What Is Experimental Humanology, and What Methods Does It Use?

A Review of Experimental or Scientific Humanology

We love to make discoveries and no matter how much we know, we still have the desire to know more. That is why we constantly create new branches of science. Thanks to scientific advancements, we are able to answer the biggest questions that our ancestors had in mind; however, we are still amazed at our own 'essence.'

Humanology is the science that deals with the collection of what we know about ourselves. This science, in the sense that it is used today, faces many crises and cannot give a correct definition of the human being. All its branches are somehow involved in the same problem as well. Humanology is the most important, beneficial, and at the same time, the most underrated branch of science. It is fair to state that no knowledge has been neglected and deviated from its original path as much as humanology.

In this article, we will introduce and examine experimental humanology. Since this knowledge relies on experimental methods to know humans, first we need to clarify the functions of experimental sciences.

Experimental Sciences and Their Functions

What comes to your mind when you hear the word 'science'? A lab and white lab coats, images showing black holes in space, physics equations on a blackboard, or something else?

Science has a broad meaning and there are different interpretations of it. But a more common definition is the information that we gain through trials and experiments. Experimental sciences fall within this particular definition of science.

Experimental science is a branch of science that studies the natural phenomena of the universe. However, any category that is to be studied in this field of knowledge has to meet a few requirements:

1. It must be observable.

2. It must be testable, measurable, and analyzable.

3. It must be replicable, that is, anyone can repeat the same experiment by providing the necessary conditions.[1]

The typical procedure in experimental sciences involves making a hypothesis, deriving logical predictions from it, and then doing experiments to see if the initial hypothesis is true or false. We may carry out an experiment based on a hypothesis, but the results of our experiment can invalidate our hypothesis. Therefore, a key feature of experimental sciences is their capacity to be proven false. This fact is not just limited to hypotheses. Sometimes, with the advancement of science, theories which have been accepted for years are called into question, and new scientific theories take their place. There are many examples of replaced principles in various fields of experimental sciences, and their number is increasing.

Most of us associate experimental sciences with fields such as biology, geology, physics, and chemistry, but in reality, these fields are all natural sciences.

[1]. https://www.sciencebuddies.org/science-fair-projects/science-fair/writing-experimental-procedures

Experimental sciences, as defined earlier, have a broader meaning; many branches of the humanities that deal with observable, experimental, and empirical subjects can also be considered as subcategories of experimental sciences. One of these subcategories is experimental humanology.

What Is Experimental (Scientific) Humanology

When classifying living organisms, biological scientists classify humans under the category of mammals and practically consider humans as a type of animal.

Based on the findings of biological sciences and the common characteristics of humans and animals, such as lust, anger, social life, etc., Western philosophers consider human beings as a type of animal as well.[2] They view humans as a more complex and evolved animal than others. This approach toward humans forms the basis of studies in the field of humanology called 'experimental humanology.'

In this field, humans are viewed as a natural organism, just like other living organisms in nature. Therefore, the same empirical and experimental method in experimental sciences is used to know human beings.

Humanology has been developed to know human beings, and obviously, we expect it to give us a comprehensive knowledge of the human. The key question here is whether the knowledge acquired through experimental humanology is a comprehensive knowledge or not.

[2]. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/animalism/

Experimental Humanology: Benefits and Challenges

Any type of study that explores a dimension or dimensions of human existence, and is testable and observable is a subcategory of experimental humanology, such as anthropology, demography, medical science, social sciences, political sciences, psychology, educational sciences, economics, etc.

Even though philosophy has no direct connection with experimental sciences, philosophers sometimes draw on the achievements of experimental humanology to support their own viewpoints. For instance, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, who is considered a proponent of experimental anthropology, explicitly states that awareness and senses must inform us about who the human being is. He explains that human "cognition reaches appearances [i.e., objects as they appear to us, in sensible experience] only.[3] Similarly, Bertrand Russell believes if we cannot have a direct cognitive relation to something, we cannot claim we are acquainted with it.[4]

This amount of dogmatism and emphasis on trial and experiment as the only means of knowing human beings is surprising. This is because the experimental method is only applicable to observable phenomena, while human beings are not characterized by their outward behavior only; they also have will, intention, faith, and meaningful actions, which are not observable. Moreover, this method cannot measure emotions such as joy, fear, and sadness.

[3]. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant/
[4]. https://iep.utm.edu/knowacq/#:~:text=Russell%20explains%20that%20a%20person,108

Experimental knowledge, in terms of its perspective, falls into the category of micro-humanology. It can only study certain aspects of human beings, so it is unable to answer general questions such as:

- How were human beings created?
- Do they have other dimensions besides their physical body?
- What is the philosophy of their life?
- What happens to them after death?

Another drawback of this knowledge returns to its nature. As we mentioned before, the potential to be proven false is one of the main properties of experimental sciences. But applying this approach to human beings is dangerous because the findings of humanologists form the basis for legislation and the regulation of social structures. So if a new theory is proposed every day and the previous principles are questioned, human life will practically face serious crises. This has already happened before, and the abnormal situation of human societies is a proof of this claim.

Conclusion

Experimental humanology must deal with what it really is, which is a limited and partial approach to know human beings through the observation of their outward dimensions. That is, while this knowledge can help us understand the physical aspects of humans, it can never provide a complete knowledge of the human being.

Generally speaking, whenever humanology has studied human beings as independent and separate beings from their creator, it has faced confusion and challenges, and this issue is not limited to experimental humanology.