

Teaching evolution in public schools argumentative essay

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Over recent years, there has been much debate as to whether evolution rather than, or in addition to, creationism should be taught in public schools. There are many groups and individuals on both side of the argument. Interestingly, some scientists are in favour of the teaching of creationism, though the vast majority are not. Although it is generally agreed that there is no scientific fact to support the notion of creationism, many believe that it should be taught to students as an alternative viewpoint. However, evolution is scientifically proven and therefore all children in public schools should be taught about it.

Contention between science and religion dates much further back than Charles Darwin's publication of Origin of the Species. There was an early conflict that has since become famous; this was the 1633 ' Trial of Galileo'. It was in this year that Dialogue was published. Dialogue was a book that backed up the Copernican theory claiming that the earth revolved around the sun. This was hugely controversial as the Bible suggests the opposite, that the sun revolves around the earth (Evolution).

Since their beginning, humans have strived to learn and to understand how life originated. As this subject concerns happenings of the past, there is a high level of speculation involved. Furthermore, the question of how life began is an issue that is deeply emotional as it is directly linked to individual personal beliefs and values. In the late 1800s, evolution started to become accepted among professors of science. However, in spite of this, people still opposed it being taught as part of the curriculum in public schools. Even today, evolution is not taught in all American public schools (Teaching, 1999).

It was not until the 1930s that evolution began to properly emerge into the education system. These days, evolutionary naturalism is the most common perspective of origins taught in the West, and over the course of the last fifty years, evolutionists have been adamantly opposed to the teaching of different theories in public schools (Teaching, 1999).

There are various important arguments for teaching evolution rather than creationism in public schools. British scientists claim that pupils must be taught unequivocally that science support the theory of evolution (Creationism, 2006). Five years ago, the Royal Society further support this view. The society's 2006 statement said that pupils may want to " explore the compatibility, or otherwise, of science with various beliefs, and they should be encouraged to do so" (Creationism, 2006).

Creationism upholds the theory that the whole world, and everything in it, was created in seven days. Referring to this notion, the Royal Society added: " A belief that all species on Earth have always existed in their present form is not consistent with the wealth of evidence for evolution, such as the fossil record. Similarly, a belief that the Earth was formed in 4004BC is not consistent with the evidence from geology, astronomy and physics that the solar system, including Earth, formed about 4, 600 million years ago" (Creationism, 1999).

However, in 2008, The Royal Society released a statement in which they were emerging as upholders of the opposite view. In this statement, they claimed that creationism should, in fact, be taught as a legitimate perspective (Smith & Freat, 2008). The Reverend Michael Reiss who was the Royal Society's director of education, claimed that it was " self-defeating to

dismiss as wrong or misguided the 10 per cent of pupils who believed in the literal account of God creating the Universe and all living things as related in the Bible or Koran” (Smith & Freat, 2008). The Reverend went on to say that creationism should be treated as a world view when being taught to students in science lessons. Professor Reiss’ remarks caused disputes between him and fellow scientists and also with the British Government. It is worth noting Charles Darwin was a former fellow of the Royal Society; this highlights the turnaround that the Society has undergone.

The British national curriculum guidelines affirm that creationism is totally irrelevant to school science lessons. If creationism is raised for discussion by a student, the guidelines stipulate that the teacher should comment on how the view differs from evolution, tell the student that creationism is not a scientific theory and therefore religious class is a more appropriate place for the conversation (Smith & Freat, 2008).

Some claim that teaching creationism is one example of inclusive learning, and that this is a valuable reason for including it in science lessons. For example, a Spokesman for the Royal Society said “ Teachers need to be in a position to be able to discuss science theories and explain why evolution is a sound scientific theory and why creationism isn’t” (Smith & Freat, 2008).

The idea seems to be that teachers should try to be sensitive to students who believe in creationism, and while teachers should explain that creationism is not accepted by scientists, they should avoid demeaning the children’s creationist beliefs. However, it is arguable that the Government’s guidelines cover this eventuality by asking the teachers to teach science in science lessons, leaving matters of religion and faith to Religious Studies

lessons.

A significant problem with creationism and the ideas that it represents is that it contradicts many scientifically proven facts in different academic fields. Creationists criticise evolution, but they additionally condemn all scientific concepts that propose a universe dating back further than 6, 000 to 10, 000 years. Examples of this are cosmology, geology, astronomy and relativity (Welcome). Creationism appears to uphold the view that evolution isn't scientifically satisfactory. However, despite the term 'theory of evolution,' the notion that the world evolved over a long period of time is a proven scientific fact. The theory part of evolution refers to how the transformation actually occurred, which is still largely unproven and is still debated among scientists.

There is a vast amount of fossil evidence that adequately validates the fact of evolution. However, there is evidence even more convincing today and that stems from species DNA testing. An example of this is the fact that humans and chimpanzees have over ninety-eight per cent identical genes. This proves how closely related the two species are. It is generally agreed that in the future, most of our new learning of the process of evolution will be provided by DNA information (Evolution).

Importantly, evolution is not deemed as conflicting with religious views of most Christians or Jews. The majority of mainstream Protestant values, the Catholic Church, and numerous other religious doctrines accept evolution as a fact.

There are disagreements concerning evolution, just as there are concerning most theories. For example, most biologists hold the opinion that evolution

has had periods of unevenness throughout the course of history. However, some biologists disagree, believing that the rate of evolution has been, and still is, constant (Evolution). After more than two hundred years, the Catholic Church finally recognised the scientific proof that the earth revolved around the sun. In the same way, it is probable that most Fundamentalists will also eventually accept the theory of evolution. It is difficult to say whether this will happen in the next fifty years or in the next five hundred years, but it will happen.

The debate over whether or not evolution should be taught in public schools is a fascinating one with many depths within it. The ideas of inclusive learning and of introducing more cultural diversity into schools are both forward thinking and positive. However, these ideas refer to matters such as allowing students the time and setting to follow their religious and cultural beliefs, and introducing into classes literary texts by authors of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds; these are, of course, just two examples within a much wider scope. Nevertheless, these movements do not suggest that children should not be taught the truth about the world and the scientific discoveries that have been made. Evolution should be taught in public schools as it is based on scientific fact. Creationism should continue to be acknowledged and discussed within the context of a Religious Studies class, but certainly not within the Sciences.

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