

Evolution and Religion

First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington, Vermont. Prepared by Ginger Hobbs

Welcome and Chalice Lighting

“Darwin’s idea has greatly expanded our understanding of who we are and why we act as we do by giving birth to two important areas of research: evolutionary biology and evolutionary psychology. The former has added greatly to our knowledge of how we evolved and how our brains work, and the latter has increased our understanding of human behavior. The more we learn about ourselves through these disciplines, the more significant the implications of Darwin’s idea of evolution become.”

William R. Murry, “Natural Faith,” *UU World*, Spring 2009

Brief Check-ins

Opening Reading –

“What *should* religions look like from an evolutionary perspective? My main hypothesis was that religious groups are products of cultural group selection and are indeed like bodies and beehives. A given religion adapts its members to their local environment, enabling them to achieve by collective action what they cannot achieve alone or even together in the absence of religion. The primary benefits of religion take place in this world, not the next.”

David Sloan Wilson, *Evolution for Everyone*

“Using evolution to justify social inequality has become known as ‘social Darwinism.’ Darwin himself was passionately against slavery and thought that social policy should be based on compassion, which he regarded as “the noblest part of our nature.’”

David Sloan Wilson, *Evolution for Everyone*

“An effective government, religion, or scientific culture must include mechanisms that make everyone accountable. . . . Science, religion, and politics all face the same problem. Some individuals are driven to benefit themselves at the expense of others or their society as a whole. At a larger scale some groups are driven to collectively benefit themselves at the expense of other groups.

David Sloan Wilson, *Evolution for Everyone*

A Moment of Silence....

Main Subject: The role of religion in accountability

Individual communing: 6 minutes per individual, 3 minutes of group response

What part might religion play in evolution?

In particular, how does UU and/or humanism fit in this picture?

What is needed to encourage the evolution of society?

How does your work in various organizations fit into your ethics?

Open Discussion

Where are we going with our group?

Business:

Next meeting:

Meeting Plan preparer:

Closing:

Every religion needs a story, and Darwin's idea has given us a place in a new story with multiple layers of meaning. That story, the great epic of cosmic and biological evolution, is a religious story because it calls us out of our little self-centered worlds to see ourselves as part of a great living system. It gives a larger meaning and a broader ethic to our lives. As Darwin wrote at the end of *The Origin of Species*: "There is grandeur in this view of life."

William R. Murry, "Natural Faith," *UU World*, Spring 2009