

For some people
science is the
supreme form of
knowledge



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With this question at hand, my aim is to prove whether it is reasonable, or otherwise, to regard natural sciences- Biology, Chemistry and Physics- as the supreme form of knowledge, perhaps for their nature, scope, methods, justification of knowledge and processes when compared to other areas of knowledge. Furthermore, in instances whereby natural sciences are NOT regarded as supreme, I will attempt to clarify whether the confusion is brought about by either the misunderstanding of science or of knowledge. This I will attempt doing by comparing science with mathematics, human sciences and ethics, focussing mainly on religion, and deducing whether or not science can be named superior over any of the other areas of knowledge or not.

Definition of terms

But what is knowledge exactly? According to Webster's World Encyclopaedia 2000 Dictionary, knowledge is a person's range of information and their awareness or familiarity gained by experience¹. It can therefore be either objective or subjective depending on the specific area of knowledge. I believe something considered to be supreme or is regarded as supreme to anything else is one that is held in the highest regards and is thought of as the best within a certain field or against a tangible, assessable criteria. Reasonable is whether something is fair, and if it should be accepted or not.

Thesis

Natural sciences being supreme over other areas of knowledge is reasonable in that natural sciences avoid the uncertainties experienced in other areas of knowledge such as human (social) sciences, mainly due to methodology

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used within natural sciences. Natural sciences are unprejudiced and fact-based, allowing judgement to be accurate and precise a vast majority of the time. Information is logical and has been experimentally proven to be sound. When in doubt, people can conduct experiments for themselves, as is the case with the earth's revolutionary path.

For centuries, it was believed that the sun revolves around the earth and the earth was the centre of the universe. After numerous experiments and observations over the years, it was proven that it is actually the earth that revolves around the sun. This conclusion has never been contradicted because of overwhelming evidence pointing to its accuracy.

Although the above example shows uncertainty as a problem encountered in knowledge, the problem is due not to scientific perception, but to a general and uneducated belief. The above example shows that the subjectivity aspect of knowledge can be swayed by various opinions and arguments whereas the objective one, science inclusive, needs experimental evidence that proves certain theories and answers many questions, thus dismissing or strengthening many subjective arguments such as that of the world being flat.

Social sciences, however, are only sciences in that they use scientific methodology in recording and processing their data. Since they focus on things such as population statistics, they make inferences, presented in tabular form and concluded on the basis of either the average or the mode of their statistical findings. However, their observations are on human behaviour, which differs from one person to another. People's emotions and

perceptions cannot be concluded and quantified in a certain scenario. For example, at funerals, the atmosphere is mostly that of sadness and grief since people are mourning the deceased. But that occurs only due to people's perception and emotions towards the deceased. If they loved and admired him, they may be sad and prefer to lament. However, if I had loathed the deceased because of a certain character flaw, I, and probably others, could be happy for the death of the individual.

It is therefore rational to see why some people acknowledge science as the supreme form of knowledge. This is because if facts are considered the supremacy of knowledge then there will be no clashes in varying personal opinions. Theories can easily be experimentally supported and/or opposed. Advantageously, others will regard inferences as "true" since they are proven facts.

Antithesis

Regarding natural sciences as the supreme form of knowledge is unfair because there are many aspects of our lives that cannot be explained scientifically. Descartes' main aim in his works was to reduce all of nature to mathematical law. 2 If successful, it would have meant that every aspect of our lives would have been completely objective.

However, we know and understand things through perception, language, reason and emotion. But emotions, such as love, cannot be quantified objectively. They are feelings and can affect people's perception and reasoning. If that be the case, then does it mean that scientists have no

emotions or are their emotions controlled so as not to affect their objective perception of the world?

The fact that emotions are disregarded as a way of knowing in the area of science implies that there is a misunderstanding of some sort on the ways in which scientists attain their knowledge. Knowledge is both information and experience. When growing up, people are taught various things, even before they are capable of attending school. They learn through actions, trial-and-error methodology and parents' guidance. They are unable to sieve the knowledge they attain at this period into either objective or subjective matter. Only when they are old enough and have gained experience in life do they manage to filter their knowledge and choose a preference.

That is one problem of knowledge encountered: although there is no bias within science as an area of knowledge due to its fact-based nature, choosing science over other forms of knowledge in itself is biased. But doesn't choosing objectivity lead to a dull and predictable lifestyle? Yet again, emotions are questioned in the lives of people opting for science as their supreme form of knowledge. Do they have opinions in their lives? If so, how do they make them? Whilst reasoning, do they ever feel in a certain manner and rather go with their instincts and their hearts rather than rationalising the situation? This is another problem of entirely depending upon science in our everyday lives; it does not allow opinionated decision-making.

So then maybe regarding science as the supreme form of knowledge is a misunderstanding of knowledge. Although science is disciplined, it is very

narrow in the scope of information received through it. I have realised that all areas of knowledge, all areas of our lives are inter-dependant and linked together and therefore, should not be treated separately. Hence, if the objectivity and subjectivity of knowledge were to be utilised concurrently, it would allow for a greater depth of analysis and understanding.

Synthesis

If “supremacy” were to be described as the more applied and evident area of knowledge in our day-to-day lives, then, in that sense, science could be regarded as the supreme form of knowledge. Science took humanity from the Stone Age to the technological 21st century. Through discovery and invention, lives have been made easier, especially by the discovery of electricity, which introduced us to electronics: light and heat at the push of a button.

If we see what science has allowed people to do, like going to the moon and cloning living organisms, we realise the immense power it provides; power that opposes the beliefs and principles of other areas of knowledge such as religion and ethics.

I believe that predominant aspects of both the main areas of knowledge, objectivity and subjectivity, should be working together to achieve a greater knowledge of them both for the knower. A few weeks ago I was complaining to my father, both a scientist and a Christian, on how there are clashes between religious material and scientific fact that force me to feel undecided about which one to go by, that is, which one to believe in. It was then that he told me of how one may give a greater understanding of the other. An <https://assignbuster.com/for-some-people-science-is-the-supreme-form-of-knowledge/>

example he gave is how we, as humans living in the “ cyber-age” can easily download information off of the internet for whatever usage is necessary. He asked me why I didn’t think of it metaphorically that God was the Internet User downloading our thoughts and emotions as if they were on the Internet. Another example he gave was of fixing the computer using anti-virus software, which could be compared with God fixing the problems (viruses) in our lives.

Conclusion:

Ultimately it really all depends on what one’s understanding of “ supremacy” is. If you think of it as being the best or more superior over the other areas of knowledge then I wish to disagree over its supremacy since these areas are all unique. Their “ supremacy” varies from one person to another depending upon their way of life, occupations, cultures and other variables that differ from place to place.

It also depends upon one’s preference. For some people it is ideal in their situation to grant science supremacy; others lack that freedom of choice. As for myself, I find it ironic to take a stand in this situation as it is biased, and bias is an identified problem that knowledge is trying to avoid. However, I do believe that science has had an immense impact on our lives, especially in the way we are taught educationally and the manner in which we perceive things. It has divided people culturally and economically; and yet it has improved the means of sustaining life here on earth. So maybe Descartes was right when he concluded that much of what is claimed as knowledge is doubtful and uncertain, that they could not be matters of knowledge but

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merely matters of opinion or belief. 3Or maybe there are countless misunderstandings about the whole idea of knowledge and belief, which is the reason why I could not fully answer the question.