

## **Evolution vs. Creationism**

The origin of the universe is a subject of great debate today, particularly because it is one that impacts both the scientific and religious spectra. The main argument of this ideological debate is between the Darwinists and Creationists, those who support the concept of evolution and those who support the Biblical story of creation as being the origin of life on Earth. What was once a matter of personal belief has become a controversial issue over education and ethics, primarily hinging on what theory should be taught in schools and what goes as far as to constitute the infringement of the separation of church and state. While many moderate views of the two ideologies hold that they are not irreconcilable, as many as half of all Americans have interpreted the Biblical story of creation as ruling out evolution altogether. The facts supporting the theory of evolution, however, are irrefutable, and deserve serious consideration.

Evolution is the theory by which inheritance and random mutation, regulated by natural selection, has led to the development of all lifeforms on earth. The concept was originally pioneered by Charles Darwin in his book *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. Later, when the concept of inheritance was developed, modern evolutionary theory came to the fore in explaining how complex organisms over the course of millennia had developed from seemingly primitive origins. Geographical and biological evidence has since been found to support this theory. The age of the earth has been scientifically determined to be roughly 4.7 billion years old, rather than 6,000 years, as it was traditionally believed in the West. Evolutionary links have also been found in fossils to show humans and many other species in various stages of development, as well as the existence of millions of now-extinct species.

Evolution is a scientific theory, which is a common misnomer—this does not imply that evolution has not yet been proven, but in the scientific sense, implies that this is a generally accepted body of knowledge that has been supported with evidence and experimentation. Still, this often results in evolution being refuted as only hypothetical in nature, and thus on an equal level with creationism, which, being a matter of faith, is unsupported by any factual evidence. Because evolution goes against a fundamental interpretation of the story of creation found in the Bible, evolution is often attacked as being atheistic and irreconcilable with creationism, leading to a number of shallow arguments by creationists against the validity of evolution.

Creationists state that evolution is unprovable, because it has never been observed. But even micro-evolution is visible and provable, such as the adaptation of bugs to certain pesticides, and over an extended period of time (millions of years), it is not difficult to imagine this resulting in drastic changes in species. There are many fossil records of intermediary species, traces of evolution in animals (such as vestigial legs in whales), and evidence to show that the mechanisms of evolution are at least immediately provable. In contrast, there is no factual basis behind intelligent design or creationism, besides Scriptural reference. This certainly does not invalidate them as matters of belief, but shows that they and Evolution are not dissimilar and opposing concepts. Evolution has great scientific basis and agreement in the intellectual community over its validity, and should be taught in schools. Creationism is a religious theory that many people refute or have opposing opinions on, which introduces the need for a divine creator, and which should not be considered as an “alternative” to teaching evolution in schools.

The controversy of evolution vs. creationism is one that will continue to heat up the political sphere, but is hopefully one that will eventually be reduced as evolution becomes more

widely accepted. Fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible leads to theories such as creationism and intelligent design, but these are not the only views that are held by Christians. For instance, the Roman Catholic Church, supported by Pope Benedict XVI, teaches the concept of theistic evolution, whereby evolution is merely a tool by which God created life on Earth, albeit one that was divinely manipulated to result in the development of humans. This view holds that Catholicism and modern science are fully reconcilable, and even complimentary to the wonder and power of God to conceive such elaborate design. Evolution is a valid scientific theory, and is generally supported to be true by nearly 95% of American scientists. It remains to be seen in the coming decades whether this trend will spread to the religious American public, or whether the fundamentalist view of the Bible will prevail.