

Michael Shermer - Pseudosceptic Extraordinaire

by

Stephen J. Crothers

[The Death of Julieka Dhu in Police Custody](#)

[Michael Shermer](#) is a self-proclaimed sceptic and an Adjunct Professor of Economics. His scepticism is however somewhat selective since he is evidently sceptical only of those who are sceptical of the Authorities of whom he is not himself sceptical. It seems that he is only sceptical of sceptics. The question arises as to whether or not a self-proclaimed sceptic is actually a sceptic when he is only sceptical of sceptics of Authorities that he is not sceptical of. Perhaps that is one for linguists to answer, or maybe a sceptic of a persuasion different to that of Shermer.

In any event, Shermer's scepticism is short on facts and long on unsubstantiated allegations, as his recent article in the October 2015 issue of Scientific American attests. Shermer reports there on his attendance at the [Electric Universe Conference](#) in Phoenix, Arizona, in June 2015, and in his fashion is sceptical of people he heard speak there. Shermer presented an [invited talk](#) at that conference, in the morning session on Monday 29th June. I too presented an invited talk on the same day as Shermer, in the afternoon session. In his article in Scientific American Shermer singles me out for particular mention. He also 'sceptically' reported on conversations he said he had with Wallace Thornhill and David Talbot, two other speakers at the conference. However, in my case, he reports without evidence. For instance, he says:

" A self-taught mathematician named Stephen Crothers rifled through dozens of PowerPoint slides chockablock full of equations relating to Einstein's general theory of relativity, which he characterized as 'numerology.' Einstein's errors, Crothers proclaimed, led to the mistaken belief in black holes and the big bang. "

What evidence does Shermer present in his article for his charge that I am a "self-taught mathematician"? None! Shermer might just as well have told his readers that I am a self-taught brain surgeon since it's no less unreasonable and no less unsubstantiated than his allegation. Despite having, it seems, sat through my presentation, he did not speak to me at any time. How does he know if I am a "self-taught mathematician" or not? Why did he not ask me if I am a "self-taught

mathematician" when he had the chance? Apparently it is too much to expect of a sceptic of Shermer's ilk to actually gather some facts before putting his eager pen to paper. So instead he conjured his claim without any substantiation whatsoever, whereas in my conference talk I presented evidence for my arguments. One can only wonder as to what Shermer's motive is for making such an unsubstantiated allegation. Shermer apparently got his training in conjuring from the same school as [Professor Gerardus 't Hooft](#), Nobel Laureate for Physics, as 't Hooft, before Shermer, also pitifully resorted to the same unsubstantiated allegation, under the misconception that it carries scientific weight. Perhaps Shermer and 't Hooft have some kind of furtive telepathic phase locking ability to communicate with one another; or is that something we should be sceptical of?

Shermer goes on to say about me,

" It is not impossible that they are all wrong and this part-time amateur scientist sleuth is right, but it is about as likely as the number of digits after the decimal place in Einstein's equations accurately describing the relativistic effects on those GPS satellite orbits. "

What evidence does Shermer present to substantiate his additional allegation that I am a "*part-time amateur scientist*"? None, of course! Heaven forbid that he present evidence for his charges. Shermer's likelihood has no substantiation either; after all he has not presented his calculation of likelihood. How many decimal places precisely is Shermer invoking? He doesn't say. Maybe it's of the order of the trillionth of a trillionth of a trillionth of a second after the big bang that the [BICEP2](#) crew claimed they had sampled with their contraption at the South Pole, mentioned in my talk. But then for comparison Shermer would need one of those very accurate Swiss clocks, which are very difficult to acquire. [The Economist](#) also reported on the BICEP2 crew's incompetence. What did Clem Pryke, BICEP2 scientist from the University of Minnesota plead? That too I mentioned in my talk:

" If we are to be criticized, it should be for over-interpreting the signal, rather than for being wrong. " Clem Pryke

Cosmologists, it seems, are never wrong - they might only overinterpret their signals! So should we ever be sceptical of cosmologists?

