

Introduction

Why study this topic? What is the importance of it?

Everyone wonders about where we came from, what is the purpose of life, and what happens after we die. We all *believe* something about those questions.

We focus on origins, because what we believe about our origin determines what we believe about life, the value of life, morality, our future – everything! If we were made by a Creator, there is purpose in life. Everything else ever made had a purpose. If there is a Creator, then that Creator is greater than we are and we have some measure of accountability, a basis for morality, and reasons for concepts such as justice, compassion.

If there is no Creator, if we are the result of trillions of accidents, there is no meaning, and no “soul” and nothing after death. It is an important topic. No one wants to be wrong about this one.

What are the options for the origin of the universe? Where did it all come from? And How?

1. **There is no cause.** The universe has always existed. This view was the predominant *secular* view till ~75 years ago, but scientists acknowledge the universe is running down, and nothing can run down forever. It had to have a beginning that “wound it up”.
2. **Big Bang** Approx 14 billion years ago all the mass and energy in the universe was condensed into a dot the size of a pin head, (they have no explanation for where that mass and energy came from) and it exploded, forming stars, galaxies, planets, everything. Over time, hydrogen turned into all the other elements, and purely by chance, organic compounds formed which became alive and resulted in the universe we know. The two key words are time and chance. There was no intelligence, no design, no purpose in anything. Nothing was aiming at life, it all just happened. Given enough time, “anything is possible”. Scientists acknowledge things look designed, but say that is not/cannot be true.
3. **Special Creation** There was an eternal, non-material, intelligent Designer that established the laws of physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy and brought the universe into existence. Since matter cannot create itself, this intelligent Creator must have existed before matter and is non-material. Life forms were made perfectly but now are devolving due to mutations and the Second Law of Thermodynamics.

What is the significance of these different options?

1. If there was no designer/maker, no intelligence - then there is no purpose

and no meaning in the universe. If we came from meaninglessness and go to meaninglessness, there is no meaning now. There is nothing that “should be”, only what “is”. Nothing is right or wrong. It just “is.”

Bill Nye, “the science guy”, said “I’m insignificant... I’m just another speck of sand ... And the earth really in the cosmic scheme of things is another speck. And the sun an unremarkable star. ... And the galaxy is a speck. I’m a speck on a speck orbiting a speck among other specks among still other specks in the middle of specklessness. But humans cannot live without some meaning. So we cling to some reason for meaning in spite of our beliefs. British physicist and TV personality [Brian Cox](#) (a confessed humanist) admits: “... there is self-evidently meaning in the universe because my own existence, the existence of those I love, and the existence of the entire human race means something to me. I think this because I have had the remarkable luxury of spending time in education.”

Richard Dawkins said “I’m a passionate Darwinist when it comes to science, when it comes to explaining the world, but I’m a passionate anti-Darwinist when it comes to morality and politics”

2. If there is a Maker there is purpose and meaning. Everything ever made came from a source of intelligence and had a purpose in the mind of its maker. Right and wrong are determined by the way the object made is used and if it fits the design/intention of the maker. Col 1:16 says “all things were made by Him and for Him”.

This issue is often framed as one of **science v religion**. It is not. It is two faith systems in conflict. One system *believes* a God made everything, gives purpose, and there is a real, eternal future.

The other system *believes* nothing made the universe, there was no cause for life, just the chance actions of atoms, that life grew more complex purely by chance, and there is nothing (knowable) after this life. Both are faith systems. But most people believe that since scientists hold to evolution it must be scientific. NO! Just because a scientist makes a statement does not make it scientific – repeatable, testable or falsifiable.

Since most people aren't scientists, they assume the scientists know more and must be correct. So some try to put the two views together in some form of theistic evolution, or “evolutionary creation”, that somehow God used and directed evolution over long periods of time.

Can you see any problems with that position? Here are three.

1) Philosophical problem: A purposeful, all-powerful and all knowing Being using blind chance to accomplish a “purpose”. The words purpose and chance are opposites and mutually exclusive. If such a god used chance, then it is as

surprised as we are. If it is chance, then that god is not a god, but a bystander. If God directed the process, it is not “evolution”. It is purposeful, intelligent design. In this context “evolution” means more than simple “change”. It means the addition of information - intelligent instructions for change within the cell.

2) Linguistic problem: All forms of theistic evolution make room for billions of years. Why? Because evolution requires *time, lots of time*. The Hebrew word for *day* in Genesis 1 is “*yom*” and is used over 2000 times. It can mean a 24 hour day, or it can refer to a longer period of time. But when used with a number, it always refers to a 24 hour day. And it is used that way 431 times in the Bible! (359 outside of Gen 1) Also, the phrase “morning and evening” is used with the numbered days, and that too always refers to a 24 hour day. The writer of Genesis could not have been clearer or stronger in communicating that he intended us to understand those days as literal days, not long periods of time. If he had intended to mean longer periods of time there were simpler and clearer ways to do that. (*I-olam*)

There can be no doubt as to the intent of the original writers of Genesis. In a well-known quote the Oxford Hebrew scholar James Barr, himself hostile to the Genesis account of creation a few thousand years ago, nevertheless asserts, “... probably, so far as I know, there is no professor of Hebrew or Old Testament at any world-class university who does not believe that the writer(s) of Genesis 1–11 intended to convey to their readers the ideas that:

- creation took place in a series of six days which were the same as the days of 24 hours we now experience
- the figures contained in the Genesis genealogies provided by simple addition a chronology from the beginning of the world up to later stages in the biblical story
- Noah’s flood was understood to be world-wide and extinguish all human and animal life except for those in the ark.”

Note that the days of Genesis do not line up with the evolutionary model. Plants were made on day 3, but the sun, moon and stars aren’t made till day 4. If those “days” were millions of years, that would be a problem! Linguistically, I can see no way to harmonize the Bible with the long ages necessary for evolution.

3) Theological problem: Gen 2 and 3 says Adam and Eve sinned, and death and suffering were the consequences. There was no death of animals with “*nephesh*” (life/soul) before Gen 3. Rom 5:12 says it was because of Adam’s sin that death entered the world and spread to all. God’s provision for sin and death was to send a Savior. The whole Judeo-Christian religion was an answer to the curse of sin and death. If there were millions of years of death, suffering and decay before sin, the main message of Christianity is wrong. It is invalidated and there is no need for a Savior. As far as I know, all who hold a theistic-evolution position also reject a literal Adam and Eve.

Although there are many famous Christian leaders who believe God used some kind of evolution, I know of no way to harmonize evolution with the Bible. Theistic evolution satisfies neither science nor the scripture. As a young man William Provine believed in Creation, then as a scientist and professor he believed in Evolution. He said '... belief in modern evolution makes atheists of people. One can have a religious view that is compatible with evolution only if the religious view is indistinguishable from atheism.'

In the remainder of this course we will look primarily at the **scientific evidence** to see how well it fits with Evolution, theistic evolution and Creation positions.