

Opinion

## What is Science?

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### Abstract

This opinion piece examines the meaning and role of science in a modern context characterized by distraction, rapid information flow, and diminished reflection. Drawing on perspectives from Socrates and Carl Jung, it argues that a decline in self-examination and critical thinking may contribute to a superficial public understanding of science. The concept of scientism, as discussed by J. P. Moreland, is considered as a factor in the mischaracterization of science as universally authoritative and capable of resolving all problems. The piece highlights the distinction between science as an evolving, evidence-based process and its technological applications, while noting the paradox of societal advancement alongside increasing mental health challenges. It concludes by emphasizing the responsibility of scientists to contribute not only to knowledge production but also to the broader improvement of the human condition.

### Opinion

It might seem like a “silly” question to be posed in this journal; nonetheless, what is science? An acceptable definition is “any system of knowledge that is concerned with the physical world and its phenomena and that entails unbiased observations and systematic experimentation” [1]. Most people are aware of science on a daily basis.

In this interconnected world of unlimited data, where attention appears to be at a premium and rapid stimulation (i.e., entertainment) is a major pursuit, little time is spent in quiet contemplation. Socrates, in antiquity, cited similar concerns. He noted that a society begins decaying when it spends more time on entertainment and fulfilling instincts than on quiet contemplation and the lifelong pursuit of self-examination [2]. Carl Jung [3] millennia later, came to similar conclusions. He examined how we interact with other humans and the physical world, positing that most people project their thoughts and feelings onto others. They often receive the quick responses they expect, thereby validating themselves. The person who chooses the never-ending search for self-knowledge needs no external validation; instead, they seek wisdom and a moral life.

So, what does this have to do with science? Everything. Unfortunately, in current society where distraction often overrides thought, and reactions are favored over well-considered actions, few people truly understand what science is. “Scientism,” a word coined in 1877, was first used to apply biological knowledge to other disciplines, primarily the social sciences. J. P. Moreland (2018) cites multiple instances where science is mischaracterized as highly predictive, consensual, and capable of solving all problems given sufficient time and resources [4]. I agree that it is often used

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to support ideological goals. Consider what many in the world have endured recently: leaders, in the name of health, issuing severe limitations on freedom of speech, thought, and movement, while not always adhering to those same restrictions themselves. I hope this stimulates thought in others.

Science is important in our lives; however, it cannot prove absolute truths, it identifies patterns, relationships, and correlations, and continually evolves. It never truly reaches an endpoint. Technology, the application of scientific principles to the physical world, has greatly changed our lives. People living today are fortunate: they live longer and healthier lives and have unprecedented access to knowledge. Yet there is a general malaise, cynicism, and record levels of mental health challenges. Why?

It may benefit major cultural institutions to keep citizens distracted, pacified, and satisfied as replaceable parts, echoing themes in the works of George Orwell and Aldous Huxley. As scientists, we must recognize that our primary responsibility is the improvement of humanity and the human condition through our work.

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