

Essay on what is it about theories in the human sciences and natural sciences tha...

[Experience](#), [Belief](#)



Human sciences and natural sciences are classically known as being factually-based knowledge and, as such, they are sufficiently convincing enough to be held in high esteem by academics and the average member of the public alike. The purpose of this essay is to explore why this is the case and what exactly happens to make it so. In truth, the sciences can only ever provide us with theories although this is becoming less and less true as scientific evidence is increasingly easy to produce. However, it seems prudent to explore why we still put so much faith into these sciences in a time before scientific proof was as founded as it is today. For instance, the Ancient Greeks invented philosophy and in turn, psychology: two of the more pronounced human sciences and both based firmly in theory as opposed to solid facts. However, despite this, philosophy is, arguably, the cornerstone of modern civilization and psychology is something which we all agree upon as defining who and what we are as human beings. Yet, the secrets of the human mind are still just that: secrets. We are none the wiser today as to why certain people behave in a particular way, except from drawing formative conclusions and yet, so many of us still pay significant amounts of money to psychiatrists. In this sense, our way of knowing is largely due to an accepting perception that scientists know more than the average person. The human and natural sciences are convincing because we desire to understand who and what we are and as a consequence, there is a sense of authority worship: they present a more realistic outlook than religion can, and equally, because we award the relevant individuals with qualifications and certificates which verify them as being an 'expert' in that field.

The term 'science' has long since been opposed to the term 'religion' which, in itself, is a form of validation of science. In truth, much of what is taught in The Bible can be easily refuted but in doing this, we are placing all of our faith in science instead, giving rise to a different form of worship. By comparison to religion, science offers a sense of realism which religion simply cannot contest. The biggest debate held between these two behemoths of the modern world, focuses on how human beings came to be: creationism versus evolution. For many Christians, the belief that God created the world, animals and people in seven days is perfectly acceptable; when questioned about how he achieved this feat when it takes six months for us mere mortals to dig up a road and replace some pipes, the response is nearly always that he is God and he can do anything. However, science disputes this and states that "there is an 'absolute lack of evidence' for creationism and intelligent design" (Ecklund XXVI). Equally, there is significant evidence that evolution took place and that the human race has evolved from apes as the progressive design of humanoid skeletons, which have been found over the decades, proves. However, that is still only a theory as we did not bear witness to this progress happening and since we, as a species, appear not to have continued evolving (Steadman 142), it does pose some questions: is evolution real? Is it just another theory? The truth of the matter is that for 'intelligent' people who wish to throw their weight behind something other than what they perceive as 'pie in the sky' religion, evolution provides slightly more empirical proof that we came into existence in this way. Equally, for people who feel it important to assert their intelligence, the human sciences offer a more significant sense of free will.

It is this word, 'empirical' which seems to provide human and natural sciences with a greater sense of being convincing. For want of a better reason, it is frequently the fact that they can provide numbers which seem to verify their argument that sways people to their way of thinking, usually because people are unable to question such statements. In itself, the name 'science' is derived from the Latin word 'scientia' which means knowledge (Helibron VII). So, in itself, the word is designed to put weight behind itself by immediately implying that science is knowledge, as opposed to theory. This plays upon the natural human instinct to be inquisitive and find out who and what we are. It is this natural nature which drives many into the arms of science in the first place: in 1998, Popular Science magazine printed that "more than 40, 000 kids in 39 states and three Canadian provinces are tagging butterflies" (Fisher 97). This statistic serves to highlight the naturally inquisitive instinct that we, as human beings, are born with and how science can serve to give answers to those questions as opposed to other concepts such as religion, which only ever seems to cause more questions to be asked.

The human desire to find out who and what we are is one which has fuelled the continuous development of science since the dawn of time. It is fair to say, however, that empirical fact and proof is a relatively recent development and it has only really been the last hundred or so years which have seen human beings become masters of their own existence: medical advancements, technological enhancements, increased levels of civilization and the ability to properly query what we are taught. This is never more

visible than when discussing religious belief: there has been a steep increase in the number of individuals who classify themselves as being 'atheists' with the view being that "the increase in atheism, humanism and rational thinking in general, could displace faith-based thinking at a faster rate than we might imagine possible" (Staume 110). The sciences fit neatly into atheism as in both instances, the individual is, arguably, more interesting in ascertaining the facts about existence than they are about attributing praise to an omnipotent being who may or may not exist, demonstrating a strong sense of skepticism which sciences can cater for. It seems clear that we are only on this planet for a short time and the human desire to find out why we're here seems only to grow stronger with each passing generation and is in correlation with the depletion of religious numbers and increase in those studying until a later age too. Perhaps it is two thousand years of little proof as to the existence of a God, or the ever-increasing proof that humans have, in fact, lived for hundreds of thousands of years which has caused there to be an increased level of scientific belief as opposed to religious.

The sciences provide us with facts and empirically-based opinions which allow us to form our own decisions. Prior to this, religion was the main deciding factor in our lives and instead of allowing us to make up our own minds, it threatened us with eternal damnation and Hell. Alternatively, the sciences offer a far more fluid approach which is both willing to accept that not everyone will be comfortable with their theories, as well as an ability to accept when they make a mistake. For many, it is this and the continued response of 'it is God's plan' that has led to a rise in the sciences'

popularity. They are more convincing for this reason too: after centuries of religion demanding that we have faith, science provides us with answers that are based in strong evidence and hypotheses which are knowingly a work-in-progress as opposed to a finite and damning conclusion. Alternatively, there is also the issue of potential for science worship and in the face of pseudo-science, which many claim subjects such as anthropology are, this could be a dangerous matter.

The increased popularity of sciences can be attributed to their convincing use of empirical evidence and a willingness to admit when there are anomalies. Science is an ever-evolving, growing creature which is willing to explore alternatives and offer up differing opinions. It is clear that this rise in popularity has happened simultaneously as religion has dwindled in positive public opinion. Perhaps this is due to science's ability to offer evidence for its hypotheses or even perhaps due to religion's inability to do so. Arguably, the human race is tired of religion's request to have an unwavering faith in God's power and love when, all around them, the world changes and tears itself apart (both through natural disaster and the occasionally-evil nature of man). Of course, for many, their atheism may be as much of a bias as others' religious belief. Equally, man's naturally inquisitive nature means that we are forever seeking answers which religion cannot offer, but which science endeavors to. Our ways of knowing are dictated from an early age that those in authority know more than us (school teachers, for example) and as such, scientists equate to knowledge and our perception of reason. Science offers a convincing alternative to the more traditional religious stance and as a

consequence, it is held in increasingly high esteem by a significant proportion of society.

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