

Before answering whether both poetry and science enjoy equal success in expanding human knowledge, one must first understand what poetry and science are and what they do. Poetry is an artist's way of abstractly conveying his or her ideas through writing so as to stimulate the emotional side of the readers. Science on the other hand, is an objective way of clearly stating facts so as to stimulate the "formal" or fact craving side of the readers. Poetry presents an object in order to convey a particular message or feeling, whilst science merely presents an object objectively and describes how it is, clearly, in every way possible. Therefore, it is clear that the purpose of these two approaches is quite different. Furthermore, the ways of knowing in poetry and science are somewhat different. Poetry's ways of knowing are mainly emotion and language, while sciences are mainly language and reason. However, although they have language in common, both of them utilize language in different ways and for different purposes.

As is obvious from above, both approaches aim to expand two completely different parts of human knowledge. Poetry aims to expand the aesthetic while science the scientific. Therefore, they cannot be assessed on their ability to expand human knowledge based on the same criteria but rather, they should both be assessed based on individual criteria in their own specific areas of knowledge and then compared after being assessed. Assessing them based on the same criteria would much be like comparing a desert with a main course, which would be wrong since they both have different purposes and, although the dessert may not be good at achieving the purpose of the main dish, it could well be excellent at achieving the purposes of a dessert.

Since poetry tries to "touch" the reader's emotional side aesthetically it must be scrutinized as an art. The purpose of art is to aesthetically touch an emotion which all people supposedly have. Through techniques specific to each art, good artists are able to do this, and this in itself is an expansion of human knowledge in that it causes people to be aware of their emotions. Humans "have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us." (Matthew Arnold, 'The Study of Poetry') The purpose of Shakespeare's Macbeth is not to scientifically understand how ambition can conquer one, nor is it meant to be a historical recount of the real Macbeth. It is a poetic story which is written so as people can empathize with the main characters and view their own life in terms of conquering their faults and sustaining their good.

Another purpose of poetry is to represent human nature. This can clearly be seen through any of Robert's Frost's poems such as Out, Out which explains, better than any scientific paper ever could, the ability of a child to care so much about his desire to work and help society, and the lack of care his family experiences when he dies. Poetry presents human characteristics, the human thought, the human inner self, all compact into one verse and it is so powerful because when read, one immediately connects with it, and it touches each person's emotions in a way. Also, it so vividly depicts the nature of humans that it is a powerful tool through which people can express themselves, and in which people can relate to. It expands our knowledge of human nature and the way humans behave and the power of emotions and their effect on us. In Shakespeare's Macbeth when Lady Macbeth asks the evil spirits to "unsex me [Lady Macbeth] here" one feels the evil powers of ambition and its ability to overtake one's sane and rational thought.

On the other hand science's purpose is to clearly depict a situation or object. Science, in no way, should aim to "touch" the reader's emotional side, but rather touch

the reader's rationality. Although some may argue that science does touch a reader's side, it is not the main purpose of the writing, and is rather an effect of extreme love towards and passion for the subject. A scientific argument should not be ambiguous or differ from reader to reader, unlike poetry. There is no way for a scientific argument to be true to some people and false to others, for in science there is an absolute truth which the scientists are trying to attain. Although many may argue that poets are also aiming to achieve this absolute truth, it must be noted that each person's emotions are different and therefore there is no way to absolutely describe the way people think, react or behave. Biology, chemistry and physics have set laws and truths which, regardless of who or where you are, will be true. If the purpose of poetry is, as we said, to depict human nature, then the purpose of science is to understand nature itself and how it works.

When writing a piece the author must create a balance between ambiguity and precision and the language of a piece is directly dependant on the purpose of the piece. Poetry and science are completely opposite in the way that they try to balance ambiguity and precision. In poetry the ability to ambiguously use words is good since it allows one to think abstractly and allows different readers, with different mindsets, to interpret the piece in different ways. Therefore, in the case of poetry language, as a way of knowing, is created to be ambiguous so as to contribute to the knowledge and effect of the piece. On the other hand, in science ambiguity greatly impedes a work. It is not acceptable for a law or theory in science to be indirect and not addressing one specific point clearly.. Otherwise the law becomes obsolete, since if it is not understandable it has no purpose. There is no space in science for different interpretations of a law; the law has one purpose that it achieves and that purpose is set. It is not different for different people, or different nations, or different cultures. In the sense of multiple meanings, contrary to poetry's double entendres, scientific writing cannot have any; the one meaning the author desires to portray must be directly stated so as to disallow ambiguity and interpretation. For example, water being comprised of two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom is true independent of one is in the United States, Russia, or Australia. Also, it is true independent of one's age, race, background, nationality, religion, or any other factor which may change from person to person. However, poetry is quite the opposite. Poetry should be, and is, interpreted differently by different people. The meaning or "truth" behind poetry is fully dependant on all the factors listed above. An old person may have a completely different understanding of words in poems such as George Herbert's The Pulley the double meaning of the word "rest" which can either mean the remainder or it can mean peace. The great difference between these two interpretations leaves the reader with the final choice to interpret the poem the way he/she wants and this is the intent of the poet. However, in science it is the intent of the scientist to clearly illustrate his/her point without any ambiguity as in science clarity is essential.

In conclusion, it can be seen that poetry and science have completely different purposes and different means of attaining these purposes. Furthermore, each of these specific areas of knowledge means to expand different types of knowledge and pertain to different ways of knowing. However, one must realize that it is essential to have a balance between the "scientific" or factual knowledge, and the "poetic"/"aesthetic" knowledge or the emotional understanding of human nature. Therefore, in these terms science successfully expands its portion of human knowledge successfully expands its.

Candidate Number: 0708011

Therefore, it can be concluded that each area of knowledge has equal success in expanding knowledge in its respective “area”.

Words: 1,379

Candidate Number: 0708011

*“In science one tries to tell people, in such a way as to be understood by everyone, something that no one ever knew before. But in poetry it’s the exact opposite.” (P A M Dirac) Do both the approaches suggested in the quotation enjoy equal success in expanding human knowledge?*