Murderous minds are among us, ranging from the likes of Norway's Anders Breivik, to his many soulmate shooters and bombers, to hardened prisoners who have killed with less compunction than some of you feel when carving off a slice of Jarlsberg. Arguably one student of human nature has spent more time with murderous minds than anyone else: Dr. Theodore Dalrymple; a psychiatrist who also happens to be perhaps our greatest living essayist. He concludes that: (1) We will never understand from the standpoint of cognitive science why some humans are murderous. (2a) We have bought into the big Rousseauian lie that people are fundamentally good, when in actuality (2b) they're fundamentally evil, and if their evil isn't conquered, murder follows. (3) (2a) has obliterated personal moral responsibility.

Dalrymple, though himself an atheist since the age of 9, has nonetheless fiercely castigated the "new" atheists, and has praised the writing and thought of Christian intellectuals --- who, after all, have for millennia proposed an explanation of murderous minds, and a recipe for conquering the evil within, a recipe the following of which validates personal moral responsibility. But to address (1), (2), and (3), something more than mere praise of such ideas is needed: belief in them and their source is required.

Lecture Open to the Public