

Evolution and Pantheism

A Defense of Our Thesis

On this website, we argue that all people are religious, including scientists. And we then specifically identify pantheism as the religion of those who believe that evolution explains origins. In other words, evolution is a religious proposition. Are we justified in making this assertion? Can our argument be defended? This article attempts to show that the claim is fully reasonable.

1. If we would phrase our argument as a logical thought progression, it would look something like this:

- a. all people are religious [Premise 1]
- b. pantheism is a religion that believes in spontaneous progress [Premise 2]
- c. the essential, defining feature of evolution is spontaneous progress [Premise 3]
- d. evolutionists are religious and pantheism is that religion [Conclusion]

2. The premises require explaining. There is also a logical problem, which is that not everyone who believes in evolution (or spontaneous progress) necessarily has to be a pantheist, as there might be other options. So our conclusion also requires explanation.

(a) **All people are religious** [Premise 1] We define religion in a broad sense. Many people, especially those who consider themselves secular, may choke on this. The common understanding of religion, after all, is worship of a deity. To most people, religion is something that involves ceremonies or rites of some kind, as well as sacred things, prayers, dogmas, etc. But this understanding of religion is inadequate. It doesn't account for how the human mind functions. All humans necessarily

hold certain assumptions about the world we live in, certain beliefs, which are used to guide thought, decision-making and behavior. These assumptions or beliefs are deeply held; they are convictions. They are of course unprovable, like axioms in geometry, and we are always seeking in one way or another to justify them. But they are there, hidden deep in the psyche of each person.

As sentient beings we try to make sense of the world we live in. We seek understanding of that which is ultimate. We demand answers to life's most meaningful questions, such as, Where did I come from? Why am I here? and, How shall I live?¹ There's no better term for the set of beliefs that we all hold than religion. These beliefs certainly are not mere philosophy. It's precisely the commitment we have to these assumptions and beliefs that identifies them as religious. Nor is world-view the explanation of these beliefs, because world-views derive from our beliefs. Atheists (and agnostics and secularists) define themselves as irreligious people, and can be expected to reject our making religion a universal feature of humanity. What atheists reject is the popular understanding of religion. If they would reflect on *how* they think about things, they would understand that our expanded definition of religion is correct. We all are religious.

¹ A letter-writer to the editor of *The Wall Street Journal* states, "I submit that humanity needs to mature and realize that the answer [to these questions] lies not in some religious dogma but in understanding that we are a product of nature through billions of years of evolution" (October 10-11, 2015, p.A10). This writer, vaunting his supposed irreligion, is unwittingly expressing a deeply religious view. People steeped in secularism cannot accept that observation. The project of Modernity strives to excise belief in the supernatural from Western civilization, and that then demeans meaning. But it's impossible to live without meaning. Humans are meaning-seeking creatures. It's religion that provides the meaning, direction, motivation, and the behavioral codes and rules by which we all live.

The reason we are convinced our assertion regarding religion is correct derives from the Bible. We've been created in the image of God. Humans thus are unique and special; they are not merely advanced vertebrates. Apes and chimps not only don't write symphonies or build bridges across rivers; they don't contemplate the purpose of existence. All humans are religious because we were created that way. God built into us a complicated mechanism of cognition, one that relies on assumptions, because it was His will and purpose that faith should be a necessary component of relationships and it's how He justly holds us accountable. Secular people, refusing to consider how accurately the Bible depicts the human psyche, will reject the argument.

Nevertheless, our claim that all people, including scientists, are religious can be demonstrated from the field of science itself. (i) No one was there when "Big Bang" supposedly occurred. No one was there when the elements supposedly evolved, or when inorganic substances supposedly assembled into the first cells or the cells evolved into plants and animals. Yet evolutionist scientists are so certain that those things occurred they not only stake their careers on it, they will go to their death depending on it to obviate being accountable to God. "Big Bang" is clearly not in the same category of certainty as are the laws of thermodynamics or the stages of metamorphosis from caterpillar to butterfly. "Big Bang" is an item of faith. It derives from the religious presupposition that there is no God and there was no Creation, but we obviously have to account for existence somehow, and Big Bang is the best explanation. (ii) Can a scientist, as a scientist, say, "This is a beautiful sunset"? No, because science doesn't deal with beauty. Nor does it deal with ethics, or love, or the meaning and purpose of life. Science is limited to the part of reality that's inside their box, a box bounded by observation and experimentation. Issues outside that box are informed by their religion, and that includes the matter of origins as well as man's ultimate destiny. Or (iii), let's ask, Where does consciousness come from? No one knows. But evolutionist scientists

are certain, because of their presuppositions, that it must have a purely physical (or naturalist) explanation. A Christian who believes in Creation says consciousness comes from God. It's not reason or logic that determines these two different explanations, our religious presuppositions do.

