

Science is an area of knowledge that has become equivalent to the word of God as society has moved from religion to science as a source of widely accepted fact and reassurance. With the application of technology and the major developments scientific study has undergone in recent history, science is a source people trust to guide them in meeting “many basic human needs and [improving] living conditions.”¹

Science as an area of knowledge obviously encompasses various significant aspects of everyday life. However, the question of if there is sufficient justification for science to be more highly regarded than any other area of knowledge, like art, is more complex. For many reasons, art and science are of equal importance as areas of knowledge.

For one, a major reason science is so highly respected is the expertise it requires. Careers in the science field like surgeons are amongst the highest paying jobs.² Scientific occupations notoriously

require extensive education, knowledge, and training. The structured methodology of scientific research and study makes it reasonably reliable, and since not everyone can be an expert, the opinions of scientific experts are widely valued. Alternatively, looking at a field such as art, people tend to bypass the experts of the field and form their own opinions. Art by nature is far less structured, allowing for interpretation. This does not mean art is without method, the method is simply “an adaptation of the idea one wants to express”.³ Artists can devise new methods to fit the piece they intend to create, such as the Ancient Greeks and their famous statues, and the Europeans of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries adopting the romanticism style of art.⁴ Although methods are adaptable, technique in artistic expression requires skill and expertise to execute the art well. In this way, art and science overlap because their quality is dependent on the level of expertise and the

methodology. Although people do not recognize the value of artistic expertise as they do scientific, the fact remains that more knowledge of the area makes a more valuable opinion. An example of the importance of artistic expertise is the selection of the architectural design for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. In this case, many people were going to have an opinion, but the decided upon best course of action was the creation of a panel of experts to choose the best design.⁵ A panel of experts provided an unbiased opinion that purely judged the art as a means of memorializing the veterans, which was exactly what was needed to settle on one artistically excellent design.

Furthermore, science is known to be reliable, as mentioned earlier. The fact that science is viewed as a concrete truth makes it an esteemed discipline to the public, while art is chiefly recognized for its ability to express. Science is regarded highly for its influence in many

ways, and the influence of art is equally as significant. Good science is defined by its ability to prove an understanding, and good art is defined by its ability to express. Science is a process of discovery, as it “aims to produce more and more accurate natural explanations of how the natural world works, what its components are, and how the world got to be the way it is now”.⁶ Science works to understand the earth through logic, but art provides discovery by helping people see aspects of the world in new ways. Art may not offer proof of the circumstances it proposes like science does, but it does communicate certain truths in a way that other disciplines like science cannot. It produces a discovery within the viewer that does not need to be verified because it can be felt and understood that way. Tolstoy said, “The chief peculiarity of this feeling is that the receiver of a true artistic impression is so united to the artist that he feels as if the work were his own...as if what it expresses were just what he

had long been wishing to express.”⁷ Art creates connection and an understanding between artist and viewer, and between all viewers. This sense of belonging is a human need as much as any physiological human need that science can provide. In fact, one theory in psychology called Maslow’s hierarchy of needs demonstrates how expression is required for humans to reach their full potential.⁸ The theory places the needs into a pyramid, the bottom half representing needs for basic survival, and the top representing “growth” needs.⁹ In the pyramid, the order from bottom to top appears as physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization.¹⁰ While physical needs like health that science supplies must be met, humans also have an innate need for experiences of belonging, expressing feeling, and establishing identity in the world in order to prosper. Artistic pursuits are the manner in which these needs can be met, which establishes the vital nature of art to human life.

Finally, science is known worldwide for its many examples of bettering the quality of human life. The examples of cancer treatment, vaccines for diseases, and the invention of glasses, are all well-known ways that science directly impacts individuals. There are many cases of art directly improving the condition of human life as well. One such instance is the era of the Harlem Renaissance. During the 1920s and 1930s, the Harlem Renaissance was an artistic movement for African Americans in Harlem who had been oppressed by segregation laws and racism for years.¹¹ The renaissance gave a chance for African Americans to express themselves, a “‘spiritual coming of age’ in which African Americans transformed ‘social disillusionment to race pride’”.¹² African Americans used art to create a new identity for themselves. Painting, sculpting, poetry, literature, dance, and music all became a mechanism that allowed them to redefine their image.¹³ Art gave them a voice in a

society that was determined to silence them, and it allowed them to take control of their own narrative. For instance, the *John Henry Series* painted by Palmer Hayden during this time depicted the life story of a black man named John Henry from birth to death.¹⁴ These paintings were able to communicate the African American experience in a unique way unachievable by any other means. The Renaissance was a significant part of the Civil Rights Movement in that it gave African Americans the confidence to be proud of their heritage and their culture, and to celebrate it freely.¹⁵ There are many similar cases where art has been used to give power to those who have none otherwise. It can be a crucial political tool, such as in the case of street art and political cartoons. It can also be an expression of pain, a warning, and a spreading of awareness like the novel *Night* by Elie Wiesel, which tells one man's story of living through the concentration camps of the Holocaust.¹⁶ All of

these examples show that art is equal in various ways to science in its ability to help people.

Overall, science and art as areas of knowledge are not as different as many believe. Although in some respects they oppose each other, in much of the opposition similarity can be found. Their methods are different, but they require the same level of methodology and skill. Their goals are different, but their outcomes, relaying information about the world, are much the same. They meet different needs, but they are both needed by humanity. Their influences are achieved in different ways, but both are influential just the same. An astronaut, Mae Jemison, remarked, “Sciences provide an understanding of a universal experience, arts are an understanding of a universal experience...they are both a part of us and a manifestation of the same thing...the arts and sciences are avatars of human creativity.”¹⁷ Creativity is part of both devising a way

to discover what is already there and originating art that allows people to discover new ideas and connect through them. Scientific developments have undoubtedly made huge strides in human standards of living and capacity for understanding the world. With that said, art has also been a necessity of human life for centuries to satisfy the human desire to be heard, listened to, and understood. Without either area of knowledge, the world would endure more suffering. All in all, science deserves to be regarded highly, but not more highly than other areas of knowledge because every area of knowledge is a puzzle piece that is essential to fill in a certain gap in the puzzle of human existence.

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