

USING EMOTIONAL TOOLS TO LEVERAGE LOGIC & REASON
WHEN DISCUSSING RELIGION & POLITICS

TRUTH WHISPERING

BW ELLIS

 TALK LIKE AN ATHEIST

IDEAS TO KEEP IN MIND

- ▶ Setting the field by establishing rules and goals in your conversations
- ▶ Building your kit
- ▶ Appealing to your opponent's emotional state
(APPROACH WITH CAUTION)

**THE AIM OF ARGUMENT, OR OF
DISCUSSION, SHOULD NOT BE
VICTORY, BUT PROGRESS.**

Joseph Joubert

SETTING THE STAGE: ESTABLISHING RULES

- ▶ Try to set rules or boundaries for a conversation and follow them yourself
- ▶ No claims without evidence, resource or other support
- ▶ Keep broad statements to a minimum, avoid generalizations unless you can back them up
- ▶ Stay humble in your presentation, do not claim to be all knowing, show it don't say it

SETTING THE STAGE: PUT UP OR SHUT UP

- ▶ Get the other person in the conversation to put their ideologies up for review
- ▶ “If you are not willing to put your ideas up for criticism and possible change, then why should I?”
- ▶ Don't play tennis without the net, follow the rules and hold your opponent to them, stress fairness

SETTING THE STAGE: SMALL MOVES

- ▶ Make the goals that are achievable, small steps to a larger point
- ▶ Use stand alone examples that can then be built upon to attain your next goal in the conversation
- ▶ You will not convince people in the moment, these concepts must unspool in their minds, that takes time

SETTING THE STAGE: BOW OUT GRACEFULLY

- ▶ Know when to end the conversation and how to bow out gracefully, like in a design presentation
- ▶ Any story/explanation must have an end, allow it to end
- ▶ If/when others linger on a topic after you have concluded, push them to address / concede your point before allowing the discussion to go off on a tangent
- ▶ Do not wonder into parts of a conversation you are not prepared to discuss, know when not to fight

SETTING THE STAGE: A GENTLE ROASTING

- ▶ If your goal is to use insult humor, be good at it
- ▶ Come up with some sharp barbs, something biting that cannot be easily turned back on you
- ▶ Be memorable and funny
- ▶ Insult with intent, with direction, with a greater purpose than just belittling your opponent, insult with a point that drives your message home

MY COACHES HAVE DONE A GOOD JOB OF TIGHTENING MY SKILLS, WHERE I CAN DICTATE A LITTLE BIT MORE WHERE THE FIGHT IS GOING.

Robbie Lawler
UFC Welterweight Champion

BUILDING YOUR KIT: RIDICULOUSLY REASONED

- ▶ Make the examples you use seem ridiculously reasoned and obvious, yet easily defended, two men gardening
- ▶ Build an inventory of responses to common questions
- ▶ Become familiar with logical fallacies for making thoughtful challenges, avoid "tattle tale" voice

BUILDING YOUR KIT: TURN A PHRASE

- ▶ Use clever/thought out language in your arguments to make them memorable
- ▶ Rhetorical devices
- ▶ Find examples from the atheist community, Hitches, Harris, Dawkins, Dillahunty & the Atheist Experience, Talk Like An Atheist, YouTube

BUILDING YOUR KIT: MAKE THE EFFORT

- ▶ Read the Bible and Quran, or enough of them to intelligently discuss the two
- ▶ Understand the underpinnings of the world's faiths, at least enough to be able to call foul when someone defines their faith in a conversation
- ▶ Listen to the arguments against before you encounter them in conversation, do the opposition research
- ▶ Be prepared to give some form of response to as many talking points as you can, know what to say

BUILDING YOUR KIT: KNOW HOW TO DEFEND ATHEISM

- ▶ Live, Work, Be an out atheist, do not let people you know define atheists without having you as an example
- ▶ Have your story ready to tell, how you became an atheist/agnostic/humanist and why
- ▶ Understand the definition/difference between atheist and agnostic
- ▶ Know who has the burden of proof and how a negative cannot be proven

