



Written by [James Heiser](#) on May 7, 2018

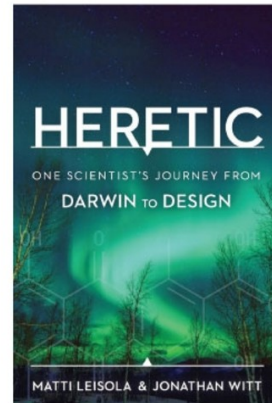
Published in the May 7, 2018 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 34, No. 09

---

## Falling From the Faith

*From the print edition of The New American*

***Heretic: One Scientist's Journey from Darwin to Design*, by Matti Leisola and Jonathan Witt, Seattle: Discovery Institute Press, 2018, 257 pages, paperback.**



In his 1969 book, *Enemies of the Permanent Things*, the conservative philosopher Russell Kirk observed that advocates of “scientism” desired that “Science, with a Roman S, should supplant God.” The hubris of such an ideology came from the perceived “successes” of science. In Kirk’s words:

The high achievements of physical and biological science in the nineteenth century gave powerful reinforcement to the advocates of ‘scientism’ in sociology and politics. Religion, moral tradition, and the complex of established political institutions were irrational and unscientific and subjective, it seemed; surely the scientists must show the preachers and politicians the way to a better world.... Fascism, Naziism, and communism all have claimed to be scientific.

The crass promoters of “scientism” such as Bill Nye and Neil deGrasse Tyson push an embarrassing jumble of virtue signaling, lowbrow atheism, and advocacy of “trendy” pseudo-scientific claptrap about the dangers of global warming. The baseline presumptions of those gripped by “scientism” continue to be a plodding materialism that allows little room for a discussion of the divine.

The title of Matti Leisola’s new book, *Heretic*, is well chosen, because it highlights the fact that the fury that drives his opponents is fundamentally theological in nature, rooted in their rejection of even the possibility of a divine creator. In Leisola’s words, “I am now convinced that Darwin’s theory won out primarily because it fills a need: Scientism, with its allegiance to philosophical materialism, needs mindless evolution to be true, so that proponents of scientism continue to prop up mindless evolution no matter how many contrary fossils slam against it.”

Leisola understands the worldview of his opponents because he once shared it: While still a university student, Leisola wholeheartedly believed in the Darwinian theory of evolution until, while attending the University of Helsinki in 1972, he listened to a series of lectures by American theologian Francis Schaeffer, “and in the course of his lectures I realized how naive my concept of truth was. I went out and bought several of Schaeffer’s books and started my reading in philosophy, which previously I had considered of little value.” It was then that Leisola began to appreciate the philosophical error underlying the theological presuppositions of evolutionists:

I soon saw there was a key philosophical question bigger than science, and yet one that many insisted must be answered in only in one way when thinking scientifically. In the *Philebus* of Plato (429–347 B.C.E.) Socrates considered this all-important question and laid out the two primary possibilities:



Written by [James Heiser](#) on May 7, 2018

Published in the May 7, 2018 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 34, No. 09

---

“Whether we are to affirm that all existing things, and this fair scene which we call the Universe, are governed by the influence of the irrational, the random, and the mere chance; or on the contrary, as our predecessor affirmed, are kept in their course by the control of mind and a certain wonderful regulating intelligence.”

The scientific establishment of our day does not for the most part, explicitly argue for the former over the latter. Instead, they simply insist that we must assume the former anytime we are doing science, must entertain only those explanations consistent with atheism, regardless of what we believe in our private lives. The name for this dogma is methodological materialism, and I came to realize how irrational this view of scientific rationality was.

Leisola’s approach to science is clearly that of an advocate of “Intelligent Design,” that is, he agrees with those who believe that the best explanation for the complexity found in all living beings is a Creator. Adhering to such a worldview has not stopped Leisola from being an effective research scientist; far from it. In fact, Leisola has more than 140 published, peer-reviewed papers (papers that have been, he notes, cited more than 5,000 times in other published scientific literature) and holds seven patents. After Leisola earned his D.Sc. in 1979 from the Helsinki University of Technology, his expertise in the study of enzymes led to a successful career as a bioengineer, in which he became research director for Cultor, an international biotech company. (It is worth noting that Leisola draws on his vast knowledge of enzymes for the 10th chapter of *Heretic*, “Mechanisms Malfunction,” in which he explains the inadequacy of the evolutionary models to account for the existence and development of enzymes.) And Leisola’s career was certainly not limited to the realm of business, as he later became dean of the faculty of chemical and materials sciences at the Finnish Aalto University.

