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You've been told that "evolution is just a theory", a guess, a hunch, and not a fact, not proven. You've been misled. Keep reading, and in less than two minutes from now you'll know that you've been misinformed. We're not going to try and change your mind about evolution. We just want to point out that "it's just a theory" is not a valid argument.

The *Theory of Evolution* is a theory, but guess what? **When scientists use the word *theory*, it has a different meaning to normal everyday use.**¹ That's right, it all comes down to the multiple meanings of the word *theory*. If you said to a scientist that you didn't believe in evolution because it was "just a *theory*", they'd probably be a bit puzzled.

In everyday use, *theory* means a guess or a hunch, something that maybe needs proof. **In science, a *theory* is not a guess, not a hunch. It's a well-substantiated, well-supported, well-documented explanation for our observations.**² It ties together all the facts about something, providing an explanation that fits all the observations and can be used to make predictions. In science, *theory* is the ultimate goal, the explanation. It's as close to proven as anything in science can be.

Some people think that in science, you have a *theory*, and once it's proven, it becomes a *law*. That's not how it works. In science, we collect facts, or observations, we use *laws* to describe them, and a *theory* to explain them. You don't promote a *theory* to a *law* by proving it. A *theory* never becomes a *law*.

This bears repeating. **A *theory* never becomes a *law*. In fact, if there was a hierarchy of science, theories would be higher than laws. There is nothing higher, or better, than a *theory*.** Laws describe things, theories explain them. An example will help you to understand this. There's a *law* of gravity, which is the description of gravity. It basically says that if you let go of something it'll fall. It doesn't say why. Then there's the *theory* of gravity, which is an attempt to explain why. Actually, Newton's Theory of Gravity did a pretty good job, but Einstein's Theory of Relativity does a better job of explaining it. **These explanations are called *theories*, and will always be *theories*. They can't be changed into *laws*, because *laws* are different things. *Laws* describe, and *theories* explain.**

Just because it's called a *theory* of gravity, doesn't mean that it's just a guess. It's been tested. All our observations are supported by it, as well as its predictions that we've tested. Also, gravity is real! You can observe it for yourself. Just because it's real doesn't mean that the explanation is a *law*. The explanation, in scientific terms, is called a *theory*.

Evolution is the same. There's the *fact* of evolution. Evolution (genetic change over generations)³ happens, just like gravity does. Don't take my word for it.⁴ Ask your science teacher, or google it. But that's not the issue we are addressing here. **The Theory of Evolution by Natural Selection is our best explanation for the fact of evolution.** It has been tested and scrutinised for over 150 years, and is supported by all the relevant observations.

Next time someone tries to tell you that evolution is just a *theory*, as a way of dismissing it, as if it's just something someone guessed at, remember that they're using the non-scientific meaning of the word. If that person is a teacher, or minister, or some other figure of authority, they should know better. In fact, they probably do, and are trying to mislead you.⁵

Evolution is not *just* a theory, it's *triumphantly* a theory!

¹ "Theory: A set of statements or principles devised to explain a group of facts or phenomena, especially one that has been repeatedly tested or is widely accepted and can be used to make predictions about natural phenomena." *American Heritage Dictionary*

² "Scientific theories are explanations of natural phenomena built up logically from testable observations and hypotheses." *Teaching About Evolution and the Nature of Science* - National Academy Press

³ A standard, scientific definition of evolution is: "In fact, evolution can be precisely defined as any change in the frequency of alleles within a gene pool from one generation to the next." *Biology* - Helena Curtis and N. Sue Barnes, W H Freeman

⁴ "Evolutionists have been clear about this distinction between fact and theory from the very beginning, if only because we have always acknowledged how far we are from completely understanding the mechanisms (theory) by which evolution (fact) occurred. Darwin continually emphasized the difference between his two great and separate accomplishments: establishing the fact of evolution, and proposing a theory - natural selection - to explain the mechanism of evolution." *Evolution as Fact and Theory* - Stephen Jay Gould

⁵ The Cobb County School Board required a sticker with the following text to be placed on all biology textbooks: "This textbook contains material on evolution. Evolution is a theory, not a fact, regarding the origin of living things. This material should be approached with an open mind, studied carefully, and critically considered." *Decision of the Court Striking Down the Cobb County Evolution Disclaimer*

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