Supposing that a scientific explanation of origins is based on logic and reason, on "evidence," whereas Creation is based on religious explanations is false, serving only to promote deception. Logic and reason are used to substantiate the religious preferences that we all have. Premise 1 is valid.

(b) Pantheism is a religion that believes in spontaneous progress

[Premise 2] Our definition of pantheism is probably more elastic than that offered by philosophers and theologians. In common with other versions of monism, in pantheism there is no transcendent personal God, and all things are unified and god-like in some way. Deity is somehow identified with nature, with the physical world, the cosmos. To some pantheists, spontaneous progress might not be a core belief. But, following theologian Robert Brow, we take what would be a corollary of pantheism, the belief in spontaneous progress, and make it definitional. Our justification for doing this is, if there is no transcendent creator God, how is existence explained? The answer is that nature alone did the creating (whether through Darwinian evolution or some other putative mechanism). Therefore, in pantheism, the world we live in necessarily came into existence progressively and spontaneously. It is likely the case that, in the Western world anyway, all pantheists are Darwinists.

It is certainly correct that naturalism is essential to pantheism (this goes back to Spinoza). Physicist Paul Davies insightfully writes, "It seems to me there is no hope of ever explaining why the physical universe is as it is so long as we are fixated on immutable laws or meta-laws that exist

reasonlessly or are imposed by divine providence. The alternative is to regard the laws of physics and the universe they govern as part and parcel of a unitary system, and to be incorporated together within a common explanatory scheme. In other words, the laws should have an explanation from within the universe and not involve appealing to an external agency. The specifics of that explanation are a matter for future research. But until science comes up with a testable theory of the laws of the universe, its claim to be free of faith is manifestly bogus."² Davies wants to know where the laws came from, without invoking a transcendent, personal Creator God and without appealing to any random, accidental collision of atoms (he's too thoughtful for this) or of their mysterious, spontaneous appearance. And his only option is what Spinoza gave to the West, though of course Davies won't use the word pantheism. Nor will he admit to any deity identifiable with nature. But how else can anyone who rejects the God of the Bible account for existence? Naturalism and pantheism are intricately interdependent.

Is pantheism necessarily a religion? Many theologians and philosophers undoubtedly were taught that pantheism is a philosophy. If they would reflect on the nature of personal commitment, however, they likely would realize that pantheism is no mere abstract idea about which to intellectualize. In its denials and affirmations, it has the essential nature of a religion – as we define religion.

We further insist we are correct here, because the Bible reveals God to be transcendent; we base our thesis on the authority of Scripture. The pantheist "deity" is an idol, something they imagined, nothing more. Pantheism is fanciful speculation. Pantheists can't agree on the nature of their deity. There exists no document claiming authority to validate

² "Taking science on Faith," *The New York Times*, November 24, 2007; this Op-Ed is on the internet at www.nytimes.com/2007/11/24/opinion/24davies.html

their deity, only the musings of a few persons. Therefore the only reason for intelligent, thoughtful people being pantheist ultimately is because of their belief in evolution. They have to account somehow for the existence of the world, and since they've ruled out special creation, it can only be by spontaneous progressive evolution. It's because of their prior commitment to evolution that they think there's no after-life, no judgment, no absolutes. It's because of their prior commitment to naturalism that they have to locate their deity—if there is one—somehow within nature (and if in nature, it must be impersonal). Were it not for naturalism (or Darwinism), pantheism would be the obscure Eastern religion it originally was. Premise 2 is valid.

(c) The essential, defining feature of evolution is spontaneous progress [Premise 3] Evolutionists may not realize that a core, defining feature of Darwinism is spontaneous progress. So Premise 3 requires explanation. Of course, there is progress in evolution, and it has to be spontaneous. Both of these are essential, but does that *define* evolution? The standard definition of evolution, after all, is common ancestry and gradual divergence by the accumulation of inherited changes over time. We are simply expanding the definition of evolution in view of its putative role. How is existence accounted for? Instead of the Bible's recent, completed Creation, the core belief of evolution is that everything that exists came into being entirely spontaneously and gradually but progressively over long periods of time. "Creation" is on-going and continuous.

