



## Is Evolution Intrinsically Atheistic?

**Denis Alexander, The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion, St. Edmund's College, Cambridge, CB3 0BN, UK**

This lecture explores the assumptions of atheism that are introduced, overtly or covertly, into accounts of evolutionary biology, in particular in the writings of the 'new atheists'. This happens in at least six different ways: by incorporating evolution within a framework provided by ontological reductionism; by presenting evolution as an ultra-Darwinian metanarrative; by displaying a profound misunderstanding of the meaning of God as creator within the Abrahamic faiths; via the rhetorical use of evolutionary language as in 'memetics'; based on a critique of the idea of a God of love as creator of a long process involving waste and suffering; and via the personal testimonies provided by atheists. Each of these ways of incorporating the ideology of atheism into the evolutionary narrative is critiqued in turn and it is suggested that evolution as an inference to the best explanation is unable to bear the weight of so much metaphysical baggage. Scientific theories should be preserved for what they are good at - to explain data-sets limited to particular domains. As with other 'big theories' in science, evolution can be incorporated within virtually any world-view, with the exception of creationism, giving freedom to scientists of any faith or none to engage actively and freely in the scientific enterprise.