

# Perception on the subjectivity of perception



Everything that moves on Earth uses perception as the primary means of gaining knowledge.

Humans are no different. Through the partially subjective nature of perception, we are subject to illusions, errors of perception, errors in judgment, emotions and personal and cultural bias. Science's goal is to rise above this flaw and to achieve understanding from a universally valid and unbiased point. However, artists do not consider this a flaw because it allows them to take a personal point of view and therefore be original. In addition, artists strive to evoke emotions through their work, which can only be incorporated if the artist knows how perception can trigger emotions. Therefore, artists value the subjective nature of perception as a means to create an effective work of art, while scientists need to confer with others in order to overcome that subjectivity and give an objective account of reality. For a scientist, or social scientist, perception and reason are the foremost methods of gaining knowledge in their respective fields. Perception is the active, selective and interpretative process of recording the external world through sensory experiences.

These characteristics of perception hamper the scientist's ability to gain objective knowledge in their respective fields. However, the social scientist utilizes that interpretative process to determine the meaning or motive behind human actions. For the natural scientist, the scientific method is the principal method for learning about nature. Perception becomes of the utmost importance during the data collection and analysis stages. During these stages, the scientist uses his senses to collect knowledge about his experiment which can later be analyzed and published. Between collecting

the knowledge and publishing there is a stage of interpretation of the data. Often scientists will form convictions about the knowledge before them, and will then use those convictions to form a conclusion to be published. The conclusion can then only be considered objective or scientific knowledge after others reached the same conclusion.

This alignment of conclusions is required because convictions, which contain inherent personal bias, can vary between individuals, and it is by means of this congruity that the knowledge can be considered true under all circumstances, hence objective. Karl Popper best puts it as, “ It happens very rarely that a man first forms a conviction on the basis of personal experience, publishes it, and gets it objectively accepted as one of the things we say ‘ It is known that...”. (Popper 13) On some occasions, scientists openly admit to employing judgment in their selection of information. Robert A. Millikan’s balanced drop’ method of determining  $e$  [the electron’s charge] is the prime example in the scientific world of subjectivity.

In both his published papers on this experiment, he clearly states that he omitted some values because they were “ irregular”. (Crease 155) Millikan’s determination of the validity of a run, in his defense, was a combination of reason and subjective perception, less so reason. Holton, a science historian, remarked that, “ Millikan was evidentially saying he knew a good run when he saw one, and he was not going to overlook that knowledge even if it was not obvious how to quantify and share it on the record.” (Holton 53) For Millikan, the subjective nature of perception was not an obstacle, but instead a tool which enabled him to selectively identify relevant values from those ‘ erroneous’ values. While Millikan’s determination of the charge of an

electron, to this day, is still regarded as an important achievement in science, it does not dismiss his conduct in his work. In addition, even though he thought he had kept only the good data and not the bad data, his value for the electron charge is still lower than current day values by . 6%.

(Worcester) However, his uncertainty, which he declared was the reason for selectiveness, was short of the current day value by 322%.

Personal bias or judgment is useful for detecting probable errors, like for Millikan, however, to justify the judgment or biased, some objective evidence needs to be found in order for the judgment to have any meaning. In the arts, perception, whether it is sight, sound, smell, taste or touch, is the primary method for most artists to gain knowledge. While other ways of knowing, including emotion and language, do influence the artist when he creates his work, they all affect the perception of reality by the artist, and hence his work. Today, the selective and interpretive process of perception is used by the artist to formulate a unique perception of the reality, which is then used to produce the art. While between artists, the goal of their art can differ, perception and its inherit personal bias serve only to strengthen their art. Comedians, while often not at the top of the list for examples of art, perhaps utilize the subjective nature of perception the most. Successful comedians tell of their personal experiences in their acts, however it is their interpretation of these events which make them humorous. One example is the Canadian comedian Russell Peters.

His success is attributed to his perception on racial diversity. It's nice like this, a mix of audience like this, different types of people ...this type of thing

is not going to be able to happen 300 years from now... you realize that there's not going to be no more white people.

.. no more black people, everyone's going to be beige. (Peters)The audience laughs at the irony in the statement, where 300 years from now through racial mixing in effort to do away with discrimination, a source of pleasure, his type pf humor, which plays on racial diversity, will also be wiped out. Through his personal experience and perception of the world around him, he became aware of this. However it is only through the subjective nature of perception, was he able to tell that the statement was amusing. This is because through his own personal bias of what type of irony is amusing and appropriate was he able to select what part of the overall observation was comical. All in all, the subjective nature of perception has its uses in most areas of knowledge, however it can also be an obstacle when an objective view is required.

Scientists generally need to remain objective, however judgments need to be made whether the information gathered is worthy of publishing or requires further scrutiny. This still entails objectively identifying possible sources of error and testing them to ensure that they do not adversely affect the results of the experiment. Artist normally employ their judgments and other subjective aspects of perception to choose the form that their art will take. This meant that they need not depict reality directly, but use their personal bias to dictate the form of reality being depicted. Realism dictated the objective portrayal of reality, however subjectivity and not objectivity was still required to evaluate the worthiness of a subject, much like in the sciences. Overall subjectivity has it's advantages in all areas of knowledge, <https://assignbuster.com/perception-on-the-subjectivity-of-perception/>

but because of this aspect, artisans and scientists will also depend on other ways of knowledge to help them teach their respective fields.