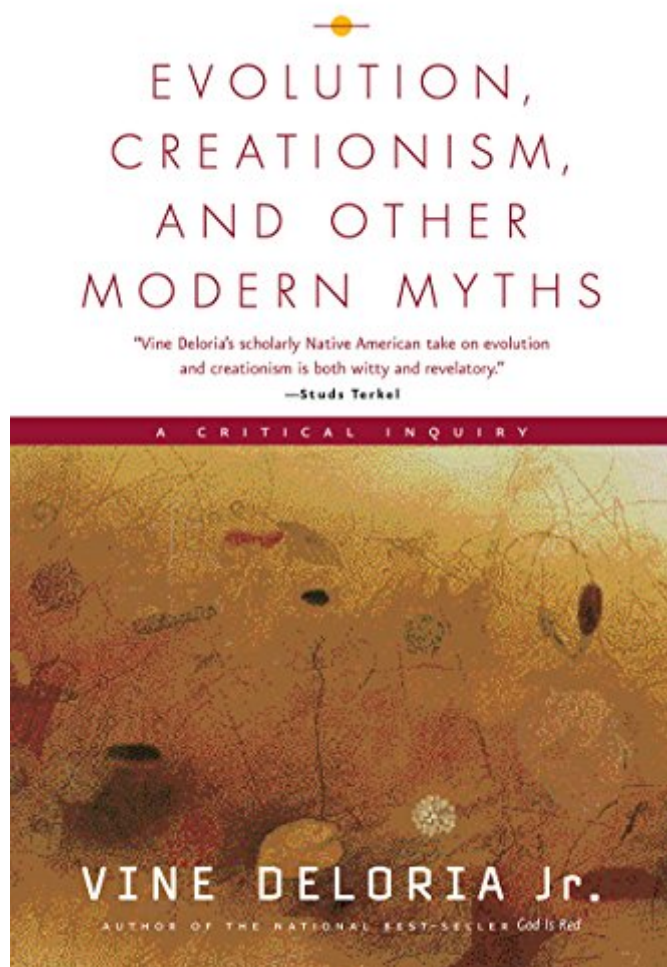


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Evolution, Creationism, And Other Modern Myths: A Critical Inquiry



Synopsis

Using the tension between evolutionists and creationists in Kansas in the late 1990s as a focal point, Deloria takes Western science and religion to task, providing a critical assessment of the flaws and anomalies in each side's arguments.

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Customer Reviews

I was looking for more direct history and myth tales directly from the American Indian point of view. Mr. Deloria is a very intelligent man and gives a truly great description and understanding of the western view. Just not what I was looking for.

DeLoria is an author I have always respected, and there is much in this book to praise, but the presentation of some views and his critique of them is clearly biased and designed to promote a postmodern view of science and culture in which fables, stories and legends are equally as valid as results reached through experimentation and testing in science. His treatment of evolutionist theory

and scientists who defend evolution is fraught with ad hominem attacks, sarcasm, nastiness and rhetorical questions. His references to evolutionist theorists such as Stephen Gould characterize them as "self-appointed high priests of evolution" and the like; on the other hand theologians and ID theorists get "the great Swedish theologian...", "the great German theologian...", or "respected theorist Behe..." (a totally scientifically discredited creationist). Why? Because attacking evolution theory, attacking even Western creationism and religion, paves the way to give equal credit with science to non-Western legends, fables, and oral history. To paraphrase many jurists who say of oral contracts, such "science" is not worth the paper it's printed on. Now, I have written articles and made presentations arguing DeLoria's point from my own perspective -- I DO believe there is much in Non-Western oral history and culture that presages modern science, and much that can be gained by melding western and non-western views, especially for ecological studies. What I object to is the constant sarcasm and lack of respect for scientists who hold views that DeLoria clearly disagrees with -- skip the snotty attitude and personal attacks (which do not exist even for the western creationist/Christians he also clearly disdains). If it's a synthesis he's after, such attacks are not going to further it. But his treatment of religion studies, history, and so forth are quite good -- I just can't get past the aforementioned nastiness, which is totally unnecessary and counter-productive. I would have expected more from an author whose previous works I so admired.

I have read most of Vine Deloria's books, my favorite being *God Is Red*. I read most of them 15 years ago and loved them. I think if I had read this one back then I would have loved it and given it five stars here. But I have spent the past five years reading A LOT about evolution and the Creationism/Intelligent Design "controversy" and then I read this book that, at least by its title, seemed to offer a bridge or at least something fresh on the subject. But like many reviewers here I have found the great Vine Deloria a total flop with this subject, and this book a crashing disappointment. This book reads pretty much like the "creationist" attacks on science and the theory of evolution I have read from the Christian fundamentalists. Neither he nor they want to take the time and effort to really understand what the theory really is, and what scientific thinking and method is. Instead he resorts to straw-man attacks on scientists, saying they are as "faith-based" as religious people. I would have believed this ten years ago; now that I have taken the time to study the subject I simply cannot buy it, sad to say.

Mr. Deloria's scholarship is sound. I've looked at many of his references and it appears that he's

been thorough and fair--his critics and reviewers here have not been! Sadly many of the other critics are apparently either died-in-the-wool evolutionists or else religious folks. Deloria is truly neither, and that is his charm and the source of his brilliance. He is a native American spiritist which is less than ideal. Optimally I'd prefer an agnostic Supreme Court Chief Justice or a world renowned mathematician or even the world chess champion. In short, Deloria clearly demonstrates that creationism, evolutionism and every other theory or myth of our origins is not and cannot truly be rigorous science. He argues convincingly that the only reason we place any emphasis on evolution in science is because scientists feel compelled to take issue with the almost ubiquitous belief in some sort of creator. As an honest scientist I feel that everyone should give this book and its central concepts a fair reading. We all accept that a disproof of existence is effectively impossible. Why, then, should we all invest so much in a theory that gives us so little. While categorization and adaptation are valuable in themselves, there is nothing of predictive or constructive value to Darwin's theory that we should invest so much of our time and resources trying to support it. In fact, working to support (rather than to refute) a theory is, by definition, bad science. Vine Deloria is finally asking the right questions. His is not a political book, but a very sound and very important criticism of what science is and what it is becoming. We can't afford to abandon the enlightenment in order to devote our inquiries solely to supporting pet affections! Required reading!

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