2017 'Why Humanities?' Finalist

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As a science student, I learn to think critically, analytically and practically. I know how to titrate an acid to a base, I can show you how to solve the solutions to an ordinary differential equation and I can explain to you Newton’s laws of Physics and Einstein’s Theory of Relativity.

Nevertheless, the study of science is more than just reading textbooks and solving math equations; it is dealing with real people. The ultimate goal of a scientist is to seek a better future for humanity as a whole, through advancements in technology and science. Yet, oddly enough, sometimes we become so preoccupied with attaining our individual versions of this goal that we forget the purpose of our primary aim: assisting other human beings.

Now, this is where things get interesting. I am going to ironically attempt to convince you that the study of humanities is the solution to this scientific dilemma. To begin, by studying humanities, I am able to discover the collective stories of the human race. The stories of triumph and despair, of prosperity and hardship, and of success and failure. I am able to recognize the downfalls of the innovative persons of history, and learn from their mistakes. I am reminded of the shameful intrinsic ability humans have to forget the past. As a scientist, I am reminded that I as a human, am included in this category. I
learn to analyze history carefully and to never repeat the unnecessary mistakes of the past.

Moreover, by studying humanities, I am exposed to the reality of the effects of my actions on the lives of others. That I can either improve or hinder someone’s quality of life by every decision I make, whether it be large or small. As a scientist, I learn that if the way I decided to achieve the scientific advances I wish to pursue hurts humanity (even if only a minority), then this initiative immediately becomes counterintuitive and destructive. Thus, I learn I must evaluate carefully my decisions.

I hope to have convinced you all that my goal as a scientist can never be truly achieved without acknowledging the thorough interconnectedness of science and humanities.