

Darwin's Theory and its Impact on America

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Evolution, Creationism, and Public Acceptance in the United States

In schools in some US states, the theory of Darwin is replaced by the teaching of creationism; however, recently, there have been increasing demands to include alternative courses in the curriculum of educational institutions (intelligent design). Supporters of the divine origin of species (creationists) are trying again to resume discussions in scientific audiences, which carry a hidden threat to the development of science and biotechnology (United States History n.p.).

Darwin's theory of evolution is the worst seen in the United States, and the most powerful position was taken in Iceland. A new study attempted to clarify why society rejects Darwinism. Among the main reasons were political views and attitudes toward abortion. Darwin's theory does not take root well in the US – worse than in other Western countries. Americans are not ready to recognize a common ancestor from which a man and a monkey derive their origin (Weiss 1206–31).

A new study, based on data from past surveys, has unsuccessfully attempted to elucidate the reasons for the massive American dislike of Darwinism: about a third of Americans deny it the right to exist. Under the leadership of John Miller of the Michigan State University, scientists compared the results of surveys conducted in the United States in 1985 and 2005, in Japan – in 2001, and at different times – in 32 European countries. Polls sought to clarify how society relates to the idea of evolution. While in the United States, only 14% of adults believe in Darwin's theory, in Japan, this figure is 78%, and, for example, in Iceland, Denmark, Sweden, and France, the concept of evolution was adopted by 80%.

Reject the theory of Darwin about 30% of Americans. In Western European countries, the number of such inflexible citizens varies from 7% in the UK to 15% in the Netherlands. And the number of doubters in the United States has increased over the past 20 years from 7 to 21%. Of all the countries that have entered the field of vision of researchers, only in Muslim Turkey was the idea of evolution even less popular than in the States (United States History n.p.).

Scientific Significance of Darwinian Theory

Darwin's theory is 143 years old, and it has become more of a platform for the development of science and modern biotechnology. In 2003, the 50th anniversary of the discovery of DNA was celebrated; last year, the decoding of several genomes, including a human, was completed. Not far off is the creation of new drugs, perhaps so-called individual medicine, when everyone will prescribe

their dose of a drug, measured by molecules, rather than tablets (Weiss 1206-31).

At the same time, many do not like Darwin's theory, and such differences in flavor are quite understandable. However, the desire to bring personal preferences to the abolition of the teaching of evolution in school means a very definite state policy, and its results will not be in favor of the next generations. At the same time, modern supporters of the theory of evolution are not pursuing spiritual goals. They are trying to convince politicians and officials of the need for alternative specialties and courses where one could get knowledge about the divine origin of the world and the divine industry. This implies teaching staff, funding, the opportunity to win research grants, etc (Szalay n.p.).

Intelligent Design and the Science Education Debate

In recent years, the most active supporters of intelligent design have manifested themselves in the United States. So recently, during the conference of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, a rather strange document, Steve's Project, was signed at first glance. In defense of the evolutionary theory of the famous British Charles Darwin, 220 scientists made speeches. The very title of the document is explained by the fact that the names of all signers are very close in sound: Steve, Steven, Stephanie, Stephanie, etc. There were also two Nobel laureates among them, who gave the document special weight and importance in both political and scientific circles – Steve Weinberg and Stephen Chu, who are working on solving various biological problems (Weiss 1206-31).

All of them insist on verifying the evolutionary theory and the necessity of teaching it in schools. Scientists are against replacing it with the newfangled theory of intelligent design, as they are trying to do in some states. The physicist Steve Weinberg even jokingly suggested to supporters of the divine origin of the species to organize a nationwide referendum on the adoption of the Second Law of Thermodynamics. He claims that he will gladly vote against him because he breaks the order in his office and causes confusion in life. It turns out that the threat of brainwashing for young Americans takes on a sizeable scope (Szalay n.p.).

