

Evolution Exploration: Classroom Relativity

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ABSTRACT

The role of the professional educator is to present information to students and other audiences as well so that individuals can objectively make decisions on how to present topics of importance in the classroom. Discussions of evolution have been underway for years and much debate has ensued as to its relevance/meaning. Pre-service teachers are sometimes unsure as to how to address questions pertaining to evolution. As exploration continues, a review of literature will be presented as well as an actual incident that occurred in my eighth grade classroom that will foster objective professionalism when dealing with the word “evolution”.

Introduction

Discussions of evolution have been underway for years and much debate has ensued as to its importance. As exploration continues a review of the literature from biblical times to the present offer explanations for consideration. Additionally, an actual incident that occurred in my eighth grade classroom will offer insight. The existence of a higher being and the relativity of findings present evidences that will be explored.

The role of the professional educator is to present information to students and other audiences as well so that individuals can objectively make decisions on how to present topics of importance in the classroom. Also included in this paper will be highlights of the objective professional and how these ideas must be presented professionally.

The exploration of this topic was sparked by questions that students asked me in classes that I teach. Preservice teachers are sometimes unsure as to how to address questions asked of them. This paper will provide much needed information for preservice teachers, classroom teachers, and the general public as well.

Words bring thoughts to many according to the events that have occurred in their lives. Alfred Lord Tennyson said, “I am a part of all that I have met” (Tennyson, n. d.). Likewise, the term evolution brings many thoughts to the mind according to the

individuality of the individual. Creativity in individuals allows them to think in sometimes uncommon ways about topics. Sir Ken Robinson (2006) wrote of a little girl who was drawing a picture of God. She was informed by her teacher that no one knew what God looked like. The young lady said that when she finished with her drawing, everyone would then know what God looked like. We should never take for granted what someone is thinking. We must allow students the opportunity to retain their creativity. We do not want to squelch their creative minds into thinking just what we want them to think. The same is true with adults. We do not want everyone to think in just one way. Variety in thinking in creative ways fosters problem solving and problem solving leads to decision making.

Science and the Bible

Explanations in science often become heated debates. Evolution in education takes on many explanations. Did man's knowledge evolve from *The Holy Bible*? Job 38:28, "Hath rain a father? Or who hath begotten the drops of dew?" (1979, p. 338, Old Testament) Was it known that water vapor comes together to form rain when the Bible was written? Or should I say that *The Holy Bible* (1979) and science go hand in hand? God brings the droplets in the clouds together to make rain. Look at Job 38:16, "Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the depth?" (*The Holy Bible*, 1979, p. 338, Old Testament) What is the earliest date recorded that tells of man's travels to the bottom of the ocean? Look at Job 38:35, "Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we are?" (*The Holy Bible*, 1979, p. 338, Old Testament) The electricity that we enjoy today and use to talk on the telephone to tell our families where we are were referred to in the Bible long before electricity was used or the telephone was invented.

Explainable Unexplainable Events

Creativity should be used in explanations of wonderment. To some, unexplainable events happen often. Believers like me know that God causes many explainable events. The classroom is the theatrical scene of volumes of situations that tell the story of some of these explainable unexplainable events designed and planned by God.

Sharing the classroom with amazing students gives rise to witnessing many events in the classroom on a daily basis. Students ask many questions. One day while I was teaching eighth grade science we were conducting an activity using balloons to observe the effects of static electricity. The students had just blown up their balloons. One student was holding a balloon in his hands. While getting prepared to conduct the activity, one student expressed a strong interest in God and a desire to know more about God. A

discussion followed. While holding the balloon in his hands, one of the eighth graders asked me where God was. I said that God is everywhere. The student wanted to know how we would know that. My reply was, "You will just know." Just as soon as I finished my sentence, the balloon popped in the students hands. I said, "See, you will just know." His eyes glowed with surprise. The students were listening intently to the discussion and nothing visible happened that made the balloon pop. To some that would be called an unexplainable event. This is one example of an explainable unexplainable event caused by God. Such as the scripture says in Job 38:26, "To cause it to rain on the earth, where no man is; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man" (*The Holy Bible*, 1979, p. 338, Old Testament). As rain in the wilderness where no man is present, so was the popping of the balloon in my student's hands. These events happen for a purpose. These are but a few examples of how explainable unexplainable events occur and why. God gets our attention through these events.