And evolution is intensely monistic. In naturalism, all matter spontaneously evolved from the Big Bang. All living things then evolved from a common first cell made of that matter, and all animals and plants then evolved from a common ancestor made from that cell. So there is a unity of substance of all things. And a "deity" (however defined—as long as it's not a person), if one is supposed, somehow suffuses or pervades both all the substance and all the process enabling

it to move ever progressively forward to greater complexity. Hence pantheism.

Here too we certainly are correct. Evolution was originally introduced, and necessarily persists today, not because of observed physical evidences (protestations by evolutionists notwithstanding) but to refute the Bible's account of origins. Regardless how biologists frame it, regardless how deeply or superficially believed it may be, evolution is, in essence, on-going creation thru time, as opposed to the Bible's unique, completed creation. Premise 3 is valid.

(d) Evolutionists are religious and pantheism is that religion

[Conclusion] Our Conclusion follows from these premises, but it requires some explanation. We need to think about the relationship of these three premises.

As all people are religious, it should be possible to identify and classify the religions that are commonly held. Identifying and labeling according to criteria is a reasonable human endeavor. So what is the religion of those who believe that evolution explains origins? The question is fair, after all, origins is an intensely religious issue. Are evolutionists really pantheists?

Let us consider a binary system in which all people involved in the origins conflict are logically classified in one or the other category: there are theists, and there are non-theists. And there are evolutionists, and there are creationists. These are the only categories. Theism understands deity as a personal, transcendent God as revealed in the Bible. Non-theism is a term that, regarding a deity, holds to no personal, transcendent God. Evolution explains origins as a continuing process, whereas creation explains origins as a completed event. It is

evident that in this scheme there are only two viable options, creation with theism, and evolution with non-theism.³

The participants in this epic Western world conflict are Christians (the theists) vs the pantheists, atheists, agnostics, humanists, New-agers and secularists (all these are the non-theists).⁴ We label these non-theists who explain origins as a continuing process as pantheists. That's our contribution to the conflict. We identify non-theism as pantheism, as a *religion*. The non-theists are religious people. Evolution is the sacred myth of their religion. And the conflict is their pantheistic religion against ours, Christianity. Since evolution is taught in schools and universities all over the world, the conflict is really worldwide.

The difficulty with our conclusion lies in assigning a religious tag to people who don't consciously hold to a certain set of beliefs. Probably most scientists who believe in evolution never even heard of pantheism and, if they did, they would have trouble understanding it. Nevertheless, the fact that both pantheists and evolutionist scientists hold one belief, one dogma, one conviction in common (and of supreme importance), namely the belief in spontaneous, progressive, on-going, naturalistic creation (instead of a completed creation by a transcendent Creator God), makes our associating the premises to form our Conclusion not unreasonable.

But we go further and assert that all evolutionists, regardless of their conscious belief in a deity or no deity, *must* be pantheists.

³ We are omitting from this discussion those who hold to theistic evolution. Theistic evolution is a problem within Christianity; it is the view of compromisers who consider the opinions of non-theistic scientists more authoritative than the Bible.

⁴ We ignore here those we regard as peripheral to the evolution/creation conflict: Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Orthodox Jews, Mormons, Gnostics, animists, etc.

If evolutionists insist on materialism (or naturalism), that means matter acted on by energy has the inherent ability to self-organize, to form into ever increasing complexity, and to give rise to the physical laws that govern matter. (The notion defies logic: How can the physical laws that govern matter derive from, or be a property of, the matter that the physical laws supposedly brought into existence? Physical laws depend for their existence on the prior existence of the nature they're supposed to bring into existence!) The evolutionary process supposedly occurs spontaneously, without direction or guidance by any intelligence, by any willful Being. It just naturally occurs, by random physical processes, by accident. This is pure nonsense.

