There is no such thing as a neutral question. Evaluate this statement with reference to two areas of knowledge.

We've always been encouraged to take a side when facing a choice instead of remaining silent, or in other words, staying neutral. So whether if a question can be asked without emotion involvement is the key point. This essay will mainly discuss the knowledge question "How far is sense perception or reason a greater factor of the existence of neutral question in areas of natural science and human science?" Neutral question is generally equal to truth, which I define as things that will never change by the test of time. To a great extent, reasoning, a way to deal with logic provided with evidence is more likely to testify the existence of neutrality rather than sense perception, which mainly depends on personal definition of what we perceive. These two ways of knowing function differently in the areas of natural science and human science. Natural science is based on testable experiments, whereas human science mainly studies people's inner world, which is driven by individual's emotions. This essay will begin by discussing whether news can be reported without bias.

As my all time favourite, the TV series "*The newsroom*" shows partially biased when reporting news. The host Will McAvoy publicly stated his own politics preference. For example, he attacked the Tea Party as "American Taliban", which is "hypocritical and completely inexperienced in politics" (*Robert Schoon, 2007*) in air. However, I used to think that news should be completely neutral to inform audience about the truths, instead of hosts' personal opinions. In the TV series, McAvory's news program

is so popular that it almost represents authority. I started to realize that the news may just the version of what host believes is true or what they want us to believe is true. This makes me reconsider that the news broadcasted may involve with reporters biases in the reality. Not only the news, can any question be asked without any purpose or expecting answers? To explore this question, two contrasting ways of knowing is applied, which is sense perception and reason. Sense perception examines how we form a question by what we see or believe in it, whereas reasoning helps us to consider things more logically without taking a side first. I will further discuss this question in the subjects of Biology and Journalism.

Natural science is generally considered as the most logical subjects. Scientists have conducted numerous experiments, collected countless data as evidences before confirming their theories. Theories like Newton's Three Law of Motion have withstood the test of time and are generally known as objective science. Does that mean that natural science is completely neutral with no bias? Frankly, it is not. "The eye sees only what the mind is prepared to comprehend." (*Henri Bergson, 1907*) Natural science, an empirical knowledge is based on scientists' perceptions. When scientists conduct experiments, they choose the phenomena seems more reasonable to further study on. This selecting process inevitably involves with personal beliefs. Therefore, natural science may be just a hypothesis, reflecting scientists' personal and social values and beliefs.

Only those who are completely isolated from the society can hold absolute neutrality in science. In the real world, scientists are affected by surrounding society and driven by self-interests, thus are difficult to ask neutral questions without personal emotion involvement. For example, the invention of thalidomide was once a huge success in 1950s. Dr. Lenz, involving in the drug testing, was the first to suspect that thalidomide may cause birth defects. However, his pride and eager to cure pregnant women from morning sickness drove him to ignore his questioning. Finally, "The world realized that thalidomide could cause babies born with short arms and twisted hands" (*Dr. Lenz, 1992*). Had Dr. Lenz ever used his reasoning to further investigate his questioning, there would never be so many newborn babies suffered from birth defects. Scientific theories therefore all begin with hypothesis, which are questions with predictions. Scientists then conduct further experiments followed by specific reasoning to testify their predictions. Usually, their predictions reflect their personal believes, thus could be biased. Reasoning is a critical way involved in experiment process because scientists use reasoning to limit the influence of bias and eliminate personal emotions in the experiments. Therefore, reason plays a larger role in establishing neutrality than perception. However, the neutrality is hard to pursue since no scientists could examine experiments with sole reasoning.

Another particular case to show scientists' knowledge is affected by outside world is normative science, which is "scientific information infused with hidden policy preference." (*Robert T. Lackey, 2013*) Science could be a major determinant in policy

debate. For example, a GMO labeling lobby, debating on whether GM food should be labeled, was described as "*Bad science, but good politics*". (*Mark Lynas, 2013*) Pro-campaigned scientists conducted numerous experiments in favor of showing potential risks of GMO. However, the real reasoning processed for over twenty years shows that no solid cases prove the poisonousness of GMO. Therefore, scientific neutrality is hard to pursue because science can be skewed by certain groups' interests. These scientists ask questions with expected answers, thus conduct experiments to get results they expect to perceive instead of reasoning the whole process. Reasoning, a logical way in examining scientific truth matters more in establishing scientific fact, whereas sense perception could blind people. It is barely possible for scientists, driven by self-interest to some extent, to make neutral scientific statement. Therefore, absolute neutral does not exist in scientific world since few people could always reason things neutrally.

