

Teaching creationism makes kids less intelligent, says Bill Nye

The Science Guy worries that forcing children to believe the world is only 6,000 years old prevents them from thinking critically.

by Chris Matyszczyk // Dember 13, 2014 // C/Net



Bill Nye wants kids to think, rather than believe something that, to him, is untenable. Newsmax/YouTube screenshot by Chris Matyszczyk/CNET

We're becoming better and better at making artificial beings, but we still aren't terribly sure how our own world came about.

There are those who prefer to imagine that it was one big, Godly bang. Others, though, think it was just a big Scientific Bang that hasn't yet been entirely explained, but soon will be.

There's a certain tension between some members of each camp. This frustrates erudite scientific minds such as Bill Nye. In an interview with Newsmax, he explained that *you have to be quite deluded to think that the Earth is only 6,000 years old.*

Thinking something like that is simply not thinking at all. "The Earth is, by the latest reckoning, 4.54 billion years old," he said.

He explained: "The problem is we have adults who have very strong conservative views that are reluctant to let kids learn about evolution."

Nye said he has no idea why these adults would be frightened, but insists that evolution is "the fact of life." Nye said that such adults get on school boards and try to prevent the teaching of evolution. This, to him, is uniquely an American problem.

Though he said he has no idea why such attitudes prevail, actually he has every idea. He blames evangelical Christians who "cling to this book written 5,000 years ago...and want to use that as a substitute for a science textbook."

This, Nye believes, affects children's intelligence. Fundamentalists are "holding the kids back."

"They will not have this fundamental idea that you can question things," he said of these kids. They will not be able to "think critically, use skeptical thought to learn about nature."

He said he found this extremely troubling because it's happening "in the world's most technologically advanced society."

Believing in absolutes is very tempting. In a world of few certainties, those absolutes that appear persuasive can serve as anchors or crutches, depending on your perspective and your own state of security.

It's not, though, as if the arguments will stop anytime soon. Just as creationists complained about Neil DeGrasse Tyson's "Cosmos" -- and finally got their own, very short version -- so scientists such as Stephen Hawking have expressed their clear views that the notion of a God is, to them, without foundation.

Nye is right in saying, though, that much of the rest of the world looks upon this argument as rooted in American culture.

Even the Pope -- to whom Nye alluded -- accepts the idea of evolution. On the other hand, America is perhaps the only place in the world where a sportswriter can get into a creationism-evolution debate with a retired sportsman and find that his employer, ESPN, suspends him from Twitter.

Will the two sides ever have a come-to-Jesus meeting? God knows, but I doubt it.