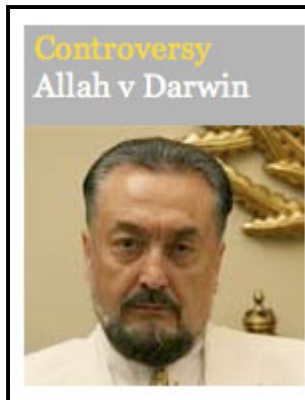


# Turkish Creationist Challenges Dawkins

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The web site of *The Guardian*, one of Great Britain's most widely read newspapers, reported on Adnan Oktar's invitation to Richard Dawkins to take part in an open debate. The report, which appeared on the Science page on 19 August, 2008, under the headline "Creationist challenges Dawkins" read:



"... his [Richard Dawkins'] [latest challenge](#) comes from a ... Turkish figure called Harun Yahya whose lavishly produced ... four-volume tome [The Atlas of Creation](#) caused a stir last year when it was sent to thousands of academics across Europe.

Yahya (real name Adnan Oktar) has invited Dawkins to debate Darwin's theory of evolution with him publicly. **Yahya believes the theory 'has lately suffered a global collapse'.**

'If Dawkins sincerely believes in this theory, we'd like to invite him to Turkey, or else we could come to UK to have a discussion. Dawkins should clarify hundreds of questions, only a few of which are listed below, before the cameras. So we, as well as the public, will be able to hear what he has to say.'

... And for some reason he has [a whole website devoted to correcting the BBC](#).

Yahya's challenge to Dawkins continues:

**'Let Dawkins ask the same questions to us, and let us give our answers. Let us supply our evidence, and let him bring his - if he has any. Then let the public decide who is right.'**

<https://www.harunyahya.info/en/articles/turkish-creationist-challenges-dawkins>

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**SCIENCE BLOG**

Creationist challenges Dawkins  
Richard Dawkins has been challenged to a public debate by an eccentric Turkish creationist

Richard Dawkins is used to being provoked by hoary American evangelical creationists. But his latest challenge comes from a strange Turkish figure called Harun Yahya whose lavishly produced (and frankly postposterous) four-volume tome *The Atlas of Creation* caused a stir last year when it was sent to thousands of academics across Europe.

Yahya (real name Adnan Oktar) has invited Dawkins to debate Darwin's theory of evolution with him publicly. Yahya believes the theory "has lately suffered a global collapse".

If Dawkins sincerely believes in this theory, we'd like to invite him to Turkey, or else we could come to UK to have a discussion. Dawkins should clarify hundreds of questions, only a few of which are listed below, before the cameras. So we, as well as the public, will be able to hear what he has to say.

Although coming from a Muslim rather than a Christian perspective, Yahya's approach to presenting the creationist argument will be familiar to evolutionary biologists. He selectively quotes from scientists. He claims tiny statistical probabilities that biological structures could have appeared by chance - but conveniently ignores the fact that the jump from nothing to complete structure that these probabilities imply is entirely different from the gradual changes produced by natural selection. He triumphantly cites the Piltdown Man bones as evidence that evolutionary biologists are out to dupe us all, even though the century-old fake is irrelevant to the evidence for evolution.

He also brings the old drum about there supposedly being no transitional fossils - there are, in fact, lots. And for some reason he has a whole website devoted to correcting the BBC.

Yahya's challenge to Dawkins continues:

Let Dawkins ask the same questions to us, and let us give our answers. Let us supply our evidence, and let him bring his - if he has any. Then let the public decide who is right. We want the public to know on a larger scale how Darwinism is a false theory and how it is the greatest deception of the world's history. We are confident that the days are soon to come when people will laugh, asking themselves "How could we ever believe this theory?"

In the Turkish courts, Yahya's organisation is currently using blasphemy laws to fight the publication of Dawkins' book *The God Delusion*.

"We are not against democracy, but no one can insult or defame our belief," Yahya's press assistant Seda Aral told me. She would not reveal how much money had been spent promoting *The Atlas of Creation*, which sells for 99p in hard copy. "We don't see the need to share this with the media," she said, although she confirmed that a "few thousand" copies of the book had been sent out.

She also denied that Yahya's organisation is supported by funding from Saudi Arabia, as has been suggested in the media, although she added, "We would be delighted to have that support."

Unfortunately for Yahya, his challenge will almost certainly come to nothing because Dawkins has vowed not to participate in such debates on the grounds that it grants undeserved scientific credibility to his opponents.

He cites advice from the late evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould:

Winning is not what the creationists realistically aspire to. For them, it is sufficient that the debate happens at all. They need the publicity. We don't. To the public, which is their natural constituency, it is enough that their man is seen sharing a platform with a real scientist. There must be something in creationism, or Dr So-and-So would not have agreed to debate it on equal terms. Lamentably, when you turn down the invitation you will be accused of cowardice, or of inability to defend your own beliefs. But that is better than supplying the creationists with what they crave: the oxygen of respectability in the world of real science.

Dawkins did have a spirited debate with the non-creationist Guardian columnist Madeline Bunting. You can also listen to Richard Dawkins on the Guardian's Science Weekly podcast.