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Discourse Community: Atheists, Apologists, and Evangelicals

Atheism's flaws: Refuted

For this assignment I read an article detailing the flaws of atheism as well as claiming that atheism is a religion. Obviously, this is not a scientific article, although this is a common misconception about atheism that is often taught to people. I found this article on a website called www.christiancourier.com. The article details why atheism is a religion as well as why atheism is flawed using very common arguments. Based on some of the other articles by the author, Wayne Jackson, one can infer that he is an evangelical christian. An evangelical christian is someone who believes the bible literally, these people are often young earth creationists. In this paper I will refute and debunk these arguments.

My first problem with this article is the fact that the author uses the bible as a source to validate his arguments. The bible is NOT a source. When debating whether or not the bible is true, you can not use the bible to prove its truth, this is a common fallacy called circular reasoning. This is the same as saying I know wizards are real because they are real in Harry Potter. Using the bible to debate atheists is useless. All of the authors arguments based on the bible are irrelevant, in fact when using these bible verses he commits another fallacy, ad hominem. The author starts one of his arguments by stating all atheists are "fools" and then cites Psalms 14:1, this passage refers to atheists as people characterized by "moral depravity, spiritual irresponsibility, and social insensitivity".

Claiming atheists are not moral is not substantiated by any evidence, in fact, the opposite can be claimed. This is a list of atheist charity organizations: KIVA, a non profit charity focused on alleviating poverty. Planned Parenthood, this organization is heavily debated because they provide abortions even though only 3% of their budget goes to funding abortions while 97% of their budget is dedicated to providing proper sex education, treatment for STIs, and providing contraception. Doctors Without Borders, a charity focused on bringing quality medical care to people no matter their race, religion, military, or political agendas. Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science, a charity focused on improving education around the world. Donors Choose, another foundation focused on providing a better education for children. Direct Relief International, a charity focused on providing relief to countries in need. This list only features few of the many atheist charities that do so much good in our world. This shows that atheists choose to be good even though they are not obligated to do so by a religious text like christians. Claiming atheists are "spiritually irresponsible" is also unsubstantiated. To accept this argument

you also have to accept that every person has a “spirit” when in fact the concept of the spirit has no evidence or proof in the scientific community and is heavily debated to this day. Claiming atheists are “socially insensitive” is just a ridiculous lie. In fact, Christians often argue against gay marriage while atheists argue for gay marriage. In the early times of our nation, slave owners used the Bible to excuse their acts. Muslims use their holy book to excuse sexism and violence. In light of these facts, I would say that religious people are the ones who are “socially insensitive”.

The next argument this article makes is essentially Pascal’s Wager. Pascal’s Wager states that it is in one’s best interest to believe in God because you are gambling eternal damnation. The problem with this argument is that it is a false dichotomy fallacy. It claims that there are only two potential outcomes, God exists or God does not exist when in fact there are many potential outcomes. He is discarding every other religion in favor of his own. Islam could be true, Christianity could be true, Hinduism could be true, Buddhism could be true, something could happen that no one has thought of. They claim this even when, time after time, the holy books make claims that are easily disproved. For example, we know there was no world wide flood as the Bible claims, we know the earth is older than 6,000 years old, and we know evolution exists. Claiming Pascal’s Wager isn’t only a false dichotomy, it is downright idiotic. For these books to be true the claims they make have to be true.

Another point he makes is pointing out atheism’s creeds and tenets. This claim comes from a misunderstanding of atheism. Atheism is simply a lack of belief in a God because there is no evidence to substantiate that claim. There are no tenets because there is no organization of atheism. There are atheist organizations however they don’t represent all atheists. For example, The Satanic Temple is an atheist religion but not all atheists are members of The Satanic Temple. Another, more popular, atheist religion is some forms of Buddhism. Just because some Buddhists are atheists does not mean that all atheists are Buddhists. It is like claiming that because some theists are Christian means that all theists are Christians, despite the fact that there are many other religions and some theists who have no religious affiliation. He also claims that all atheists believe that the universe was created from nothing. This claim also comes from a misunderstanding, not of atheism, but the Big Bang theory. The claim that the Big Bang came from nothing was disproven long ago and the scientific consensus now is that there was a singular point of energy that rapidly expanded in an explosion. We have found evidence of the Big Bang, we have found background radiation that matches what we would expect from the Big Bang, we have even found the echo of the explosion. He also claims that atheists don’t believe in order in the universe. This is also a fallacy called the divine fallacy, claiming that because something is so amazing it must have a creator. He claims that it is impossible for everything to form how it is from the Big Bang. This shows that he does not understand basic physics, chemistry, or biology. We know through chemistry that certain elements bond to each other

more frequently and we know with basic physics, the laws of the universe, in other words we know why the universe formed as it did and we can explain it without a creator. For example we know that all planets are round because of gravity pulling the matter to a center point. We know that evolution gives the illusion of design because there is a form of “design” however it is instructed by nature not a creator. The way evolution works is that the best survive and reproduce and the others don’t. This makes us perfectly adapted to survive in our environment giving the illusion of intelligent design when in fact it was due to small mutations over millions of years. He also claims that atheists have no standard for morality which can also be explained by evolution. Humans are a group species. We have survived better in groups than we have alone. Humans have evolved a biological function called empathy. We understand that some things cause pain and because we live in a group we see ourselves in others and we don’t want that pain to happen to us, so we don’t cause that pain to happen to others. This also claims that morality comes from judeo christian values however this does not explain how we see empathy in other social creatures or the fact that civilizations before the bible (Sumeria, Mesopotamia, and hindu cultures) also had laws against murder, theft and the likes long before the ten commandments came along. This is a perfect example of correlation is not always causation.

The last argument he makes he calls “The Void of Unbelief.” In short he claims because science doesn’t know it is wrong. Just because you say “I don’t know” you are wrong. The problem with this is that claiming you know something that is unknowable, like what happens when we die, is arrogant. Saying that you don’t know something that is unknowable is the logical reaction. Some claim that people who have died for short amounts of time and then revived by doctors have seen heaven and god. The problem is we know that humans can hallucinate as well as the fact that the placebo effect is very powerful. The combination of the two in a state where your brain is severely deprived of oxygen leads to these spiritual experiences. How would you explain the difference between a muslim person seeing Allah when they have a near death experience or a christian person seeing Jesus when they have a near death experience. He says this void of unbelief has no hope, but I see it differently. It is the next great adventure because we don’t know what happens. If there is no afterlife then it won’t matter when we die because we won’t know or care. It would be the same as before we are born. If there is afterlife it will be exciting because if there is an afterlife it is very unlikely that anyone on earth can or has guessed what it is. I don’t want to die at all however I am excited to die. Either I will be proven right and we cease to exist when we die or I’ll be proven wrong and I can learn more about life and the universe.

In conclusion the authors whole article is full of fallacies and poor arguments stemming from misunderstanding of science. The fact is we just don’t know some things yet, what happened before the universe was there, the origin of life, or what happens when we die.

However every day we are working to figure out these questions and we won't get the answers through religion. The only way to get these answers is through the scientific method.

Sources:

- Jackson, Wayne. "Atheism: The 'No-God' Religion." *Christian Courier*, 2018, www.christiancourier.com/articles/1533-atheism-the-no-god-religion.
- David, et al. "Atheist Charities Are More Generous than Religious Charities." *Thaumaturgical*, 21 Aug. 2014, thaumaturgical.com/a-big-list-of-atheist-charities/#.