

- [Start Here](#)
- [Member Resources](#)
- [Blog](#)
- [Common Room](#)
- [Contact](#)



- [Announcements](#)
- [Settings](#)
- [Logout](#)

← [Back to ToK Notes](#)

Search



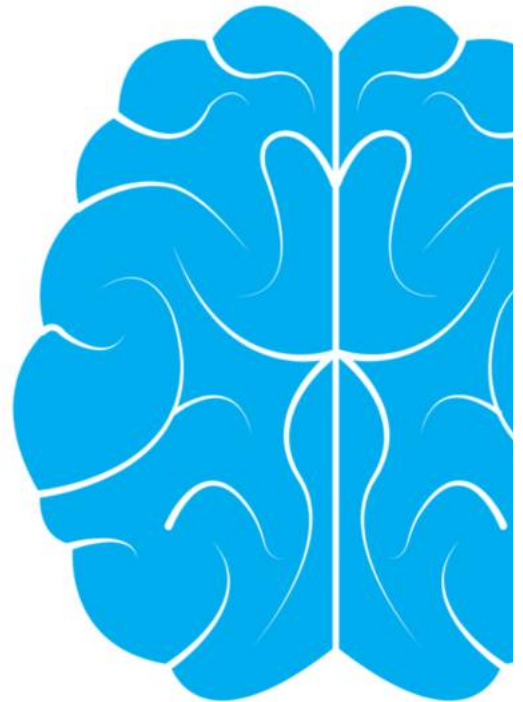
Human Sciences Notes

Post 13/17

TOK NOTES

WOKs: Language, Sense Perception, Emotion,
Reason, Imagination, Faith, Intuition and
Memory

AOKs: Arts, Ethics, History, Human Sciences,
Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Mathematics,
Natural Sciences, and Religious Knowledge
Systems



ToK Notes

[Mark as Complete](#)

Human Sciences Quotes

- "The social sciences are good at accounting for disasters once they have taken place" (Claude T Bissell)
- "If it cannot be expressed in figures, its not science; it is opinion." Lazarus Long
- "It is not in our human nature to imagine that we are wrong." (Kathryn Schulz)
- "Life is heredity plus environment." (Luther Burbank)
- "An economist is an expert who will know tomorrow why the things he predicted yesterday did happen today." (Laurence J Peter)
- "Human behaviour makes most sense when it is explained in terms of beliefs and desires, not in terms of volts and grams." (Steven Pinker)
- "We need more understanding of human nature, because the only real danger that exists is man himself." (Carl Jung)
- According to Eric Schmidt of Google, every two days now the human race

creates as much information as we did from the dawn of civilisation until 2003.

Human Sciences Definitions

- "A branch of study which deals with people or their actions, including the social sciences and the humanities, as contrasted with the natural sciences or physical sciences" (Oxford).
- The study of the reality of being human--the social, cultural, biological and behavioural aspects of human existence. (Adapted from the 2015 ToK Guide, Page 37).

Insights from Human Sciences

- Human sciences teaches us about people. For example, it gives us insights into **how people react to things**, which is often not what might be expected. One example is [the bystander effect](#). Researchers have shown that individuals are less likely to offer help to a victim when other people are around. The more people who witness someone needing help, the less likely people are to help.
- It helps us understand **how humans are manipulated**, what types of weaknesses we have as a species. These include logical fallacies (see Reason Notes). Understanding these better can help us make better decisions.
- The lessons learned through Human Science also help us improve society, through **improved public policy**. A great example of this is the UK's "Nudge Unit." In this government department, the insights of economists, such as Chicago's Richard Thaler, are being used to make changes to how to the government works. These changes are intended to "nudge" citizens toward choosing actions which are best for themselves and society (Guardian). The techniques are fascinating. For example, simply informing late-taxpayers that that most of their neighbours pay their taxes on time, improves the likelihood that they will pay theirs (Sunstein).

Weaknesses of Human Sciences

- Humans are complex, so it can be **hard to know what is causal** --what aspects are actually causing different outcomes. (You can read more about this idea that 'correlation does not imply causation' [in this Wikipedia link](#)).
- The kind of controlled experimentation, which is done in Natural Sciences, is not possible in human sciences, for a variety of reasons.
 - **Ethics** is one. For example, we cannot divide the children of a primary school into two groups to experiment on the effects of a healthy breakfast on test results or future financial success. It wouldn't be fair to the group of students who weren't allowed the good breakfast.
 - **Control** is another. Even if the above experiment could be justified ethically, it would be logistically very hard to ensure that the students in the 'bad breakfast group' actually were eating a bad breakfast.



Sources

- Sunstein, Cass R. "Nudging Taxpayers to Do the Right Thing" Bloomberg. APRIL 15, 2014. <https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2014-04-15/nudging-taxpayers-to-do-the-right-thing>
- Oxford. Definition of Human Sciences. https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/human_science
- Guardian. "David Cameron's 'nudge unit' aims to improve economic behaviour" <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2010/sep/09/cameron-nudge-unit-economic-behaviour>

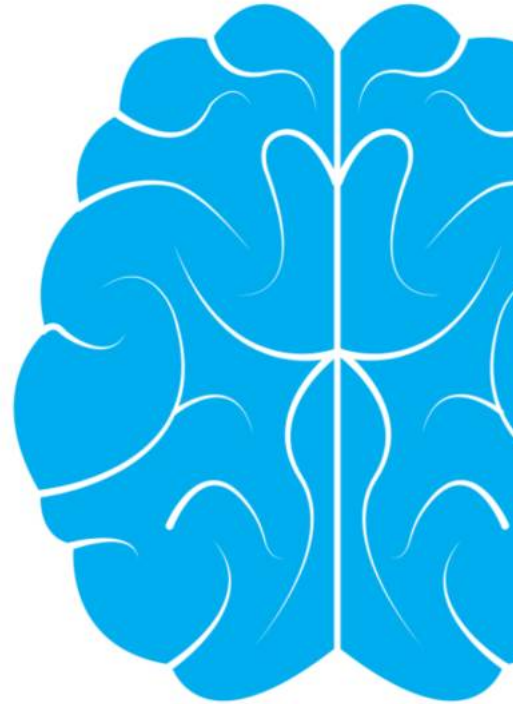
Say something
interesting...

Add Comment

0 Comments

TOK NOTES

Indigenous Knowledge Systems



Coming Up

Indigenous Knowledge Systems Notes

[Previous](#) [Next](#)



Tim Woods

ToK Teacher



[Terms](#) | [Privacy](#).

© 2016 IBMastery

