

Using or Misusing Science?

Comparing Worldviews across Academic Disciplines

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In the early 1800s, all academic subjects were considered “sciences,” from a Latin word meaning “knowledge.” The following chart illustrates how various “sciences” (whatever they may be called today) may be used or else *misused* depending upon the worldview that shapes the research involved.

	Using Science When Teaching about God’s Wonderful Creation	Misusing Science When Teaching <i>against</i> God’s Wonderful Creation
Moral Science (Ethics, Psychology, Anthropology)	Natural Law 1. God created humans. 2. God inscribed the objective distinction between good and evil in human consciences, and people can recognize this in nature’s design. 3. People are morally responsible to both God and their neighbors.	Moral Skepticism — <i>take your pick</i> : 1. Relativism : Each culture invents its own morality. 2. Subjectivism : Each individual invents his or her own morality. 3. Nihilism : There are no standards of morality; terms such as “good” and “evil” are nonsensical.
Mathematical Sciences (Mathematics, Geometry)	1. Though God’s thinking is higher than human thinking, God blesses humans to understand aspects of His creation through mathematics and geometry. 2. Human investigations into mathematical laws of nature and geometrical patterns in nature offer a glimpse of divine intelligence. (The “laws” of science that humans “discover” may not be strictly correct; nevertheless, they have a significant degree of correspondence to God’s creation.)	<i>Two alternative tendencies</i> : 1. Mathematics and geometry are social constructs, invented by particular human cultures without having any objective bearing on reality. 2. Mathematics and geometry are the most objective of all human sciences, and they disprove many claims made in the Bible, such as that Noah fit all the animals into the ark or that Christ’s body and blood are present in the Lord’s Supper.
Physical Sciences (Astronomy, Geology, Physics, Chemistry)	1. Several thousand years ago, God created the sun, moon, and stars for giving light and timing the seasons. 2. God created the earth in such a way as to be especially suited for human habitation. 3. Through physical laws, God daily and richly preserves what He created (Providence). 4. The earth has experienced at least one great catastrophe (the Flood in Noah’s time), apparently resulting in the sudden fossilization of many animals.	1. The sun, moon, and stars evolved from the Big Bang, either without any god, or with some sort of divine guidance. 2. The earth is one planet among many, where life evolved, either by chance or through divine guidance. 3. The laws of physics and chemistry resulted from the conditions that precipitated the Big Bang. 4. The fossil record reveals millions of generations during which animals evolved from simple to complex.
Life Sciences (Biology, Ecology, Genetics, Medicine)	1. God created all living forms according to their kinds. 2. Organisms exhibit divine design. 3. God designated humans to exercise dominion over His creation as stewards accountable to Him. The “natural state” involves the domestication of nature by humans. 4. God blesses children with variations as well as resemblances to their parents through genetics, and God desires that husbands and wives love one another with a marital embrace that is open to God’s procreative blessing of children.	1. All living things evolved from one or a few common ancestors over millions of generations. 2. Apparent designs result from natural selection’s filtering of random, heritable variations—possibly with divine guidance. 3. Humans are fundamentally the same as animals. The “natural state” is devoid of human technology. 4. Human evolution now permits humans to guide the future course of evolution through genetic reengineering and technologically assisted reproduction.
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	Using Science When Teaching about God’s Wonderful Creation	<i>Misusing Science When Teaching against God’s Wonderful Creation</i>
<p>(... continued)</p> <p>Life Science (Biology, Ecology, Genetics, Medicine)</p>	<p>5. God blesses humans with the ability to understand anatomy and physiology so that they can preserve and improve their health in order to prolong their time of grace.</p> <p>6. Pregnancy is a normal, healthy function of a woman’s body; contraception circumvents God’s design of both the one-flesh union and the marital estate for which it was created.</p> <p>7. God begins each new human life—body and soul—on His own schedule, not ours. Science indicates that by the time of conception a new individual has a unique bodily existence, with his or her own DNA. The process of begetting new life deserves great respect throughout its procreative totality. Medicine oversteps its proper scope when attempting to determine a moment prior to which destructive intervention would be permissible.</p> <p>8. Sodomy violates human anatomy and physiology, and poses severe immunological risks to participants, their offspring, and the wider public.</p>	<p>5. Medical science is an evolutionary adaptation enabling humans to increase individuals’ longevity and the survival of the species.</p> <p>6. Pregnancy is an illness whereby a woman’s uterus becomes the unwilling host of a parasitic fetus; contraception is recommended for prevention. Even in its late stages, this illness can be treated by evacuation of the uterine contents.</p> <p>7. Pregnancy begins when the embryo implants in the uterus, <i>ca.</i> 14 days after conception. The pro-life community has no legitimate claim prior to implantation, so embryos may be harvested for stem cell research prior to implantation. Since even a mature fetus lacks autonomy while in the prenatal state, late-term, partial-birth abortion remains an ethical option for treating the illness known as pregnancy.</p> <p>8. Homosexuality is a healthy form of sexual experimentation among young people and a physiologically normal activity for adults, particularly those with genetic predispositions for it.</p>
<p>Social Sciences (Political Science, Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, History)</p>	<p>1. God created humans with inalienable rights to life, liberty (especially liberty of conscience), and property.</p> <p>2. A husband and wife establish a family through marriage and build it through the procreation of offspring.</p> <p>3. Governments properly exist as extensions of parenthood for the purpose of protecting the natural rights of citizens through foreign defense and domestic justice.</p> <p>4. God guides human history for the service of the church.</p> <p>5. Texts have genuine meanings inscribed by their authors, available to their intended audiences, and discernible by historical-grammatical scholarship. Sound scholarship results in the discovery of the author’s original intention.</p>	<p>1. Governments create rights by granting citizens privileged protections, whether to life, liberty, and property, or to “privacy” (abortion, sodomy, etc.) and social entitlements.</p> <p>2. Societies create families by defining marriage and distributing children in schools and daycare centers.</p> <p>3. Parents serve primarily as agents of the government in providing for the upbringing of future generations.</p> <p>4. Humans determine their own destinies by their own choices.</p> <p>5. Texts have no genuine meanings, but are constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed repeatedly by their communities, which scholars appropriately scrutinize through higher criticism and various postmodern methods of analysis.</p>
<p>Theological Science (Dogmatics, Systematics, etc.)</p>	<p>Biblical theology is the only “science,” if by that term one means the attainment of certainly true knowledge.</p>	<p>Theology properly concerns itself only with values, not with facts, and never should constrain the human sciences.</p>

Books by Ryan C. MacPherson, Ph.D. (www.ryanmacpherson.com/publications)

- *Rediscovering the American Republic: Biographies, Primary Texts, etc.* (2 vols.)
- *Debating Evolution before Darwinism: An Exploration of Science and Religion in America*
- *The Culture of Life: Ten Essential Principles for Christian Bioethics*
- *Studying Luther’s Large Catechism: A Workbook for Christian Discipleship*
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