

Dialogue: The special plea

[The two have been speaking to each other for some time]

Voice 1: Do you believe in God?

Voice 2: I can't answer that. The question has no meaning for me.

Voice 1: Maybe not, but you can still answer.

Voice 2: You want me to answer a meaningless question?

Voice 1: Sure.

Do you believe in God?

Voice 2: Vegetable.

Voice 1: That's a response, not an answer.

Voice 2: And that's a perceptive response. So perceptive is it that you will know that the distinctive is irrelevant when the question is meaningless.

Voice 1: Ah, but I don't believe the question is meaningless for you. I think you want to avoid a perfectly good question.

Voice 2: Your belief undoubtedly gives you great comfort.

Voice 1: Very clever.

I think you're an atheist with the balls to fess up.

Voice 2: Interesting choices of idioms. What do women unbelievers do?

Voice 1: You keep avoiding the question.

Voice 2: The question is invalid.

Voice 1: Wo! Just now the question was meaningless. Now it's invalid. You're on the run.

Voice 2: You think so?

Voice 1: I do.
Well?

Voice 2: Well what?

Voice 1: Are you going to answer me?

Voice 2: Ask me a valid question and I will try to answer it.
I am not going to be bamboozled into answering what is effectively a trick question.

Voice 1: There's no trick. It's a straightforward question.

Voice 2: A straightforward invalid question, deliberately asked as such, to try to force me into accepting a false dichotomy.

Voice 1: Look... What kind of a God would you believe in?

Voice 2: I think you're rather uttering a special plea.

Voice 1: And what does that mean?

Voice 2: It's very common among evangelicals. It --

Voice 1: I'm not an evangelical.

Voice 2: I'm speaking figuratively.

Voice 1: I'm not an evangelical.

Voice 2: Not even figuratively?

Voice 1: I'm not an evangelical.

Voice 2: Thank you for that. Most illuminating.

Voice 1: Never mind all that. What's this special plea thing?

Voice 2: It's a claim of exceptionalism. In your case, it is.
The rules of logic don't apply to me, you say, meaning your argument.
Put it another way: you assume the correctness of the belief you're defending in order to try to validate the

supposed evidence for your belief.

Voice 1: I don't have beliefs. The existence of God is a fact.

Voice 2: So, if I said that I did believe in God then I would still be less than you in terms of certainty.

Voice 1: First you believe, then you know.

Voice 2: How?

Voice 1: Faith.

Voice 2: That can only give you belief.

Voice 1: And knowledge.

Voice 2: No.

Voice 1: Yes.

Voice 2: Do you have evidence?

Voice 1: I don't need evidence; I know. And I know again every day. God tells me every day.

Voice 2: So you know God exists because he tells you so.

Voice 1: Yes.

Voice 2: That is a special plea.

You can get pills for the voices.

Voice 1: I don't hear God's voice; I hear his word.

Voice 2: In your head?

Voice 1: In my soul.

Voice 2: Well, it's been nice talking to you.

I have to scratch my arse now.

Voice 1: You're going to lose your immortal life, my friend.

Voice 2: Little surprises me.