

The Inaccurate View of Science

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Offering an alternative method of viewing science and our understanding of knowledge.

Content:

If I have one purpose in life, it is to enlighten those around me. All too often, if one has a social and political awareness, we are going to hear such statements as, "Science has proved this," or "Science has proved that," and it will be implied in a way that it is absolute. So often have I heard this statement, that I feel it is necessary to write upon it.

Science may best be defined as a method of investigation, as well as the results of that investigation. It allows scientists, or at least followers of this method, to conduct

experiments and tests. Once the tests are concluded, other scientists may conduct the same experiment to receive identical or similar results. This is all simple, though, and certainly nothing new to anyone well versed in the philosophy of science.

Society can be defined as the attitudes held in the minds of those who are members of such a society. Reformers and revolutionaries alike are intrinsic in developing good societies, as they are the ones to form, mold, or alter the attitudes of others. In the end, though, of course, only the person can change themselves, in that they are open minded and willing to understand new things. Writers and artists can only help them in their journey to understanding. By creating awareness about certain social and economical issues, by strife that occurs between different classes, attitudes are molded and formed. For example, if writers and poets focus much of their art on an issue like police brutality, it may instill people with the attitude that police officers and representatives of the law have no authority to be cruel or malicious -- some of the population may even fight back, defending themselves and their rights. In this way, one flick of the pen can incite a thousand protests. By molding the attitude of the public, reformers and revolutionaries take on a great responsibility. Yet it is here that we discover that the attitude of a society is what makes up its foundation. Sometimes, reformers and revolutionaries focus their energy solely on infusing the attitude into a populace that there is nothing wrong in considering new ideas, that it is no sin to rebuke ignorance of knowledge, to -- in general -- have an open mind on all matters. For example, if Germany's population had a positive attitude about tolerance and acceptance, they would have never allowed Hitler's policies to come into practice. In the United States, there was a strong anti-war attitude among citizens, and 1,500 protestors rioted in San Francisco at George Bush's war.

Most importantly, for a society to flourish, in that it contributes to the development of philosophical, scientific, and literary thought -- through writing books, conducting experiments, and creating inventions -- for a society to prosper, it must have well-reasoned attitudes towards the confronting political, economical, and social issues. In our society, the belief that science is an absolute, single figurehead remains as a sign that our attitude towards science is rather weak. It is true, though, that not everyone will have such an attitude. The public, though, does have such an attitude. Science is not one set ideology. It is a mass of what often seems to be quarreling, bickering, almost beaurocratic-like scientists, arguing over the validity of experiments, tests, and criticizing almost every point. For what evidence you can get to support one theory, there will be five scientists supporting opposite theories. At least, with new theories attempting to explain new fields of understanding, this is the case. There is the case of what I will call orthodox science, on questions such as the movement of the planets in the solar system or the roundness of the Earth. When a person states that science has proved something, it is an empty, hollow statement. Science itself proves nothing, as it is a method, and the community that follows this method. If someone wants to offer evidence that something is true, then show the experiment or the data supporting it. "This person conducted this experiment on this date, and found these results," -- this statement, however, is specific. Unlike the vague "science proves it," this statement can actually be criticized.

The importance of having this attitude towards science is great. What we know as truth, especially in the scientific community, is always changing and improving, with new experiments confirming our hypothesis and other ones disproving what we believed to be ancient wisdom for so long. It is impractical to rely on "science" as a single body of perfect knowledge, immune to learning and the passage of time. But it is more than just knowing that science is one body, but it is understanding it and having that attitude. It is very possible to simply know that science always changes, but it is entirely different thing to have the open mind that what scientists are predicting is fallible, that our understanding of atoms and electrons could be entirely false, that our knowledge on fusion and fission are actually upside down from the actual true understanding -- and that, even in a thousand years, our knowledge in these areas will still be subject to new experiments and discoveries. The inaccurate view of science is that it is a single, immutable body of truth. The accurate view of science is that it is a method of investigation and the community that adheres to this method, as well as an ever-changing collection of

theories and evidence to support these theories.

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Punkerslut (or Andy Carloff) has been writing essays and poetry on social issues which have caught his attention for several years. His website <http://www.punkerslut.com> provides a complete list of all of these writings. His life experience includes homelessness, squatting in New Orleans and LA, dropping out of high school, getting expelled from college for "subversive activities," and a myriad of other revolutionary actions.

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