

# Teaching the origins of humans

Irony makes life more interesting. The debate over teaching evolution in public schools continues in the year 2006. Religious groups continue dominating the opposition to Darwin's theory. The irony lies in the knowledge of



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On education

Charles Darwin's initial life path toward the clergy.

Living with moral conflict over his findings on the Galapagos Islands in the 1830s, Darwin believed that expressing his thoughts equated to "confessing a murder," according to the article, "Charles Darwin: Evolution of a Scientist" by Jerry Adler, published on November 28, 2005 in Newsweek magazine. His theories about the concepts of evolution — that living beings changed, adapted, and eventually became extinct over time — go against the biblical belief of life suddenly appearing. Furthermore, Darwin thought that his destiny existed in the underworld, as a result of promoting "Survival of the Fittest".

Despite his trepidations toward his life work, since his death in 1882 Darwin has rested just a few feet away from Sir Isaac Newton in Westminster Abbey. More than a centu-

ry later, in 1996, Pope John Paul II stated "There is no essential conflict between Darwin's theory and Catholicism."

Back in 1925, John Scopes, a teacher from Tennessee, faced legal action in what has become known as

"The Monkey Trial" for his instruction of evolution in his classroom. Scopes was condemned for violating state law prohibiting the teaching of evolution. In the 1960s, chief justice of the Supreme Court, Earl Warren, established the prohibition of teaching evolution in Arkansas, arguing that it violated the First Amendment. However, 20 years down the line, the Balanced Treatment for Creation-Science and Evolution-Science Act was passed in Arkansas, which lasted for one year before it was deemed unconstitutional.

In the 1980s, a new idea regarding the creation of the world came into play: intelligent design. To help us understand the complexity of living organisms, it is held that there is an "intelligent designer." This belief can also uphold the idea of a greater force being responsible for the world's creation. The major difference between this new thought and

evolution is that one single person is not necessarily the sole creator — yet, divinity still plays an important role.

Dover, Pa., currently hoards most of the recent debates over teaching intelligent design in public classrooms. Margaret Talbot delves into this court case in her discussion titled, "Darwin in the Dock." Her article in *The New Yorker* magazine, published on Dec. 5, 2005, provides the details leading to the ultimate decision of keeping evolution instruction in the classrooms and religious teachings outside of public education.

State's Departments of Education take responsibility for creating standards of learning within public classrooms. Part of being an American is having the freedom of religious beliefs. A separation of church and state still exists in our country. Interestingly, in the present moment, less than half of all Americans believe in evolution.

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