

## The Ambassador Series

### The New Atheists

#### Day 1

Atheism – a lack of belief in gods

What do atheists believe?

- **Materialism** – matter is fundamental substance of nature; *everything* is the result of material interactions
- **Naturalism** – everything arises from natural properties and causes; no spiritual or supernatural explanations are even considered
- **Scientism** – belief in universal applicability of the scientific method and approach, empirical science is *only* method to discover truth

#### Part 1: Reason

Critical Thinking

- What is the claim?
- What are the reasons given to support the claim?
- What appeals are irrelevant?
- Do the conclusions follow from the evidence?

Logical Fallacies

- Ad Hominem – attack person instead of addressing the argument
- Appeal to Authority – “trust me; I’m the expert” (instead of providing evidence)
- Bandwagon – appeal to popularity of something to validate it
- Begging the Question (Circular Reasoning) – assuming the truth of what you’re trying to prove
- Equivocation – changing the meaning of the word mid-argument
- Genetic – trying to dismiss an argument because of its source
- Non Sequitur – conclusion does not logically follow from the premises
- Strawman – mischaracterizing opponent’s argument then discrediting the mischaracterization

Overcoming Modern Atheists’ “Demand for Evidence” with 3 Questions

- What would you count as “actual, credible, real-world evidence for God?”
- Why would dramatic, miraculous, sensational event count as evidence for God?
- Is the existence of things that cannot be explained by science/natural law a valid way of determining the existence of God?

Theism is Rational – every effect requires an adequate cause

- Cosmological Argument
- Teleological Argument
- Moral Argument

*The  
Ambassador  
Series*

**The “New Atheists”**



**Neil deGrasse Tyson** ✓

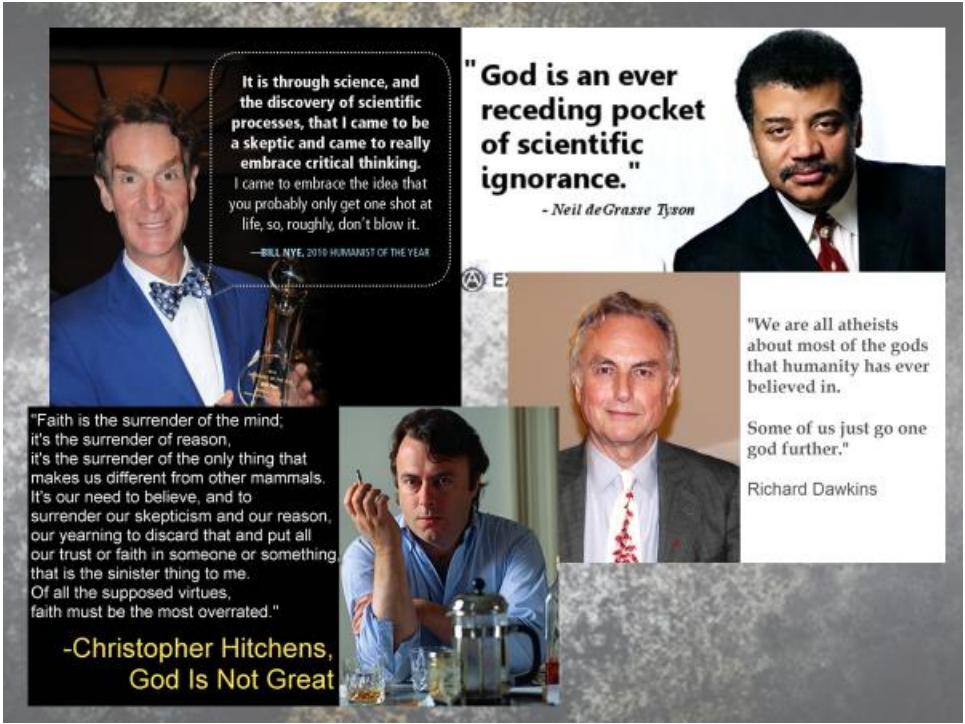
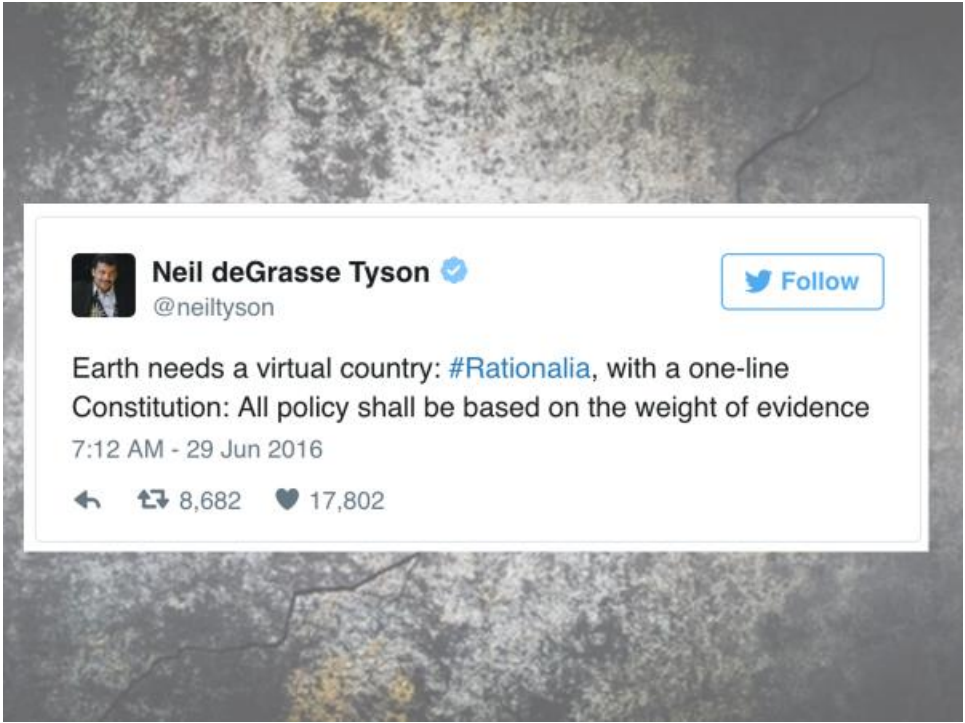
@neiltyson

