

Empedocles (c. 490 – 430 BC)

Greek Philosopher

Thought only some animals and plants survived, others die out.

Animals and plants were like disjointed parts of the ones we see now.

Animals and plants that survived seem like they were created that way but it was actually accidental that they did.



Tusi (1201 – 1274)

Persian Scholar

Argued that those organisms that could gain new features could gain an advantage over those that did not and survived.



Epicurus (341 – 270 BC)

Greek Philosopher

Believed that the goddess Gaia created lots of different species in the past.

Only those that functioned the best survived and had offspring.



Erasmus Darwin (1731 - 1802)

English Physician

Thought that the strongest and most active animals would reproduce.

Believed that animals transmuted (evolved) from other living things.



Al-Jahiz (776 – 868)

Arab Prose Writer

Argued that animals struggled for existence, resources, to breed and avoid being eaten. Those that were successful were better able to survive.



Thomas Robert Malthus (1766 – 1834)

English Cleric and Scholar

Argued that if populations grew then they would struggle to survive as food would become scarcer. In this case, some would die of disease or hunger and others would live.



Anaximander of Miletus (c. 610 – 546 BC)

Greek Philosopher

First animals lived in water during a wet phase of the Earth's past.



Augustine of Hippo (354 - 430)

Bishop and Theologian

Believed that God created life but that living things had been transformed slowly over time.



Georges-Louis Leclerc (1707 – 1788)

French Philosopher

Thought all the mammals had descended from as few as 38 original animal types.



Ibn Khaldun (1332 - 1406)

Arab Historian

Thought living things were able to transform from one thing to another.



Zhang Zhou (c. 369 – 286 BC)

Chinese Philosopher (Taoist)

Believed that plants and animals did change and that the species were not fixed.



Pierre Louis Maupertuis (1698 - 1759)

French Mathematician and Philosopher

Adaptations result in new varieties of the living thing as well as lead to new species.



Alfred Wallace (1823 - 1913)

British Naturalist and Explorer

Thought that natural selection caused varieties of the same species based on evidence from observations in South America and Asia.

Emphasised how environmental changes could lead to natural selection (adaptive traits).



Charles Darwin (1809 - 1882)

English Naturalist and Geologist

Brought together the ideas of natural selection, adaptation and a single origin of life. He went on to state that humans were not separate from all living things but had developed through the same evolutionary process. He emphasised survival of the fittest and the competition that allowed certain varieties to survive due to inherited traits.



The reason Darwin is known for evolutionary theory is the way that he combined the ideas so that they made sense – there was a single origin of life for all living things, that living things changed through adaptations that helped them to survive better in their environment and that these adaptations led to evolution from the original living thing to the ones we see now.





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Lamarck (1744 – 1829):

French Naturalist

Thought that transmutation (evolution) of species occurred due to inherited traits that helped them adapt to the environment.



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Taoists thought the environment affected the attributes of different living things.
Believed that plants and animals did change and that the species were not fixed.



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Thought modifications occur when living things reproduce.
Adaptations result in new varieties of the living thing as well as lead to new species.





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French Philosopher



Stated that species were actually just varieties of animals which had been modified from the original animal due to environmental factors.

Thought all the mammals had descended from as few as 38 original animal types.

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Said that 'one and the same kind of living filament is and has been the cause of all organic life'. This means that all living things have a common ancestor.



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First animals lived in water during a wet phase of the Earth's past.

Land-dwelling ancestors of humans would have been born in the water and then spent some of their life on land.

First human would have been the child of a different type of animal.



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Thought living things were able to transform from one thing to another.

Stated that humans developed from the world of monkeys by a process that led to numerous species.



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Argued that those organisms that could gain new features could gain an advantage over those that did not and survived.

Thought elements mixed and changed to create three types of living things – plants, animals and humans.

Thought that some animals were more advanced than others and that humans developed from those advanced animals.

Suggested that humans came from apes that live in Western Sudan (in Africa).



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Robert Edmond Grant (1793 - 1874)

British Anatomist

Proposed that animals and plants had a common evolutionary start point from which they then diverged.



Robert Chambers (1802 – 1871)

Scottish Geologist and Publisher

Argued that the Solar System and Earth evolved, as well as living things on earth.

