

Teaching creationism in public schools argumentative essay

[Experience](#), [Belief](#)



Abstract

The issue of whether creationism should be taught in schools is one of contention. Many people believe that as many people believe in creationism, it should therefore be part of education and, in particular, part of science lessons in schools. However, there is strong opposition to this, mainly with the argument that creationism is not based on scientific fact and therefore should not be part of a science lesson. Overall, it appears that creationism should be taught as a world view in religious education classes, but not in science subjects.

Over recent years, there has been much debate as to whether 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, creationism is based on a religious faith and therefore is not in any way scientific. Therefore, creationism should not be taught in public schools, as it is not a legitimate scientific alternative to evolution.

Within the argument of whether creationism should be taught academically, there are two main groups: evolutionists and creationists. An evolutionist can be defined as someone who “ accepts the Darwinian argument that natural selection and environmental factors combine to explain the diversity of life we see on earth. An evolutionist may or may not believe that evolution is

the way in which a Divine Being has chosen to work in the world”

(Evolution). On the other side of the debate, a creationist can be defined as “ a person who rejects the theory of evolution and believes instead that the each species on earth was put here by a Divine Being. A Creationist might accept " micro-evolution" (changes in the form of a species over time based on natural selection), but rejects the notion that one species can-- over time-- become another species” (Evolution).

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 against teaching 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." It then went on to say: " However young people are poorly served by deliberate attempts to withhold, distort or misrepresent scientific knowledge and understanding in order to promote particular religious beliefs" (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 & Freaan, 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 & Freaan, 2008). The Reverend went on to say that creationism should be treated as a world view when being taught to students in science lessons.

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 & Freaan, 2008).

The view that creationism has nothing to do with science is a commonly held view. For example, Professor Lewis Wolpert who of University College Medical School, said: " Creationism is based on faith and has nothing to do with science, and it should not be taught in science classes. It is based on religious beliefs and any discussion should be in religious studies" (Smith & Freaan, 2008).

Furthermore, Dr John Fry, who is a University of Liverpool physicist, said: " Science lessons are not the appropriate place to discuss creationism, which is a world view in total denial of any form of scientific evidence. Creationism doesn't challenge science: it denies it!" (Smith & Freaan, 2008).

The idea that science lessons should, exclusively, teach the subject of

science to students seems to be both tautological and obvious. Nevertheless, an interesting quote from Professor Reiss, said: “ Just because something lacks scientific support doesn’t seem to me a sufficient reason to omit it from a science lesson” (Smith & Fearn, 2008). This particular comment appears to have been said irrationally, as it clearly makes no sense and is rather an extended oxymoron. However, there are other British scientists who agree with the Professor. For example, Professor John Bryant, a University of Exeter biologist, supported the notion that creationism should be talked over as another argument for the origins of earth and of mankind. “ If the class is mature enough and time permits, one might have a discussion on the alternative viewpoints,” he said. “ However, I think we should not present creationism as having the same status as evolution” (Smith & Fearn, 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 & Fearn, 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 also criticise all scientific theories that suggest a universe older than 6, 000 to 10, 000 years old, for example; cosmology, geology, astronomy, relativity etc.” (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 creationism 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 the nature of an academic subject should be changed, which is exactly what people who want creationism to be taught in science lessons are proposing. The idea of creationism has no scientific evidence to back it up and, therefore, it does not have a place in a science classroom. Furthermore, the theory of evolution is accepted, by most, as the truth of the origin of the universe and of mankind. To introduce creationism, even as a possibility of a cause of such origins, would be introducing untruths into the science classroom.

Creationism should not be taught in public schools as it is not an alternative to the scientifically proven theory of evolution. Creationism should continue to be acknowledged and discussed within the context of a Religious Studies class, but certainly not within the Sciences. Rather than representing a

progression in the education system and in society, introducing creationism would be a major step backwards for us and for future generations.

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