 Follow

Earth needs a virtual country: [#Rationalia](#), with a one-line  
Constitution: All policy shall be based on the weight of evidence

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## *Atheism*

### *What We're Going to Discuss*

- Session 1 (today)
  - Definition, history, beliefs, and appeal of atheism
  - How **reason** actually supports theism, not atheism
- Session 2 (next week)
  - How **science** supports theism
  - How **morality** supports theism
  - How to be an Ambassador to atheists

## *Atheism*

"A disbelief in the existence of a deity.  
The doctrine that there is no deity."

- Merriam-Webster Dictionary

"A lack of belief in gods."

- American Atheists

## *History of Atheism*

- 5<sup>th</sup> Century BC – Diagoras of Melos (“The First Atheist”)
- Start of Modern Atheism – The Enlightenment (18<sup>th</sup> Century AD)
- Communism and Atheism
- The New Atheists

## *What Do Atheists Believe?*

- Materialism
- Naturalism
- Scientism

## *The New Atheists*

- Generally don't argue **for** atheism; they **attack** religion
- Most objections by New Atheists fall into one of three categories:
  1. **Reason** is on their side
  2. **Science** is on their side
  3. **Morality** is on their side



*Part 1: Reason*



## *Critical Thinking*

- 1. What is the claim?**
- 2. What are the reasons given to support the claim?**
- 3. Which appeals are irrelevant?**
- 4. Do the conclusions follow from the evidence?**

## *Logical Fallacies*

**Ad Hominem**

**Appeal to Authority**

**Bandwagon**

**Begging the Question**

**Equivocation**

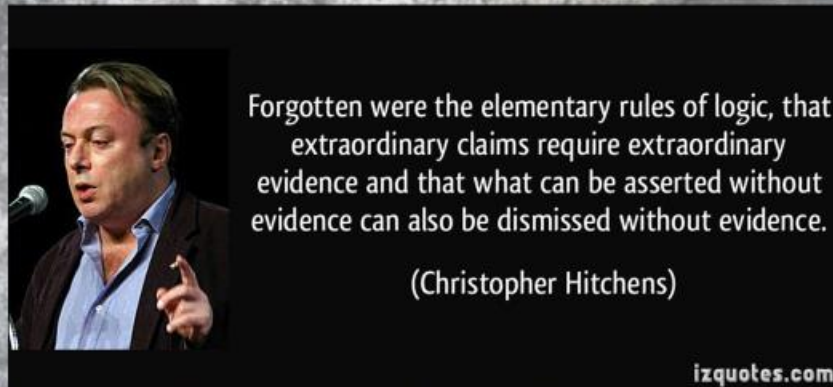
**Genetic**

**Non Sequitur**

**Strawman**

## *David Hume's Objection to Miracles*

1. Natural Law is by definition a description of a regular occurrence.
2. A miracle is by definition a rare occurrence.
3. The evidence for the regular is always greater than that for the rare.
4. A wise man always bases his belief on the greater evidence.
5. Therefore, a wise man should never believe in miracles.



Forgotten were the elementary rules of logic, that extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence and that what can be asserted without evidence can also be dismissed without evidence.

(Christopher Hitchens)

izquotes.com



## *How to Overcome the Modern Atheist's "Demand for Evidence" with 3 Easy Questions*

1. *What would you count as "actual, credible, real-world evidence" for God?*
2. *Why would that dramatic, miraculous, sensational event count as evidence for God?*
3. *Is the existence of things that cannot be explained by science/natural law a valid way of determining the existence of God?*

## *Central Argument of Richard Dawkins's Book The God Delusion*

1. One of the greatest challenges to the human intellect has been to explain how the complex, improbable appearance of design in the universe arises.
2. The natural temptation is to attribute the appearance of design to the actual design itself.
3. The temptation is a false one, because the designer hypothesis immediately raises the larger problem of who designed the designer.
4. The most ingenious and powerful explanation is Darwinian evolution by natural selection. The appearance of design is an illusion.
5. We don't have an equivalent naturalistic explanation for the apparent design features of physics.
6. We shouldn't give up hope of a better explanation arising in physics, something as powerful as Darwinism is for biology.
7. Therefore, God almost certainly doesn't exist.

## *Central Argument of Richard Dawkins's Book The God Delusion*

4. The most ingenious and powerful explanation is Darwinian evolution by natural selection. The appearance of design is an illusion.
  
7. Therefore, God almost certainly doesn't exist.

## *Theism is Rational*

- Premise: ***Every effect requires an adequate cause***
- Rational arguments for theism
  - Cosmological (Causality) Argument
  - Teleological (Design) Argument
  - Moral Argument