Scientific Literacy and the Teaching of Evolution

Indeed, the US authorities in the middle of the last year, 2002, expressed serious concern about the educational level of their citizens in the field of natural sciences. According to a study conducted by the US National Scientific Organization, only 45% of American adults know about the main purpose of DNA in the body, 22% were able to give a correct definition of the concept of the molecule, and only 48% confidently stated that the electrons are smaller in size than the atom. Only one-third of the respondents demonstrated knowledge of the essence of the research process, the concept of probability, and the rules for conducting experiments. Moreover, these surveys are conducted every two years, beginning in 1979, but, as analysts say, their results as a whole remain on the same level

(Ruse 870–72).

One of the reasons for the stagnation of the natural sciences and educational level in the United States, according to experts, is the poor training of school teachers in mathematics, physics, chemistry, and other natural sciences, including biology. In this regard, one of the letters, published in the well-known American peer-reviewed scientific journal, causes despondency. I grew up in Oklahoma, in the center of the Biblical belt, writes Lisa Lindeman, a Scientific American reader. The explanations of fossils (petrified remains of animals and plants) include the statement that dinosaurs lived to Adam and Eve while angels inhabited the Earth.

Apparently, in these conditions, increasing the influence of creationists on politicians and officials can lead to a deterioration of the situation and a drop in education. After the announcement of the results of this survey, asked the question – how can a nation with such knowledge in chemistry, physics, and biology seriously discuss problems such as cloning and genetic engineering? Recall that in the US, cloning is prohibited in general, that is, experiments with human embryonic [stem cells](#), which have great therapeutic value (Morris n.p.).

According to the well-known geneticist Robert Winston, who delivered a lecture in the framework of the Week of Science held in St. Petersburg on April 6, this harms science. So, some scientists from America who have engaged in research in the field of therapeutic cloning have already moved to the UK and continue their work in this country. I'm not sure that Bush understands sufficiently what this is about, said Lord Winston. In his view, one of the advantages of the UK is that there are scientists in the upper house of parliament who have some influence on the government and can convince him since the scientists themselves are recognized experts in their field.

Religious and Political Influences on Evolution Acceptance

To understand the reasons for the rejection of the theory of evolution in the United States, the team led by Miller had to study some additional factors. As a result, they found that the reasons lie in the unique symbiosis of American religiosity, political activity, and powerful public opinion, which manifests itself in the understanding of biological science. The research report is published in the latest Science issue. A complex statistical analysis has made it possible to distinguish three key socio-cultural factors influencing the ratio of the average American to the theory of evolution. They include orthodox religions, attitudes towards abortion, and low levels of biological literacy (Menton n.p.).

Thus, some or other confessional preferences almost twice affect the attitude towards Darwinism in the United States than in Europe. Miller says that America, unlike Europe, has preserved a strong independent Protestant tradition, in line with which believers perceive the Bible and see in the Book of Genesis (the first book of the Pentateuch) a documentary account of the creation of the world. In Europe, says Miller, Protestants, having split from the Roman Catholic Church in the 16th century,

retained a hierarchy that remained part of the university system.

Their political views also influence the attitude of Americans toward Darwinism. As the study showed, supporters of Republican conservatives, whose program includes, in particular, the fight against abortion, are much more likely to reject Darwin's theory than supporters of Democrats who uphold the right to abortion. In Europe, the correlation of the right views with the rejection of Darwinism is much less pronounced (Menton n.p.).

Conservatism and Limited Biological Knowledge

The tendency of Darwin's rejection in the USA was most clearly manifested, in the opinion of researchers, in the second half of the twentieth century, when the conservative wing of the Republican Party accepted creationism – the doctrine of the creation of the world by God, in order to secure support for the southern and Midwestern states. Miller recalls one of Reagan's pre-election speeches during a trip to these states, in which he mentioned that there was no chimp in my family.

Finally, the low level of biological knowledge is of great importance. A large proportion of adult Americans have a very vague idea of the main biological and genetic discoveries of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In a 2005 study referenced by the authors of the article in *Science*, 78% of the respondents agreed that plants and animals developed gradually from other organisms. At the same time, 62% believed that God created man and evolution has nothing to do with it. Also, it turned out that less than half of US adults can give at least the most general definition of DNA. Only a third agree with the statement that more than half of the human genes are identical to the genes of mice, and only 38% of the respondents know that more than half of the human genes are common with chimpanzees.

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