**What roles for the sciences in doctrines of misanthropy?**

*Integrated HPS, Durham, 11/7/23*

1. **Preliminaries.**

 The sciences have become integral to discourses about **misanthropy**, defined as a critical and negative verdict on the collective moral condition and performance of humankind as it has come to be (Cooper, Kidd – compare utopianism: Paskins).

 What roles are there for science – and iHPS – in these discourses?

1. **Roles for science.**

Within discourses about misanthropy, ‘pro’ or ‘anti’, science features in five ways:

1. **evidential**

environmental sciences confirm and detail our violent, destructive, wasteful treatment of the natural world (cf. eco-misanthropy).

1. **aetiological**

evolutionary and psychological sciences are central (even indispensable) to explaining the sources of our moral condition (human nature – Kronfelder).

1. **condemnatory**

science as an expression/engine of many failings (central to C20 European critiques of scientific modernity, Feyerabend (in shouty moods), ‘po-co’ and feminist STS projects).

1. **celebratory (i): progress**

science is an engine of moral and epistemic progress (Jones) – *via* **truths**, **technologies,** or **worldview** (cf. naturalism, secularism, transhumanism).

1. **celebratory (ii): exemplar**

 well-ordered science as an institutional manifestation of ethico-epistemic excellences (Vienna Circle’s scientific world-conception, Popper, Kitcher).

 I will argue that only (1) is plausible from an iHPS perspective, (2) has something going for it, but (3-5) all run into significant historiographical problems.

1. **Assessing the connections.**

The epistemological claims (1 and 2) are OK; but the claims about conceptions of science (3 to 5) contestable, and in urgent need of careful, critical iHPS analysis.

1. **Epistemological roles:** evidence and aetiology.

 Several sciences can (i) evidence the effects of our moral failings and (ii) contribute to multidimensional accounts of their biological, historical, social, and structural causes.

 But this requires **epistemic pluralism** and **epistemic humility** to resist the ‘lure of the simplistic’ (Dupré) – lacking in anti-misanthropes (see Kidd and Livingstone Smith on Bregman).

1. **Historiographical problems:** conceptions of science.
2. **condemnatory** **conceptions** of science buy their power at the price of their plausibility and exchange scope for specificity (Feyerabend’s ‘conquest of abundance’).
3. **celebratory** **conceptions**: scientific enterprise reflects & reinforces the ‘better angels of our nature’ (Pinker) or valorised as ‘an exemplar of human solidarity’ (Rorty).

 But such conceptions of science likely violate key iHPS principles:

1. beware grand narratives of science!
2. beware essentialism about science!
3. beware moralistic purism about science! (cf. Shapin).

 Pluralism about ‘frameworks’ (Currie and Walsh) inspires proper reticence.

1. **Conclusions.**

 Construed properly, several sciences can contribute evidentially and aetiologically to several misanthropic verdicts on the collective moral condition and performance of humankind, as along as one honours iHPS insights.

 However, the further roles, involving condemnatory or celebratory conceptions of the moral performance and potential of science, are historiographically suspect.

IJK

**References.**

Bregman, Rutger,*Humankind: A Hopeful History*, trans. Elizabeth Manton and Erica Moore (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

Cooper, David E. *Animals and Misanthropy* (London: Routledge, 2018).

Currie, Adrian and Kirsten Walsh, ‘Frameworks for Historians & Philosophers’, *Hopos* 9.1 (2018): 1-34.

Dupré, John, ‘The Lure of the Simplistic’, *Philosophy of Science* 69 (2002): S284–S293.

Feyerabend, Paul, ‘How to Defend Society Against Science’, *Radical* *Philosophy* 11 (1975): 3-8.

Feyerabend, Paul, *Conquest of Abundance: A Tale of Abstraction versus the Richness of Being*, edited by Bert Terpstra (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

[Jones](https://www.google.co.uk/search?hl=en&q=inauthor:%22Matthew+L.+Jones%22&tbm=bks), Matthew L., *The Good Life in the Scientific Revolution: Descartes, Pascal, Leibniz, and the Cultivation of Virtue* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

Kidd, Ian James, ‘Humankind, Human Nature, and Misanthropy’, *Metascience* 29 (2020): 505-508.

Kidd, Ian James, ‘Misanthropy and the Hatred of Humanity’, Noell Birondo (ed.) *The Moral Psychology of Hatred* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2022), 75-98.

Kidd, Ian James, ‘Varieties of Philosophical Misanthropy’, *Journal of Philosophical Research* 46 (2021): 27-44.

Kronfeldner, Maria, *What's Left of Human Nature? A Post-Essentialist, Pluralist, and Interactive Account of a Contested Concept* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018).

Livingstone Smith, David, ‘Are We Decent Deep Down?’, *The Philosopher* winter (2021): 82-87.

Paskins, Matthew, ‘History of Science and its Utopian Reconstructions’, *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 81 (2020): 82–95.

Pinker, Steven, *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress* (New York: Viking, 2018).

Pinker, Steven, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (New York: Viking, 2011).

Rorty, Richard, *Consequences of Pragmatism: Essays 1972-80* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

Shapin, Steven, *Never Pure: Historical Studies of Science as If It Was Produced by People with Bodies, Situated in Time, Space, Culture, and Society, and Struggling for Credibility and Authority* (Baltimore, MA: John Hopkins University Press, 2010).