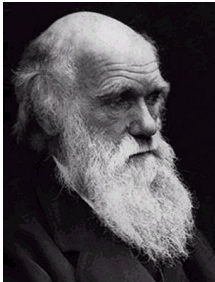


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By: Dan Talpalariu, Science Editor



2009 will be Charles Darwin's year
Berkeley

[Galileo Galilei vs. Charles Darwin](#)

Whose year 2009 should be

With 2009 being labeled as the International Year of Astronomy, it is quite obvious why the next year should be named the Galileo year, after the great scientist and visionary of his time, [Galileo Galilei](#), the author of the world's greatest discovery in the field. This is even more valid as in 2009, there will be 400 years since Galileo first used the telescope that helped him conquer his immortality, but also 200 years since the birth of [Charles Darwin](#), the scientist who first claimed we descend from the apes. Perhaps 2009 should be his year, ponder [New Scientist](#) editors.

The dilemma, which actually referred to which one of the two caused man to "fall from the pedestal" more, was then subject to an internal debate, involving Lawrence Krauss (a theoretical physicist and cosmologist, Arizona State University, Tempe), Frans de Waal (primatologist, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia), Paul Davies (physicist and cosmologist, Arizona State University), Daniel Dennett (philosopher, Tufts University, Boston), Steve Jones (geneticist, University College London), Michael Ruse (philosopher, Florida State University, Tallahassee), Steven Pinker (psychologist, Harvard University) and Matt Ridley (author on evolutionary biology). The bias oscillated towards each of the scientists at some point. Galileo was more credited for the harsh conditions in which he made his discovery and the repressions he was subjected to by the Catholic inquisition. Still, "Who cares which ball of rock goes round which?" asked Ridley. More than that, the telescope was not his invention, and the idea of the Earth not being the center of the universe actually belonged to Copernicus. He just perfected both. Darwin was not the first choice of many of the "jury members" either. Krauss argued that "It was clear before Darwin that we share many things with other species. [...] But Galileo removed us from the centre of the universe: how much greater a fall could we have?" And Galileo's theory had more impact on humanity than Darwin's: in the US, 80% of the people believe the Earth revolves around the Sun, while only 50% believe we descend from monkeys. But Galileo's idea has two centuries ahead of Darwin's. "For Darwin's great supporter Thomas Henry Huxley, there was nothing degrading in being modified monkeys rather than modified dirt," shared Ruse in support of his favorite. Eventually, it seems Darwin won. At least, at New Scientist, 2009 will belong to him.