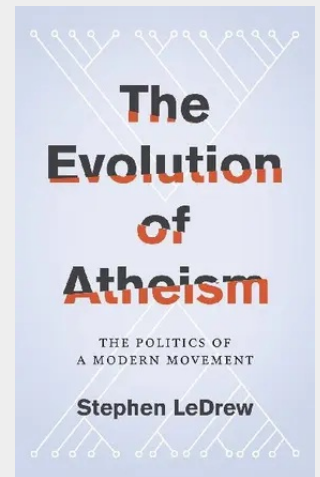


Evolution of Atheism

The Politics of a Modern Movement

Despite its seemingly straightforward premise--the rejection of religion--atheism has a complex history and an uncertain future. In this groundbreaking, cross-disciplinary study of the New Atheism movement, Stephen LeDrew fills a void within current scholarship on the subject by approaching New Atheism critically and historically, both as an intellectual current as well as a global movement. The book's title reflects the ways in which atheism has changed and become more complex since it was born in the Enlightenment. But it also points to the central importance of the concept of evolution in the dominant form of atheist discourse, which involves both defending Darwinian evolution against religious beliefs and applying the theory of evolution to humanity's social development. The Evolution of Atheism examines this "scientific" version of atheism that defends, above all else, a narrative of modernity as an evolutionistic progression from superstition and ignorance to scientific rationality. Yet this stands in contrast to the other forms of atheism, which take a very different approach to religion and modernity, and are rooted in very different political visions. LeDrew argues that these evolving understandings of what atheism means, and how it should be put into action, are threatening to irrevocably fragment the movement. Drawing from campaigns, publications, podcasts, and in-depth interviews, LeDrew offers a picture of a movement confounded in its attempts to define itself by a complex and sometimes self-contradictory set of discourses, and of groups of people united only by their lack of faith struggling to maintain cohesion in the face of deep divisions.

The concept of evolution is widely considered to be a foundational building block in atheist thought. Leaders of the New Atheist movement have taken Darwin's work and used it to diminish the authority of religious institutions and belief systems. But they have also embraced it as a metaphor for the gradual replacement of religious faith with secular reason. They have posed as harbingers of human progress, claiming the moral high ground, and rejecting with intolerance any message that challenges the hegemony of science and reason. Religion, according to the New Atheists, should be relegated to the Dark Ages of superstition and senseless violence. Yet Darwin did not see evolution as a linear progression to an improved state of being. The more antagonistic members of the New Atheist movement who embrace this idea are not only employing bad history, but also the kind of rigid, black-and-white thinking they excoriate in their religious opponents. Indeed, Stephen LeDrew argues, militant atheists have more in common with religious fundamentalists than they would care to admit, advancing what LeDrew calls secular fundamentalism. In reaction to fundamentalist Christianity and Islamism, this strain of atheism has become an offshoot of the religion it tries so hard to malign. The Evolution of Atheism outlines the essential political tension at the heart of the atheist movement. The New Atheism, LeDrew shows, is part of a tradition of atheist thought and activism that promotes individualism and scientific authority, which puts it at odds with atheist groups that are motivated by humanistic ethics and social justice. LeDrew draws on public relations campaigns, publications, podcasts, and in-depth interviews to explore the belief systems, internal logics, and self-contradictions of the people who consider themselves to be atheists. He argues that evolving understandings of what atheism means, and how it should be put into action, are threatening to irrevocably fragment the movement.



44,10 €

44,10 € (zzgl. MwSt.)

Lieferfrist: bis zu 10 Tage

Artikelnummer: 9780190225179

Medium: Buch

ISBN: 978-0-19-022517-9

Verlag: Oxford University Press

Erscheinungstermin: 01.11.2015

Sprache(n): Englisch

Auflage: Erscheinungsjahr 2015

Produktform: Gebunden

Gewicht: 581 g

Seiten: 280

Format (B x H): 161 x 240 mm