BUILDING YOUR KIT: BEWARE YOUR SURROUNDINGS

- ▶ One on one alone, a private conversation or interview
- ▶ Amongst family & friends or in a public square, part of a group conversation, at a party
- ▶ Chat room, social media forum, literally open to anyone dropping into the conversation
- ▶ Remember you are not just convincing your opponent, but others reading or listening to the conversation

BUILDING YOUR KIT: HOW THE OTHER SIDE DOES IT

- ▶ Exactly what religious schools and institutions are doing
 - ▶ Training their apologetics, reinforcing the ideology
 - ▶ Building communities for both inclusionary and exclusionary purposes
 - ▶ Keeping tribalism global in the modern world

YOU WIN BATTLES BY KNOWING THE ENEMY'S TIMING, AND USING A TIMING WHICH THE ENEMY DOES NOT EXPECT.

Miyamoto Musashi

APPEALING TO YOUR OPPONENT'S
EMOTIONAL STATE

APPROACH WITH CAUTION

APPEALING TO EMOTION: IRON MAN THE ARGUMENT

- ▶ Establishing your opponent's argument gets their attention and ensures that you are representing them properly before providing the counter argument
- ▶ Marvel vs DC
- ▶ Building an Iron Man your opponent's argument
- ▶ LSAT

APPEALING TO EMOTION: CHALLENGE THE MORAL FOUNDATION

- ▶ Attack a perceived strength
- ▶ Challenge the religious argument on moral grounds
- ▶ Take away the moral high ground
- ▶ Be prepared to define/defend your morality
- ▶ Evolved morality

APPEALING TO EMOTION: SURPRISE THEM

- ▶ Use outlandish statements that can then be turned into obvious truths
- ▶ “Taxing the churches would protect children from being sexually assaulted”
- ▶ “Christianity is remarkable in how unAmerican it is”

APPEALING TO EMOTION: SURPRISE THEM

- ▶ “Taxing the churches would protect children from being sexually assaulted”
- ▶ Effective even if the tax rate is 0%
- ▶ Require the churches to file tax returns for tracking the money when they hide predators
- ▶ Finding settlements paid out to victims so journalists can track and report on these crimes.
- ▶ Opening the books can also give a community a clear picture of how religious donations are being used

APPEALING TO EMOTION: SURPRISE THEM

- ▶ “Christianity is remarkable in how unAmerican it is”
- ▶ Only connecting tissue between Bible and Constitution is slavery
- ▶ Show me the verse!
- ▶ All the reasons why we don't want America to be a Christian nation.

APPEALING TO EMOTION: RESOLVE THE NUMBERS

- ▶ Resolve percentages into whole numbers for greater effect
- ▶ Use solid numbers, stats with pedigree and impeccable science, something you can put your back against
- ▶ The Pew Forum Report:
 - ▶ Indonesia: 204 Million Muslims, 72% support sharia
 - ▶ In whole numbers that is 147,489,000.
 - ▶ A number of people equal to just under 50% the American population support a legal system that is unchanged since the Iron Age

APPEALING TO EMOTION: RESOLVE THE NUMBERS

- ▶ 147,489,000 Indonesians support sharia (Russia = 146m)
- ▶ Of those Indonesians that support sharia:
 - ▶ 45% Support Hunan Punishment
 - ▶ 48% Support Stoning Adulterers
 - ▶ 18% Support Death for Apostates
- ▶ Let's see those as whole numbers
 - ▶ 66,370,000 Support Hunan Punishment (UK = 66m)
 - ▶ 70,759,000 Support Stoning Adulterers (Thailand = 69m)
 - ▶ 26,548,000 Support Death for Apostates (Texas = 28m)
- ▶ Which list has the greater impact ?

APPEALING TO EMOTION: FRAME THE CONVERSATION

- ▶ Frame the customs of religious culture in terms of:
 - ▶ Slavery, every religion supports it in some way
 - ▶ Imprisonment, how a culture can be a prison
 - ▶ Victimization of vulnerable members of society
 - ▶ Domestic abuse, how it is justified in the church
 - ▶ Child abuse, how it is disguised and hidden
 - ▶ Sexual assault/rape, how its in the scriptures & culture
 - ▶ Shame culture, how it facilitates the abuse

**I LOVE QUESTIONS, THEY CAN BE
BOTH CHALLENGE AND REWARD IN
A SINGLE BREATH.**

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