Cabot Steward

Reaction 2: “Pyramidology, Heretics, Mystics, and Cranks”

February 12, 2025

Summary:

In the reading “Pyramidology, Heretics, Mystics and Cranks,” the author explores various pseudo-scientific and mystical interpretations of the Great Pyramid of Giza. The reading dives into details surrounding the evolution of alternative theories regarding the pyramid, focusing on figures like John Taylor, Charles Piazzi Smyth, and David Davidson. These individuals sought to prove the pyramid encoded mathematical, astronomical and even prophetic truths. These theories linked the pyramid’s dimensions to pi, the circumference of the earth and historical prophecies, often blending scientific reasoning with religious or esoteric beliefs.

The reading further examines the emergence of occultists like Helena Blavatsky and Aleister Crowley, who paired the pyramid with mystical initiation ceremonies and acts. On top of this, it dives into the idea of the pyramid as an Atlantean relic, promoted by figures such as Ignatius Donnelly and Edgar Cayce, who believed the structure contained lost knowledge from a pre-diluvian civilization. The text also critiques the extraterrestrial hypothesis popularized by Erich Von Däniken, who suggested that ancient aliens constructed or influenced the pyramid’s design. Lastly, the article discusses the “pyramid power” phenomenon, a 20th-century movement that attributed supernatural properties to pyramid shaped objects and concludes with a broader commentary on the persistence of pseudo-scientific beliefs.

Analysis:

This reading effectively demonstrates how speculation surrounding the Great Pyramid has evolved from mathematical theorizing to outright mystical extraterrestrial claims. One of its strengths is its comprehensive approach, detailing the chronological progression of pyramid theories while exposing their logical inconsistencies. The author adeptly highlights how proponents of pyramidology selectively use evidence to fit preexisting beliefs rather than employing rigorous scientific methods. This approach aligns with broader critiques of pseudo-science, where confirmation bias and a lack of falsifiability undermine the legitimacy of the claims.

A criticism of the article is its limited engagement with why these theories persist despite academic refutation. While the article thoroughly debunks alternative theories, it could have explored more deeply into the psychological and cultural factors that contributed to their resilience. For instance, belief in lost civilizations and extraterrestrial influence might be fueled by a broader dissatisfaction with mainstream historical narratives or a desire for a more extraordinary past. Addressing these motivations would have provided a more nuanced understanding of why pseudo-historical claims endure.

An additional limitation is that while the author critiques figures such as Von Daniken, there is little direct engagement with primary sources from these theorists. Incorporating direct quotes or arguments from their original texts could have further strengthened the rebuttal by allowing the debunking to be more precisely targeted. Addressing such assertions with archaeological and historical evidence would have made the critique more compelling. A video by DMAX further explores the origins of Von Daniken’s claims and the flaws in his reasoning, particularly emphasizing how modern archaeological evidence directly contradicts his theories. Referencing such external critiques reinforces the argument that pseudo-scientific explanations often ignore well-documented historical facts. Nonetheless, the reading successfully exposes the fallacies in pyramidology and reinforces the necessity of historical skepticism and rigorous methodology in the study of ancient civilizations.

Works Cited

DMAX. *The Man Who Theorized That Aliens Built The Pyramids*. YouTube, uploaded by DMAX, 2023, www.youtube.com/watch?v=O0j3WNdVblE.