

BAD ATHEIST MEMES

CAN WE ATHEISTS DO BETTER?



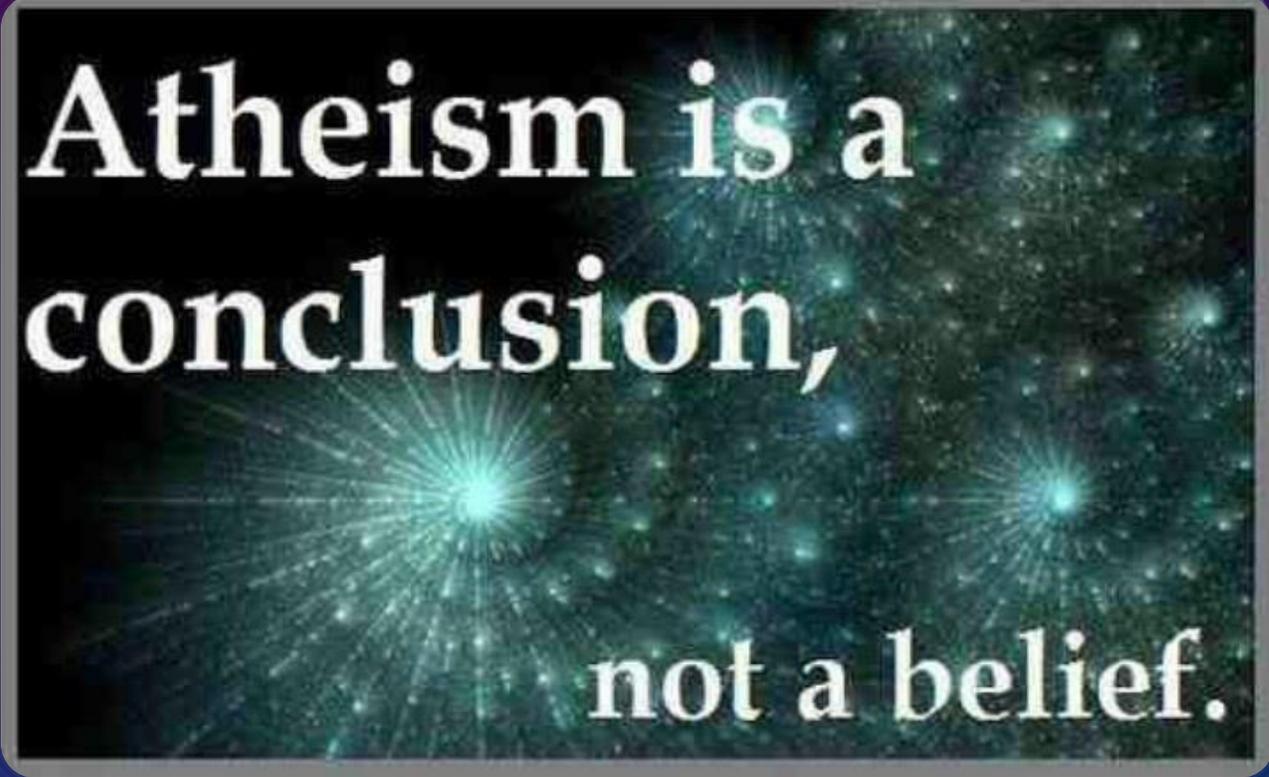
HELLO AND WELCOME

- We atheists have a number of things in our toolbelts, and one of those is memes.
- Many of these memes are oversimplifications or just flat out wrong, so I thought I would create a series to address some of our worst memes and explain why they are so bad.



ATHEISM IS A CONCLUSION

- One of the most common memes we see is "Atheism is a conclusion, not a belief."
- This is a bit of a bad meme and I figured I would explain why

A meme image featuring a dark space background with numerous bright, multi-colored stars and nebulae. The text "Atheism is a conclusion, not a belief." is overlaid in a white, serif font. The word "conclusion," is on the second line and "not a belief." is on the third line.

**Atheism is a
conclusion,
not a belief.**

THE BELIEF THAT GOD DOES NOT EXISTS

atheism

noun [U]

UK  /'eɪ.θi.i.zəm/ US  /'eɪ.θi.i.zəm/

the belief that God does not exist

- For one, atheism is defined as a belief in a number of dictionaries and philosophical papers.
- Yes, there are a number of different definitions of atheism, and you might prefer the "lack of belief" definition.
- The issue you now have is that "lacking belief in God(s)" is not a conclusion.
- It is describing a psychological state and is a 2nd order belief.

AN -ISM IS NOT AN ACTIVE BELIEF

theism

noun [U] • RELIGION

UK  /'θiː.ɪ.zəm/ US  /'θiː.ɪ.zəm/

belief in the existence of a god or gods

- Ok, so to be fair, an -ISM is not an active belief. To explain this in more detail let's briefly review THEISM.
- Theism is commonly described as the belief (at least one) god exists.
- And -ISM is a practice, system, philosophy or ideology.
- It is the -IST that ascribes to the -ISM.
- Therefore, when describing theism as the belief in existence of god(s), it is talking about something believed, and the propositional content of that belief, namely "[at least one] God Exists".
- Therefore, theism is the proposition "[at least one] God exists".
- If you accept (or conclude) this proposition is true, that makes you a theist, aka one that believes [at least one] god exists.

CONCLUSION VS BELIEF

conclusion *noun* (JUDGMENT)

B1 [C]

the opinion you have after considering all the information about something

A conclusion is something an agent comes to, usually after some form of deliberation (internal or otherwise). Essentially, it is what you judge to be the case.

A belief is something accepted as true, thought most probable, or a positive attitude towards a proposition.

If the proposition is "God exists" there are 2 possible outcomes or conclusions. God exists, or god does not exist.

Whichever outcome you conclude to be the most likely is the one you accept as true. Therefore, your conclusion is a belief.

Essentially, any conclusion you make is a belief

SO, IS ATHEISM A CONCLUSION OR A BELIEF?

Lack of Belief Atheism

- If atheism is described as "a lack of belief in god or gods" then it is not a conclusion, it is a description of a psychological state that is a 2nd order belief. It doesn't really make sense to describe an -ISM in those terms though.

Propositional Atheism

- If atheism is the negation of theism, and theism is [the propositional content of] the belief God exists, then atheism would be understood as [the propositional content of] the belief God does not exist.
In this regard, it could be regarded as a conclusion, which would make an atheist one that believes God does not exist.
- Essentially Atheism is a proposition that can be described as either a (passive) belief or (passive) conclusion.
- The Atheist would then hold an active belief about atheism.

SUMMARY

- If atheism is a lack of belief in god or gods, it is not a conclusion. At best it is a 2nd order belief.
- If atheism is to be regarded as a conclusion, it is also a belief. Neither is active, as an ISM is the concept or proposition.
- In both instances, atheism can be described as a belief.
- The meme is awful.