Shermer admits that he did not even understand my talk (it seems on account of the "*chockablock*" equations):

" I understood none of what he was saying, but I am confident he is wrong by the fact that for a century thousands of physicists have challenged Einstein, and still he stands as Times's person of the

century. "

Without even understanding my talk he nonetheless argues from his ignorance that I must be wrong, and he says so with 'confidence', because of "*thousands of physicists*". Shermer, rather than being a true sceptic using his own brain, thoughtlessly appeals instead to the very Authorities he is not sceptical of in order to uphold the demonstrable falsehoods of those Authorities. That's not a scientific argument let alone a proof that I am wrong. Time magazine's anointing of Einstein is not a scientific argument or a proof either. Shermer's method is very far from rational. He employs those old and stale methods of politicians; fails to actually address the issues I raised in my conference talk and invokes Authorities; Authorities he presumably does not understand either, on account of their "*chockablock*" equations. And he certainly had the chance to understand some things in my talk as they were not all mathematically complicated. All he had to do was pay attention. For instance, as I pointed out in my talk, the cosmologists assign to their black holes the schizophrenic property of having and not having an escape speed simultaneously at the same place:

" *some objects are so massive that the escape speed is basically the speed of light and therefore not even light escapes.* " Professor Joss Bland-Hawthorn, University of Sydney

Since it is in fact impossible for anything to have and not have an escape speed simultaneously at the same place, the black hole is a fallacy. I also pointed out that Einstein and his followers assert that matter is both present and absent by the very same mathematical constraint in Einstein's field equations. That's impossible too, and so the black hole is again a fallacy. No sums are involved in these simple arguments.

Here are a few recent short and simple articles precipitated by my talk in Phoenix. Very little knowledge of mathematics is required: e.g. can you square a real number?

1. [A Few Things You Need to Know to Tell if a Nobel Laureate is Talking Nonsense](#)
2. [A Nobel Laureate Talking Nonsense: Brian Schmidt, a Case Study](#)
3. [A Few Things You Need to Know to Tell if a Mathematical Physicist is Talking Nonsense: the Black Hole - a Case Study](#)
4. [Black Hole Escape Velocity - a Case Study in the Decay of Physics and Astronomy](#)
5. [To Have and Not to Have - the Paradox of Black Hole Mass](#)

I wonder if Scientific American would publish any one of them in the interests of science, to balance the unsubstantiated and quite irrational scribblings by Shermer in its pages. I wonder if Shermer would publish any one of them in his magazine Skeptic (he is its Editor-in-Chief). Such a prospect is not worth holding one's breath over as the Authorities that Shermer is not sceptical of do not have a good track record in handling the truth or engaging in reasoned discourse. People who believe in ghosts assign the action of ghosts to that which they don't understand. In like fashion, cosmologists and pseudosceptics assign the action of black holes and big bangs to that which they don't understand.

Reading [this report](#) what would you conclude about Michael Shermer? I conclude nothing because evidence has not been presented to substantiate the allegations. In similar fashion Shermer presents no evidence whatsoever for his allegations about me in his article in Scientific American. Neither has he adduced any scientific argument in attempt to refute my proofs that black holes, big bangs, and Einstein's General Theory of Relativity are the products of irrational imagination, invalid physical principles, and invalid mathematics. But then, he admits that he did not even understand my conference talk, and does not know the relevant mathematics. How could he therefore know what he is talking about? He doesn't! It is the ignorance and thoughtlessness of the likes of Shermer that have turned astronomy and physics into an expensive circus freak show. It is no wonder that the cosmologists are now spending \$100 million or more, looking for aliens, in the guise of science:

[Hawking and his friends looking for aliens with Milner's money.](#)

Page established: 27th September 2015

Page updated: 27th September 2015

[Home Page](#)

[[top](#)]

[>](http://www.quantcast.com/p-e7_XIJOWZCZ26)