The same case goes with the area of Human Science, which deals with "biological, social and cultural aspects of human life" (Unknown, Oxford University). Unlike natural science, human science incorporates humans' psychological experiences, which generally involve with our sense perception and emotion. Therefore, it is difficult to always stay in the middle ground when we use emotion to interpret what we perceive. Let's take a deeper insight into neutrality in media mentioned above. A particular case is the tragic public shooting happened in Cobb County, Georgia, in April 2014. Almost all authoritative news agency, including "New York Times, CBS

News and BBC published the news without mentioning the gun shoot was happened in a gun-free zone" (Dr. John R. Lott, 2014), though these words can be easily perceived on the photo. Reporters do not want to report on it because gun-free zones are called "magnet for shooters." (Dr. John R. Lott, 2014) The fact that criminals like attacking places where people have no arms to protect themselves would make the news less sensational. Therefore, news reporters prefer only reporting newsworthy side of the news. Although they can perceive the fact, they may still choose to ignore the reasoning and report the news in a more sensational way. We can conclude that reason plays a smaller part since what we perceived could be skewed in the area of human science, thus neutrality is likely to be impossible.

Above examples in the area of natural science and human science has shown that neutral questions barely exist. However, most of the news reporters claim their mission is to pursue the truth and report objective news, is there any possibility that neutrality may exist in some news? The answer is to some extent, it is possible. The most startling news recently is the attack at Charlie Hebdo magazine in France. At the time that people celebrate journalists at Charlie Hebdo as "Martyrs on behalf of freedam of expression" (David Brooks, 2015), New York Times published an article "I am not Charlie Hobdo" to clarify that the news agency would never publish such hate speech or offensive materials with discriminated religious tendency. This shows that, New York Times, an official news agency objectively reasons this attack instead of reporting it with its sympathy to Charlie Hebdo. The news agency is striving to

reach the goal of journalistic objectivity and present viewpoints without being partisan. Therefore, although it is difficult to achieve neutrality, the possibility is still there because news agencies are now making their efforts to report events more rationally.

In conclusion, in this essay the knowledge question "How far is sense perception or reason a greater factor of the existence of neutral question in areas of natural science and human science?" is discussed. I mainly use reason and sense perception to examine whether neutral questions really exist. Above examples of the discovery of thalidomide, GMO labeling lobby in natural science and the publication of sensational news in human science have proven my viewpoint because they all show that science and news could be distorted by human's bias, thus does not represent neutral question. It is difficult for humans, even the most rigorous scientists, to ask questions with no emotion involvement. Therefore, neutrality barely exists in the area of natural science and human science. However, instead of absolute neutral, we could pursue comparative neutral with our reasoning. Above examples show that people usually become biased when they only perceive what they want to perceive and leave some parts of truths behind. In which case, they lose their reasoning when interpret things. Trying to be neutral, just like the case of New York Times above is not being detached from the outside world, but not losing one's reasoning at any time. It is difficult to attain but not completely impossible, thus we could conclude that neutral questions hardly exist in both natural science and human science to a great extent. Meanwhile,

reasoning plays a larger part in the creation of neutral questions, whereas sense perception could act as a mean to take personal emotions into the question, thus cause it to be biased.

(Word count: 1598)

Bibliography:

1. David Brooks. 2015. I Am Not Charlie Hebdo. [ONLINE] Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/09/opinion/david-brooks-i-am-not-charlie-hebdo.html. [Accessed 10 January 15].

2. Dr. John R. Lott Jr.. 2014. Media bias on gun free zones. [ONLINE] Available at: http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2014/05/01/media-bias-on-gun-free-zones/. [Accessed 03 December 14].

3. Dr. Widukind Lenz. 1992. The history of thalidomide. [ONLINE] Available at: http://www.thalidomide.ca/history-of-thalidomide/. [Accessed 27 October 14].

4. Elaine Watson. 2013. Bad science, good politics? Why the GMO labeling lobby is winning the PR war. [ONLINE] Available at: http://www.foodnavigator-usa.com/Manufacturers/Bad-science-good-politics-Why-the-GMO-labeling-lobby-is-winning-the-PR-war. [Accessed 29 November 14].

5. Henri Bergson. 2011. Priming the mind's eye. [ONLINE] Available at: http://www.sciencefriday.com/video/02/23/2011/priming-the-mind-s-eye.html. [Accessed 16 November 14].

6. Robert Schoon. 2012. The problem with "The Newsroom's"Critics-They're

Journalists. [ONLINE] Available at: http://www.onthemedia.org/story/219146-problem-newsrooms-critics/. [Accessed 03 November 14].

7. Robert T. Lackey. 2013. Normative Science. [ONLINE] Available at: http://oregonstate.edu/terra/2013/01/normative-science/. [Accessed 19 November 14].
8. University of Oxford. 2010. Human Sciences. [ONLINE] Available at: http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/courses-listing/human-sciences. [Accessed 19 December 14].
9. William Harris. 2012. How the Scientific Method Works. [ONLINE] Available at: http://science.howstuffworks.com/innovation/scientific-experiments/scientific-method9.htm. [Accessed 03 December 14].