"Spontaneous progress" is an oxymoron. Progress must be directed, it cannot occur spontaneously. And progress does not have to be forward; it can be in any direction, including backward. Without intelligent guidance and awareness of that which is desired, complex living forms and a highly ordered world such as we see today could not have spontaneously come into existence. So the evolutionist's core doctrine is a fantasy. Ascribing it all to "chance" magnifies the absurdity of it.⁵ Evolutionists use "chance" to hide their ignorance of what they imagine had happened in the past. Events occurring by chance result only in chaos. "Self-organization" (which doesn't occur in today's world and has never been observed) is similarly a concept that appeals to an imaginary process to explain a *lack* of evidence in order to retain evolution. And evolutionists thoughtlessly assert that because energy is available, the evolutionary process inexorably proceeds. But energy also destroys. For energy to accomplish something useful there needs

⁵ Chance is not a property of matter or a force in nature. It's simply an abstract idea people invoke when trying to explain uncommon events. Chance doesn't cause events to occur, no matter how much time is allowed. Chance cannot cause what physical laws such as the second law of thermodynamics prohibit from happening. See the article, "Improbable Singularities—Evolution is Riddled with them," by Alex Williams in *J. Creation* 29(2):92-98, 2015.

to be in place a system by which energy can be put to use. Such systems must be purposefully designed. Again, the supposed evolutionary process demands intelligent guidance.

The pantheist solves this problem. For the pantheist, progress is guided or directed by their deity residing in nature. The pantheist deity is responsible for spontaneous progress. Their deity (somehow) imbues matter with the ability to organize into ever more complex forms. The pantheist strenuously rejects the idea that chance alone resulted in the evolutionary process.⁶ The pantheist deity has both the will and the capacity to create.

To create, that is, to bring something into existence that previously did not exist, is a divine prerogative. It requires divine intentionality and divine capabilities. Repeated transformations in the direction of increasing complexity and new features likewise require divine superintendence. For nature to self-create, nature must have divine qualities. If there's no transcendent, personal Creator, only pantheism, with its belief in a deity that (in some sense) resides in nature, can account for the world we inhabit.

So all evolutionists must be pantheists, whether they like it or not, whether they are conscious of it or not. It's the only way they can escape the absurdity of their non-theistic explanation of origins. They must (subconsciously? secretly?) believe that some form of deity or intelligence or guiding principle in some way controls the evolutionary process. And if they don't, if like Dawkins *et al* they demand that it all occurred only by chance, then they are unwittingly ascribing deity to

⁶ "[P]antheists are committed to life not being accidental," writes pantheist Peter Forrest in "Pantheism and Science" in *The Monist*, 80(2):307-319,1997. In the same issue of *The Monist*, in the article, "Pantheism vs. Theism," pp 286-306, Lewis S. Ford, also a pantheist, sees the chief advantage of pantheism that it explains continuous creation without invoking a transcendent Creator.

nature. So they wind up being pantheists, unaware of the term, unaware of what their mind is doing. Their fierce atheism prevents them from thinking clearly about their presuppositions.

Evolutionists can reject this assertion, but the problem is one of their making and the only solution available to them is pantheism. Matter cannot spontaneously self-organize and proceed to higher and higher forms of order and complexity over time. The notion is preposterous. Only by retreating into pantheism can they escape the absurdity of their own making. And we suspect they have unwittingly done this. Or, if they haven't, they must do it to maintain intellectual integrity and a semblance of reason. Ascribing divine qualities to nature, evolutionists are pantheists.⁷

What's radical about our Conclusion is it identifies evolutionist scientists as being religious. They have a religion too! They have been hiding their religious beliefs behind the illusion that they are objective researchers, and the knowledge regarding origins that they've amassed is empirical, fact-based and testable, the product of reason – in contrast to creationists whose beliefs supposedly derive from holy writings that don't differ from magic or fantasy.⁸ Our Conclusion rips off this mask,

⁷ It is pantheism that lies at the core of evolution. Not naturalism or any of the other –isms, as some theologians and creationists suggest. Naturalism is no mere philosophy that scientists use in their work; naturalism is how pantheistic scientists worship their deity, although of course they are not doing it consciously. Moreover, evolution is not the religion, as some suggest. Evolution is the sacred myth that lies at the core of pantheism. The religion is pantheism. It's the religion of all those who, for lack of careful thinking, call themselves atheists, agnostics, secularists, etc. Nor, as has been suggested, is science the religion; it's those who do science that are religious.

