



Influence of Science on Everyday Life

Scientists spend numerous years in various levels of education in order to develop a basic understanding of their subject. From this base each scientist devotes his or her scientific career to making new discoveries. These subjects range from natural sciences such as biology and chemistry to the studies of human behavior, but every field of science has an important role in the ongoing quest for a more advanced society. Science and its various components, are developed for the sole purpose of increasing scientific knowledge; however, this knowledge is often met with controversy. For every new finding there will be an audience of disbelievers. For example, evolutionary theories on the development of ~~man kind~~ will likely meet resistance with conflicting religious beliefs. New scientific findings presented to a community in different spheres of life can be welcomed or destroy communities depending on the terminology used to present the new ideas. The influence of community views on science and its applications is an ever-growing area of concern for scientists. Jewish anthropologist Jonathan Boyarin, in his essay, "Waiting for a Jew"; explores the extended uses of his anthropological studies and their possible practical applications. Paleontologist, Stephen Jay Gould, in his essay, "What does the dreaded 'E' word *mean* anyway? A Reverie for the Opening of the New Hayden Planetarium" discusses the importance of language and the interactions between the field of science and public communities. **Neither scientist is writing with strict regards to science or its applications, although both expose the reader to the extended influences on or practical applications of science in society. In order for these influences to be productive rather than detrimental to society, an acceptable set of terms must be developed.** 

The scientific terminology chosen to express radical scientific ideas, such as evolution, is the main cause of problems between science and the public spheres of everyday life.  The way a discovery or theory is explained can make it acceptable or controversial to different communities depending on their beliefs. An explanation for new scientific discoveries may be offensive to the general population if the language chosen is

not agreeable. This is why a common acceptable vocabulary is essential to the successful introduction and application of new findings. Boyarin, in his essay, discusses the importance of language and its role in communication with people representing different ideas. He suggests that a translator of some form will make communications more productive. Boyarin says when scientists are, "attempting to communicate knowledge", in this case, scientific discoveries, "we are messengers" (164). When exposing new ideas to the public, scientists become the messengers between science and every aspect of life. The messenger must be able to communicate in terms accepted by everyone in order to ensure the new information is welcomed by the public. Public reactions to the controversial theory of evolution are present in Gould's essay. Gould also emphasizes the importance of language when exposing scientific discoveries like evolution. He realized in his research that the language we chose to represent an idea can determine how the public will react to the idea. Gould explains that a topic such as evolution is considered controversial and is therefore deemed unnecessary. He realizes that rather than accepting a controversial issue such as the theory of evolution, the public decides to pass it off as a conflicting argument. Gould recalls his time in high school biology and states that "our textbooks didn't utter the word" (Gould 323) referring to evolution. Because an agreement of terms cannot be reached, evolution has become a mystery to many people. If people chose to simply ignore what is foreign to them society will not make any scientific advancements. In order to create a better relationship between science and the public scientific messengers must translate discoveries into common terms.

The issue of the use of language and common terms transcends into the world of education when people decide what can and cannot be taught in schools. The way a topic is developed and presented to the public will determine whether or not it belongs in the classroom. Science as a high school subject is being hindered due solely to the fact that a decision cannot be made on what to present to children in their learning experience. Science is meant to be an addition to the knowledge given to children, but often is seen as a

contradiction to pre-learned religious beliefs. To remove major elements of a science curriculum based on a disagreement of terms is a regression in the stride for a more scientifically advanced future society. Gould compares the necessity of evolution in a science curriculum to the need for grammar in an English curriculum by saying that the removal of evolution from a science course is like "stating that English will still be taught but that grammar may henceforth be regarded as a peripheral frill" (323). Evolution is a scientifically proven theory which is essential to understanding the creation of mankind. Just as an understanding of grammar is needed to be fluent in English, an understanding of evolution is needed to fully understand the creation of mankind. To the anti-evolution population this elimination of evolution education may seem acceptable, but to the population of scientists and people interested in the growth of scientific discovery, it seems as though children are being robbed of essential scientific knowledge. In order for this debate over evolution in the classroom to end scientists and the public audience must come to an agreement of terms. If scientists could explain the benefits of evolution education the public reaction to evolution could be reversed.

While evolution is being avoided in the education of young children, it continues to play a role in the interaction with religion. Religious believers argue that evolution, as explained by scientists, contradicts what is accepted to be true in religion. To the vast majority of religious people, this scientific belief of the creation of mankind is not compatible with the belief that God created mankind. Scientists argue that the theory is a major component of the life sciences while religious people argue that evolution leaves no room for religious beliefs regarding the creation of man. Boyarin says it would be impossible for a person to join a community "without giving up major parts of his or her identity" (157). In order to make the relationship work, both science and religion must give up part of their beliefs and adapt to meet the other. Scientists have been unable to provide an explanation of evolution which will be acceptable to people with strongly supported religious beliefs. In order for scientists to succeed in the search for common terms they must give up part of

their theory and develop a modified theory which will be more compatible with the religious beliefs of the creation of man. If scientists were willing to revise their theory of evolution and consider the addition of God's role in evolution, religious disagreements could be eliminated. This modified version of the theory of evolution would include the common terms found to be accepted by both scientists and the public.

An important tool for a successful relationship between any two groups, such as science and religion, is the ability to accept and appreciate the other group's viewpoints. Often, this acceptance is done simply to ease tension rather than as a final agreement of terms. This acceptance is the beginning of a better relationship. In the ever-changing world of science, theories such as evolution are developed every day. Many of these theories contradict something that has already been agreed on, and this creates problems with the people who believe in the existing theory. Boyarin recalls a time when he brought a friend to the Eighth Street Shul. The congregation, although it was against their normal policy, were "willing to include in the minyan a young man", who unlike anyone else, "wore dreadlocks under a Rastafarian-style knitted cap" (157). This shows that although the man's appearance did not meet their normal criteria; they were able to accept him and allow him to participate in the service. This same practice of accepting other people's ways can be applied to the situation between science and religion. The congregation modified their beliefs on proper dress code in order to include this man in their celebration. Religion could similarly modify its ideas of the creation of man to meet that of the scientific world. When scientists present a new topic to the public, people should be prepared to accept this new discovery and be willing to modify their beliefs to make room for new information. The ideas are not usually exposed to the public as a way of changing the way every person thinks about that topic, but as a significant finding essential to the growth of science. A common agreement should be reached so that there is not an ongoing debate between science and the public.

As time moves on, science is ever-changing and growing. New discoveries often end or lead to the end of major world problems such as disease. It is understood that as new radical ideas emerge from the laboratories, they will be met with some resistance. This resistance must be kept to a minimum in order for the development of man-kind to continue. The idea of evolution causes controversy and debate in many aspects of life, but by coming to a common agreement of terms and policies new findings can be put to better use. It is important to inform generations of the past, present and future of existing theories, controversial or not, in order to move ahead in new discoveries. The removal of a major scientific theory based solely on its controversial stance is taking us a step back in time. A better relationship between science and the public will reverse this pattern and continue to take us into a more advanced tomorrow.