*This article appears in the May 7, 2018, issue of The New American.*

In *Heretic*, Leisola blends a memoir of his own experiences with an evaluation of the way in which much of the academic world has hardened in its ideological commitment to “scientism” in recent decades, even as developments in research continue to make that worldview increasingly untenable. For example, Leisola offers the discovery of soft tissues in a fossil of Tyrannosaurus Rex as a window into the “scientific” mind-set:

In 2005, Mary Schweitzer published her now-famous results of soft tissues in T. rex bones. *Discover* magazine did a retrospective, and the article’s subtitle nicely captured the reaction to her groundbreaking discovery: “When this shy paleontologist found soft, fresh-looking tissue inside a T. rex femur, she erased a line between past and present. Then all hell broke loose.” Conventional wisdom said there was no way dinosaur fossils could contain soft dinosaur tissue. In the same article, Schweitzer described her experience: “I had one reviewer tell me that he didn’t care what the data said, he knew that what I was finding wasn’t possible. I wrote back and said, ‘Well, what data would convince you?’ And he said, ‘None.’”

Leisola also offers an evaluation of many of the purportedly strongest “proofs” that have been raised in the past several generations in support of evolutionary theory, and although his treatment is necessarily technical, the author makes the issues understandable. Thus, for example, when reviewing experiments conducted on bacteria and viruses in which scientists endeavored to determine whether or not evidence for evolutionary processes were at work, the studies found that changes came from a decrease in genetic information:



Written by [James Heiser](#) on May 7, 2018

Published in the May 7, 2018 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 34, No. 09

---

Studies carried out with Q $\beta$ -virus are sometimes heralded in biology textbooks as examples of evolution in action. What gets obscured in such triumphant announcements is this: No new biological information was formed during the experiments and much was lost. I asked my colleague how his experiments, even in principle, demonstrated that the evolutionary mechanism could generate new form and information. He admitted he did not see how it could be interpreted in this way. How can loss of biological information be interpreted as gain of information?

The conversation was an instance of something I ran into frequently: scientists willing to have frank, open-minded conversations with me about evolutionary theory, but only in private. I came to understand through my many international connections that neo-Darwinism, while little valued among mainstream biologists who spent any time thinking about the theory, was treated by them as a third rail — too dangerous to touch. Many who understand one or more of the problems with it are afraid to share their views for fear of losing their positions.

As noted previously, Leisola's area of expertise is in the study of enzymes, and his personal experience working in his field has only strengthened his understanding of the inadequacy of Darwinism to explain the evidence:

My research has often focused on modifying proteins — mainly enzymes — to function better in specific industrial processes, and on altering the metabolism of microbes so they would produce various chemicals economically. More than forty years of work in this field have left me more skeptical than ever of theories of blind, unguided evolution. It is increasingly clear to me that random mutations cannot produce novel functional information — even one new gene — with or without help from natural selection, and with or without help from any of the other ancillary mechanisms proposed to rescue neo-Darwinian evolutionary theory from the swelling onslaught of contrary evidence.

Leisola offers an engaging examination of the intersection of theology, philosophy, and science from the perspective of a scientist who has given much thought to the larger implications of scientific discoveries. The author has not allowed his experiences of academic conflict to embitter him, and, instead, he brings wit and clarity to a variety of complex topics. The "Science and Religion" debate would profit a great deal from more such voices.



## Subscribe to the New American

Get exclusive digital access to the most informative, non-partisan truthful news source for patriotic Americans!

Discover a refreshing blend of time-honored values, principles and insightful perspectives within the pages of "The New American" magazine. Delve into a world where tradition is the foundation, and exploration knows no bounds.

From politics and finance to foreign affairs, environment, culture, and technology, we bring you an unparalleled array of topics that matter most.



[Subscribe](#)

### What's Included?

- 24 Issues Per Year
- Optional Print Edition
- Digital Edition Access
- Exclusive Subscriber Content
- Audio provided for all articles
- Unlimited access to past issues
- Coming Soon! Ad FREE
- 60-Day money back guarantee!
- Cancel anytime.