⁸ Evolutionists have been able to get away with this fraud because of technology's extraordinary success in advancing Western society as well as evolutionists' impressive scientific vocabulary and use of highly technological methods and instruments.

this deception, and reveals their explanation of origins is nothing more than the outworking of their religion. Christians and evolutionists both develop a world view and an explanation of origins based on prior assumptions. The pantheist and the evolutionist begin with the presupposition that there is no God in heaven. The Christian begins with the presupposition that God is there and He has revealed Himself to us in His Word, the Bible. Whose set of presuppositions is correct is a *religious* matter. So the evolution/creation controversy is really a question of which *religion* shall have the ascendancy, pantheism (with its evolutionary explanation of origins) or theism.

Of course our Conclusion is true because of Romans 1. According to this text, there are only two possibilities for all humans. They either worship the Creator God of the Bible, or they worship the creature/creation. It's Romans 1 that compels accepting our Conclusion. Those not familiar with this dichotomy, or who don't accept it, will choke on our Conclusion – if they even are able to make the connection. But our Conclusion is valid.

3. Our Conclusion ignores other categories in the Western world that hold to spontaneous progress, such as atheism and Deism. (Agnosticism and secularism are other categories that, for the sake of argument here, can be subsumed by atheism.) Why lump atheists and Deists as pantheists?

(a) **Why pantheist and not atheist?** Pantheism holds to a deity, and atheists reject any deity. Scientists who hold ardently to evolution for the most part certainly don't worship a deity in nature. They despise any deity. But pantheism is no mere philosophy, and it's not some harmless religion that loves sunsets and meditation on how we're one with God. Pantheism, like atheism, is rebellion against the God of Scripture. Both atheists and pantheists deny the existence of the supernatural; in this, their central defining doctrine, they are one.

Moreover, atheists pretend that they are not religious. Their apparent hostility to religion belies their inherent religiosity. To affirm that there is no Creator God is itself a religious statement! Nietzsche correctly said, "All atheists are unwilling believers." Both pantheists and atheists have a world view and an explanation of origins that derive from their common belief that there is no transcendent God. There is no functional difference between those who claim to be atheists and pantheism.

(b) Why pantheist and not Deist? Probably many evolutionists are not true atheists but Deists; they're in love with the science part of it yet are unwilling to reject the possibility of a transcendent deity. So their god is the Deist God. Deism and evolution go together hand-in-glove. But Deism is also rebellion against the God who has revealed Himself. Like atheism and pantheism, Deism is a rejection of theism. In practice, Deists are pantheists.

As there's no functional difference between Deism and atheism, or between atheism, Deism and pantheism, we believe our Conclusion is valid without making allowance for these other categories. We believe our formula is both reasonable and valid: If people deny there is any Being outside nature and believe that meaning can be found in aligning with the principle behind nature, namely evolutionary progress, then they are pantheists.

4. Our most persuasive argument is Scripture, namely Romans 1. As Romans 1 is our *crux interpretum*, and as our premises are certainly valid because of Scripture, we could safely say that the central, most fundamental issue here is not pantheistic religion vs theism, but it's whether one accepts God's Word, the Bible, to determine our thinking and our world view, or whether we rely on some other source, anything else, to determine our thinking and world view. Pantheism relies on human speculation, as does evolutionary thinking. Scripture in contrast

is revelation, purposely given by God so we can know that He exists and other truths that are essential to our relationship to Him, truths that are otherwise unknowable because of our finitude.

But for the one not persuaded by Scripture, our thesis nevertheless is demonstrably valid. Evolutionists are religious, they hold to evolution because of their religion, and that religion is pantheism.

But now we go further and assert that the unrelenting evolution/creation controversy in the West is fundamentally a religious conflict. Evolutionists cannot abide a competing religion. Their religion has to be supreme, without challenge, so tenuous are the presuppositions on which evolution is based (human speculation). They seek a radical reorientation of society, away from theism and the basics of Western civilization that developed out of theism, toward their pantheist religion and the ideas that monism spawns, ideas such as Marxism, scientism, and sexual freedom. Their umbrage against religion is phony. The hostility is really directed at the Christian religion, which they want extinguished – or at least "neutralized," which means it should disappear in the next generation.

What tempers this warfare? The fact of death. Every non-theist knows that one day, death awaits. And what is beyond death? It's the stark reality of death that forces everyone to re-think their religious presuppositions. The key question is, How authoritative are the sources on which we base our religion? How certain are the opinions of Spinoza and of Dawkins, compared to the authority of the Scriptures? The issue is no light matter. We can either love a good God who is beautiful in His Person and in all His ways, or we can rebel against Him, preferring idolatry and sin. Scripture warns, "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'"