wars out of our faith?

If so, the matter is not only that we —also— positivists did make something similar or worse out of that other scientific faith with instrumental reason, in the context of the Nazi phenomenon, but that the author may not be aware of that self-righteous ground that lies under us. Then, why do we seem to believe that things as scientific as animal testing are reasonable, but a religious belief must be scrutinized as if it were a sin?

So that other phenomena that I see here may belong to a deep cultural exercise of psychoanalysis of the sciences to come.

Is it real that the world of ours where we can treat delusions of any kind as reducible to reason? —as, let's say, a glass?— Because let's recall that glasses may be instruments of death too, but we like to ignore it, because we tend to trust too much our own beliefs when we consider ourselves men of science.

And because we seem to control them with very humane methods —because they are, aren't they?— do we really understand, for instance, delusions? Or do we (re)fall on another type of faith where, instead of religion, we (re)claim over and over as if it was our own, the supernatural power of science? A power which, let's recall it, kills for no reason, animals or humans, for no just explanation but a quite questionable experiment.

And do not modern psychologists also endorse and back, in many cases, for instance, the perverse social phenomenon of selfish predation of the world that has us all near to total extinction? Because the remaining question is not only: is that morally or ethically acceptable? But is it even reasonable?

So why is subjectiveness supposedly absolutely unauthorized, as if it were totally separate from these supposedly objective Western final (re)solutions?

I must add, however, that the critique of a naïve acceptance of some sort of "unitarism" is valuable. And the confrontation of the accounts related to the historical, religious, and symbolic is very interesting. However, the scientific current method needs a similar treatment and confrontation too. That's where I'd suggest a review similar to Thomas Kuhn's of his own positive method, or Latour's approach, or even the Strong Program for Social Sciences.

But do not mistake my suggestion: I did really appreciate, for instance, the emphasis on the issue of no evidence of the biblical studies for the historiographical nature of the Bible —which has no ground in the end, as it is not the same piece of history as a toaster manual—, and the glimpse of the well-problematized issue of the relation of spirituality to the human flesh as such; and I did, too, almost enjoy say as well the whole structure of the Covid reception phenomena as a social conflict, which leads us to awake from the promises of modernity.

Because, as in history, we don't make a living out of it: we live in it.

And I then still have and will have some suspicions put on the progress of psychological knowledge, or on any science, or specialization, to be universal answers to real problems of humanity. Issues such as violence, or to be specialized as you like it, an unexplainable phenomenon to many scholars: rape as a dynamic and usual resource in secular wars.

Because, if so, I'd prefer a soldier to be a true believer of the Lord, as myself, in the current state of affairs. If we really are so, it's less expected to propagate unimaginable suffering as something justified just by my own wicked pleasure.

Anyway, let's keep up with the good work and the hopes of unbiased Western religious historical research.