Long Lasting Influences

Attention getters are often memorable occasions and are remembered for a lifetime. The incident of the balloon popping in my classroom was many years ago. One day recently, I visited a doctor's office where a former student of mine worked as a nurse. In an unsolicited remark from her, she told me that the student in whose hands the balloon had popped had been "saved" meaning that he has now accepted God as his personal savior. As shown in *The Holy Bible* (1979, p. 126, New Testament) in Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Not only are the influences of teachers long lasting, actions of adults may have profound effects on others.

In terms of long lasting one might consider dinosaur bones. One day while examining dinosaur bones in her lab, Dr. Mary Higby Schweitzer (2006) found tissue that was not fossilized but instead looked like the long bone of a female storing calcium in the way that females do in preparation for giving birth. Prior to this time, no one had determined the gender of a dinosaur. This will have a lasting effect on thinking about how long ago dinosaurs were alive on earth. It is already bringing about much discussion as to the age of the earth as well. Could the soft tissues really have been around for billions of years or for 10,000 years? This gives rise to the search for new knowledge. *The Holy Bible* says, "I will fetch my knowledge from afar, and will ascribe righteousness to my maker" (Job 36:3, p. 337, Old Testament). As new knowledge evolves, creativity in thought continues or evolves into perhaps more research. Only when we keep open minds are we able to pursue more knowledge. As students gain more knowledge they evolve in their thinking.

The evolution of the love of science is often seen in the eyes of students as they learn. Associated with the word evolution is often the discussion of primates. Sapolsky (2006) tells of how simple it is to decide that man did not have to evolve to be human as he explains about the complex neurons in the human body. There is no reason why we

would need to evolve to be who we are. Preservice science students evolve in their ability to conduct classes successfully to meet the needs of their students but they don't change into a frog or anything else as they evolve in their growth as a future teacher. So evolution of thought brings about the cycle of necessary intrigue that needs to occur for the advancement of knowledge.

Preparing for Professional Objectivity in Future Educational Endeavors

In order to consider the future of evolution discussions in the classroom, one must look to the past for consideration of what has been stated before present day. Mayr (2001) refers to "puzzling questions" (p. 5) that arise in science. One would expect a gradual transition shown in fossil records but such is not the case. Some guess that the reason for this is that many organisms never left any fossil record. Is this really the case?

The American Scientific Affiliation, as discussed by Isaac (2007), is a society organized in 1941 and is made up of Christian scientists who look at issues objectively. As the society members look at objective issues, so must teachers in the classroom present objective decision-making in the classroom. Kenneth Ham (1987) in *The Lie: Evolution* points out that many do not think objectively when considering evolution. He believes that some individuals look at evolution as a religion in itself. Many who believe in evolution as a religion look toward the disbelief of Christianity. On the other hand, many Christians believe the Genesis account of the creation of the earth. However, not all Christians believe that the Genesis account is a literal account. Even some ministers believe that the Genesis account of the beginning of the earth as we know it is symbolic. Scott Huse (1997) in *The Collapse of Evolution* points out that scientific truth is never determined by a vote but is generally determined by what is observed. Likewise, not everything that has happened in the past can be observed. One method, radioactive dating, which has been used to date the age of the earth, is one example of an area where questions have arisen as to the validity of findings.

Sometimes uncovering questionable findings causes concern which makes one feel uncomfortable. In *Evolution: The Remarkable History of a Scientific Theory*, Edward J. Larson (2004) points out that controversy often arises among what he refers to as the "Religious Right" and devoted believers in evolution. Ray Comfort (2003) in *Out of the Comfort Zone*, discusses many issues that cause distress and some of the ways that people respond. Sometimes people just get angry and sometimes they get violent. We would hope that evolution doesn't instigate violence in anyone. In *Preparing for an Uncertain Future*, Laura Lefkowitz and Kirsten Miller (2007) point out that we can not know all that the future holds. We hope that objectivity will remain in whatever lies in the future. The future of education as far as evolution is concerned must include objective voices as professional educators look at evidence and decide for themselves the open discussions about evolution that are necessary.

Concluding Remarks

Learning occurs through an evolving process. From biblical times to the present, knowledge continues to evolve as more information is brought to light. We must keep in mind that the word evolution does not mean just one thing. It means many things to different individuals. Creativity is important in the evolution of knowledge and open-mindedness must remain foremost in the minds of man. All have a right to their own thoughts, including Christians who believe that God created the earth and everything in it.

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