

Department of Philosophy

Dr. David Ross Boyd Colloquium Series



Dr. David Kyle Johnson

King's College, Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania

"Moral Culpability and Choosing to Believe in God"

November 4, 2016, 2:30-4:30pm, Dale Hall Tower, Room 607
Reception to follow

Atheism is highest among academics; among academics it is highest among philosophers (72.8%). Indeed, even theistic philosophers generally admit that theistic belief is a matter of faith—that the arguments for God's existence fall short and that belief in God requires belief without sufficient evidence. But, motivated by the arguments of William James, theistic philosophers usually suggest that one has a right to choose to believe in God if one wishes. Although it's not entirely clear whether James had epistemic or moral rights in mind, it's generally held that choosing to believe in God by faith is morally acceptable (indeed, morally praiseworthy).

It is this notion that I shall challenge; I will argue that choosing to believe in God by faith is immoral. To accomplish this, I will delineate between two different kinds of faith (blind and simple) and argue that belief in God by either is immoral. Blind faith promotes harmful epistemic practices; simple faith makes one guilty by association. It's not that belief in God is always immoral; some do not choose to believe. But, when presented with a choice between theism and atheism, atheism is morally preferable. I will close by considering multiple objections.

Department Home Page: philosophy.ou.edu
The University of Oklahoma φ For accommodations on the basis of disability and for more information, call (405) 325-6324

The lecture is free and open to the public