

Darwin's Theory of Evolution via Natural Selection:

a) Species change over time; some traits become more common, others less. This process of change is driven by natural selection. The traits that become more common are the ones that are “adaptive” or “increase fitness” (that is, a creature's chances of living longer and producing more offspring). Example: the long neck of giraffes.

b) Speciation occurs. The process described in a) continues to the point where descendants eventually constitute a different species from their remote ancestors. New species evolve from older ones.

c) The common ancestry of different species. The common/shared ancestors of more closely related species (e.g. lions and tigers) are more recent than the shared ancestors of less closely related ones (e.g. tigers and humans). But we'll find a common ancestor for very dissimilar species, like humans and flies, if we go back far enough.

Darwin's theory does *not*:

- Either assert or deny the existence of God as the creator of the universe.
- Make any claims about the “evolution” of stars, galaxies, solar systems, or the universe.
- Make any moral claims or value judgments (e.g. “the weak ought to perish”).

Some different theories about God, the universe, and the origins of living things that either accept or reject Darwin's theory ("→" means "caused" or "created", "G" means "God," and "E" means "evolution via natural selection"):

Atheistic evolutionism

The universe (natural forces, acting blindly)→DNA, then E→ all of the different species with their traits. No God, no "first cause" of the universe.

Theistic evolutionism

G→universe, then the universe→DNA, then E→ all the different species and all of their adaptations and maladaptations.

God created the universe billions of years ago with no living things in it, but He set it on a path so that eventually *it* would create living things. The different kinds of living things (species) were *not* created by God *directly*, that is, in *separate* acts of creation. Rather, God created species indirectly, *via* evolution by natural selection.

Two creationist views—"Creationism" insists that at least some facts about living things cannot be explained as the result of purely natural causes; they can only be explained as the result of God's intervention in nature, i.e. his *miracles*. Creationism, so defined, is incompatible with Darwin's theory. If Darwin's theory is true, then creationism is false; if either version of creationism is true, then Darwin's theory is false.

Theistic evolutionism is NOT a kind of creationism. Why not? Because creationism says that miracles are needed to explain some of feature of *living things*, whereas theistic evolutionism says that God created the *universe* many billions of years ago, and that after he created it, he didn't interfere with it any more. Nature developed on its own, in accordance with the "laws" that govern it, without any nudging, tinkering, or helping hand from God.

The two creationist views are:

i) “Moderate” creationism:

G → the universe, then later, E → *many* new species and most of the transitions in the history of life on Earth.

But also:

G directly → *some* of the transitions in the history of life on Earth.

God created the universe several billion years ago. Evolution by natural selection does create some new species from old ones. But natural selection can't explain all of the transitions in the history/development of life on Earth. Some of the transitions were caused, not by natural selection, but directly by God. That is, God intervened in the course of nature and gave evolution a nudge. (Which transitions? Perhaps invertebrates to vertebrates, or the appearance of the first eyes, or the appearance of the first animals with consciousness, or the appearance of the first humans, or Different moderate creationists point to different transitions in the history of life as requiring a divine nudge to explain it.)

ii) “Hard-core” creationism:

G directly → all of the different species and their adaptations.

God created the world only a few thousand years ago. All of the animal species in existence now were created by God, at about the same time, shortly after he created the Earth. No new species have come into existence since then (i.e. no “speciation” has occurred). The Book of Genesis in the Old Testament, read literally, provides an accurate natural history of life on Earth.

Which of these views does Paley accept? Since he wrote in the very early 1800's, before Darwin even wrote *The Origin of Species*, he never heard of Darwin's theory, and thus, neither accepted or rejected it. So he neither accepted nor rejected any of the above views.

Which of the above views *would* he have accepted, had he been aware of Darwin's theory? Probably one of the versions of creationism. He probably would have agreed with those creationists alive today (e.g. Henry Morris) who maintain that evolution by natural selection cannot possibly explain how the first eye came into existence.

Sober's reply to Paley's design argument for God's existence:

Darwin's theory provides a better explanation of the order (g) that we find in eyes (and other living things) than the theory that they were designed and created by an omniscient and omnipotent intelligent designer. Why? Because:

i) Darwin's theory can explain "arbitrary similarities" among organisms.

ii) Darwin's theory can explain imperfect adaptations like the Panda's thumb, whereas the omniscient intelligent designer theory cannot.