# A Humanist Apologetics Workshop

West London Humanists and Secularists

21 November 2013

# Objectives

- To help those attending to develop their ability to make the case for Humanism.

- To give some idea of the breadth of the knowledge and skills that are involved.  A lifetime's work.

- To consider the circumstances when these skills and knowledge may need to be deployed

- To give some examples of good and bad practice.

# Scope of Apologetics = Scope of Humanism

1. Rationalism

2. Atheism

3. Secularism

4. Humanitarianism

# Rationalism

- Positively valuing human reason

- Science and reason only paths to knowledge

- Rejection of superstition

# Atheism

1. Absolute atheist – the existence of god is logically impossible

2. Atheist – the existence of god is as likely as fairies in the garden.  Requires no action

3. Agnostic – not sure and maybe worth taking precautions

# Secularism

1. Politics

2. Education

3. Morality

# Humanitarianism

- Belief in value of humanity in itself

- Support for Human Rights

- Striving to improve the human condition

# Humanism in the UK

- Rationalist
- Weak atheist
  - readiness to combat bad outcomes of theism
  - readiness to challenge most motivations for theism
- Secular on all three fronts
- Humanitarian

# Situations

- Friends/acquaintances

- Humanist representative in the community

- Debates/Media Interview

- Discussion group

# Friends/Acquaintances

- Do they care?  Should we make them care?
- Refer to [Iron Chariots](#)
- Discuss common ground in human nature
  - Altruism
  - How we can be fooled:
    - Magic
    - Assumptions
    - Conversion experience
- Highly varied posture depending on sensitivities/opportunity

# Humanist Representative in the Community

- What are you doing here?
- Mostly avoid confrontation
- Use word spirit
- Should we only challenge when religion does harm?
- More progress by looking for common ground (e.g. public spiritedness) but discussing motivations

# Debates/Media Interview

- Supporting beleaguered atheists?
- Who is choosing the battleground?
- Is the topic not worth debating?
- Am I equipped for this?
- Facts or concepts?
- What's the likely outcome?
- Generally avoid

# Discussion group

- Hounslow Friends of Faith

- 3 Faiths Forum

- As for Friends/acquaintances but more inclined to get into detailed philosophical arguments

# Just Some of the Arguments

- Arguments for the Existence of God

- Arguments against the Existence of God

- Common Objections to Atheism and Counter-Apologetics

http://wiki.ironchariots.org/index.php?title=Main_Page

# Challenges - 1

- Atheists worship materialism
- You are a communist
- So you believe in nothing?
- You just want to sin
- It takes more faith to disbelieve than it does to believe
- Only religion can give meaning to life
- Atheists believe that everything is an accident
- Science is a faith
- Atheism is based on faith

# Challenges - 1

- Atheism is a religion
- Atheists are just in denial
- God can't be defined
- Science can't touch god
- You can't prove God doesn't exist
- That might be true for you, but it's not true for me
- Religion is another way of knowing
- Faith is a virtue
- You'd have to be skeptical of skepticism, ad infinitum

# Arguments for the Existence of God

| | |
|---|---|
| **Anthropic arguments** | [Anthropic principle](#) · [Natural-law argument](#) |
| **Arguments for belief** | [Pascal's Wager](#) · [Argument from faith](#) · [Just hit your knees](#) |
| **Christological arguments** | [Christological argument](#) · [Argument from biblical miracles](#) · [Would someone die for a lie?](#) · [Liar, Lunatic or Lord](#) |
| **Cosmological arguments** | [Cosmological argument](#) · [Fine-tuning argument](#) · [First cause argument](#) · [Kalam](#) · [Uncaused cause](#) · [Unmoved mover](#) |
| **Majority arguments** | [Argumentum ad populum](#) · [Argument from admired religious scientists](#) |
| **Moral arguments** | [Moral argument](#) · [Argument from justice](#) · [Divine command theory](#) |
| **Ontological argument** | [Ontological argument](#) · [Argument from degree](#) · [Argument from goodness](#) · [Argument from desire](#) |
| **Reformed epistemology** | [Argument from divine sense](#) · [Sensus divinitatis](#) |
| **Teleological arguments** | [Argument from design](#) · [Banana argument](#) · [747 Junkyard argument](#) · [Laminin argument](#) |
| **Testimonial arguments** | [Personal revelation](#) · [Argument from observed miracles](#) · [Argument from personal experience](#) · [Consciousness argument for the existence of God](#) · [Emotional pleas](#) |
| **Transcendental arguments** | [Transcendental argument](#) · [God created numbers](#) |
| **Biblical arguments** | [Biblical knowledge of round earth before science](#) |

# Arguments against the Existence of God

| | |
|---|---|
| **Existential arguments** | Argument from nonbelief · Who created God? · Turtles all the way down · Problem of non-God objects · Incompatible properties argument · No-reason argument · Santa Claus argument |
| **Arguments from the Bible** | Failed Prophecy · Biblical contradictions |
| **Reasonableness arguments** | Occam's Razor · Outsider test · Argument from locality · Argument from inconsistent revelations |
| **Moral arguments** | Euthyphro dilemma · Problem of evil · Problem of evil (evidential) · Moral argument |

# Common Objections to Atheism and Counter-Apologetics

| Personal | Why are you trying to tear down other people's faith? · Why can't everyone just have their beliefs? · What are your qualifications? · Atheists believe in nothing · You are a communist · Why do atheists inspire such hatred? · That's not my God |
|---|---|
| Religious | That's not in my Bible · They're not true Christians · You just want to sin · Atheists know there is a God · It takes more faith to disbelieve than it does to believe · God doesn't believe in atheists · Science is a faith · Atheism is a religion · Atheists worship materialism · Hypocrisy of celebrating religious holidays · Atheism is based on faith |
| Science and logic | You can't prove God doesn't exist · Science can't touch god · God can't be defined · So you think we came from nothing / pondsoup / monkeys? · If God didn't create everything, who did? · That might be true for you, but its not true for me · Religion is another way of knowing · God is trying to trick you with dinosaur bones · Satan is trying to trick you with dinosaur bones · Tides come in, tides go out. You can't explain that. |

# Should We Build a Resource?

- Increase scope from Iron Chariots

- Structure and links

- A BHA resource?

- Is it too big, too much work to maintain?