

Has science done
more harm than
good? a reflection



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Academic Essay

Title: " Science has done more harm than good to the overall development of society over the last 200 years"

" The saddest aspect of life right now is that science gathers knowledge faster than society gathers wisdom."

(Isaac Asimov)

As I drove along the Golconda bypass I looked towards the sky and noticed something I never thought I'd see in our country. The skies over Point Lisas and the outskirts of San-Fernando were filled with smog. I then started to wonder if science had done more harm to humanity than good. I came to the conclusion that science has indeed done more good than harm, and it is humanity that is solely to blame for the problems that their irresponsible use of science has caused. It can be said that technology is making people more and more lazy and people are getting laid off of their jobs because of increased mechanization. It's also not natural; it is something that has to be created, but on the other hand, it has helped humankind advance in the world more over the last 200 years than in a thousand years before.

" Science is the quest for truth about Nature. Its aim is not to produce technology, but to understand how Nature works and discover the tremendous order and intelligence operating around us. If Nature were chaotic, if sometimes a stone went up and sometimes down, then there would be no science. But definite causes produce definite effects, and that is

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why science is possible. The scientist does not create order, he merely studies it." (Prof. P. Krishna, 2005). There is no doubt that with the development of science, mankind has been affected; the way we think, the way we live and even the way we worship has changed all due to science. A few thousand years ago man lived a terrible and nomadic existence and the average lifespan wasn't even 50. Science has become so important to human life because it enhances the way we live. When Dutch spectacle makers Janssen and Lipperhey developed the concept of the compound microscope, they had no idea that it would be the basis of many important scientific discoveries. The discovery of cells would create the foundation for a new way to look at life and medicine. Louis Pasteur used a microscope when he discovered yeast fungus which led to the process of pasteurization. Antonio van Leeuwenhoek discovered bacteria through the lens of a microscope and because of this humanity has been able to learn about sickness and how it is spread. The invention of the electron microscope is solely responsible for humanity's knowledge on the atom...the foundation of everything and all technologies! Can we even begin to imagine life without science or its applied counterpart – technology? No vaccinations or anaesthesia, no electricity to work our appliances, no telephones, computers or internet!

Two hundred years ago in the nineteenth century bloodletting and leaching was practiced to help alleviate the ills of man. Fortunately, because of proper application of scientific knowledge we now know how to treat various disorders using the right medication and surgical methods. Antibiotics have become the biggest life saver, vaccination is the best preventative method

of potentially fatal illnesses and most importantly surgical procedures can be done with no pain through anaesthesia.

Methods of communication are improving at a rapid pace today than in any other century. We now have telephones, emails and cell phones that can send text messages and are internet ready. When the telegraph was invented in the 1830's it allowed messages to be sent through a series of electric impulses. Although inconvenient compared with modern technology, it provided a lead forward in communication when compared with traditional mail. This would not have been possible if wasn't for science and scientific experiments.

It is in my opinion that when scientist learned to harness the power of electricity, the entire world changed for the better, development and progress in science and technology was done at a quicker pace. Society had a safe source of light; electricity replaced gas lamps and fires and eliminated accidents that may have been occurred because of this. It made refrigeration possible and because of this food lasted longer, food safety improved and food transportation was easier. The quality of life improved with electricity, industrialization was possible; dangerous jobs that were done manually were now done with machines. Various forms of communication stemmed from electricity such as the telegraph, telephone and television.

The main function of the scientific goal is to carry out a comprehensive and thorough inquiry into nature and society, leading to new knowledge. This new knowledge provides educational, cultural and intellectual enrichment and leads to technological advances and economic benefits. New scientific

knowledge may lead to new applications and new technological advances that may lead to new scientific discoveries. For example, the discovery of the structure of DNA was a fundamental breakthrough in biology. It formed the basis of research that would ultimately lead to a wide variety of practical applications, including DNA fingerprinting, genetically engineered crops and tests for genetic diseases. DNA copying and sequencing technologies have led to important breakthroughs in many areas of biology, especially in the reconstruction of the evolutionary relationships among organisms.

The impact that science has had on society can be seen anywhere we turn, it is very visible; progress in agriculture, medicine and health care, telecommunications, transportation, computerization and so on, it is part of our daily living. To say that science has done more harm than good is naive, science does neither harm nor good because it is simply a disciplined way to understand how things work. It is mankind that uses the knowledge that science provides and they decide what kind of application to make of it. As the quote by Isaac Asimov says; science is gaining knowledge faster than man gains wisdom. If there is wisdom, we will not use the knowledge gained by science for destructive purposes. Albert Einstein whose theory of relativity was used in the making of the A-Bomb said "*the discovery of nuclear reactions need not bring about the destruction of mankind anymore than the discovery of matches.*" The gun was invented with the sole purpose to kill, an equalizer in some way. The individual who invented the gun intended it to promote peace, by discouraging violence. It made hunting easier for man to do than with bow and arrow. All tools that are made are made for the sole purpose of making life easier. If a hammer is used to kill someone, the

hammer is not to blame, it is the person who used it, and same too is the gun. Therefore in conclusion, I can now say that science without wisdom and conscience will be the destruction of humanity as we know it. Science is a good tool but it is only a tool. Like a knife, science has to be used with knowledge, wisdom and understanding. It needs to be guided by people who understand this concept so that it benefits mankind and not destroy it. Science can be referred to an intelligent child with a lot of potential, without the right guidance, that child will wreak havoc with his newfound power...his knowledge.

“ Science has generated tremendous power; knowledge always gives power and is useful because it increases our abilities. But when we do not have wisdom and love, compassion or brotherhood, which are all by-products of wisdom, then power can be used destructively. Sixty- five percent of all the scientific research being done currently is directly or indirectly meant for developing weapons, and supported by the Defence Ministry in every nation. In the last one century, 208 million people have been killed in wars, which is without precedent in any previous century.” (Prof. P. Krishna, 2005)

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