

## **Making Elbow Room for Faith in the Science Classroom**

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### 1. Intro

- a. Does high-quality *science* instruction require leaving God out? Indeed, not.
- b. Eventually, every line of questioning leads to teleology and to the intersection of science and faith.
- c. The point at which God comes in depends on the type of question being asked.

### 2. Four Classes of Questions

- a. Class I questions have scientific answers:
  - i. What causes thunder?
  - ii. Why does cotton absorb moisture?
  - iii. Is there dark matter?
  - iv. How are methane molecules shaped?
- b. Class II questions do not presently have scientific answers, but we reasonably expect that they will
  - i. What causes Alzheimer's disease?
  - ii. How are the theories of quantum mechanics and general relativity to be reconciled?
  - iii. Is there life on other planets?
  - iv. Why is the expansion rate of the universe increasing?
- c. Class III questions don't have scientific answers; many experts believe that they never will
  - i. Why does purposefulness, specifically human purposefulness, exist?
  - ii. Why do people weep when they listen to Handel's Messiah?
  - iii. How did life arise (biogenesis)?
  - iv. What is the source of the intelligence that pervades the coding in DNA?
  - v. How did human nature arise, including self-awareness, use of language, rationality, the ability to produce art, humor, and self-denying love?
  - Secularists claim denying that science has access to these questions is a God-of-the-gaps argument. Further, materialists categorically deny divine intervention.
  - Atheists must reduce weeping over Handel to brain biochemistry; Christians believe in the soul.

- Scripture implies that biogenesis is in this class, but our understanding may be incomplete on this.
    - Scripture affirms God’s direct creation of life
    - 60 years of research have produced nothing
    - The improbability speaks for itself
  - Emergence of human nature is similar: how can purpose and consciousness arise from purposelessness and inanimate matter?
- d. Class IV questions are definitely not accessible to scientific inquiry
- i. Why does the universe exist?
  - ii. What caused the Big Bang?
  - iii. Why are there laws of nature?
  - iv. Why are the laws of nature orderly, even highly mathematical?

Faithful science teachers respond with wisdom right here.

3. Who gets to define science?
  - a. Methodological naturalism? Even some Christians insist on it.
  - b. A more expansive—and legitimate—view, expressed by Alvin Plantinga
4. The centrality of Christ in all things

This talk is based on an article by John D. Mays in the Novare Newsletter. For the original article, including the quotes, go to [novarescienceandmath.com](http://novarescienceandmath.com). Click on Newsletter, and scroll down to Vol. 4, Number 4, October 24, 2013.