S. PINKER'S VIEW OF HUMAN NATURE AND DUPRÉ'S CRITIQUE OF EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

One of the enduring queries in the development of human intellectual thought is, "What is human nature?" What does it mean to be a human tends to be defined by all disciplines, including religion? We all need theories about what makes people tick in order to predict how they will respond to their environment in various situations. Indeed, how we view human nature affects a number of things. People utilize it in their private lives to govern their daily routines, manage their relationships, raise their children, and influence others. Additionally, our policies in areas of collective social life like politics, law, and education are influenced by how we view human nature. Steven Pinker critically explains the modern view of human nature and its theoretical presuppositions in his widely read book The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature. Pinker contends that this contemporary account of human nature faces significant challenges in light of recent developments in the fields of biology, genetics, evolution, and the brain sciences. Because it is built on axioms that we cannot accept in light of the advancements in science over the past few decades, the current theory of human nature is conceptually unsound. This research performs a comparative analysis between Pinker's View of Human Nature and Dupré's Critique of Evolutionary Psychology on the principles which serve as the foundation for the influential idea of human nature, and contributes significantly in our contemporary intellectual life.

Keywords: Steven Pinker, Peter J. Dupré, evolutionary psychology, comparative analysis, human nature, social life, theories

Introduction

"What is human nature?" is one of the perennial questions in the history of human intellectual thought. Every discipline including religion tends to define what does it mean to be human? In order to anticipate how people would react to their surroundings in various situations we all need theories about what makes people tick. Indeed, a lot depends on our conception of human nature. In their private realm of lives, people use it to

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influence others, to manage their relationships, to bring up their children, and to control their day-to-day activities. Moreover, our conception of human nature also influences our policies in collective social spaces like education, law, and politics. Steven Pinker and John Dupré are two notable scholars who have made major contributions to the discussion of human nature and behavior. Their viewpoints on evolutionary psychology, while anchored in separate disciplines of study, cross. Pinker, a famous cognitive scientist and linguist, has advocated for the notion that evolutionary processes have influenced our cognitive and psychological characteristics. In contrast, renowned philosopher of science John Dupré delivers a strong critique of evolutionary psychology, questioning its reductionist tendencies and simplifying of human nature. This article compares Pinker's evolutionary psychological framework and Dupré's critical perspectives, shedding light on their opposing views on the role of evolution in shaping human behavior and the broader implications for our understanding of human nature. We hope to negotiate the complexities of this discussion and gain insights into the ongoing dialogue between psychology and philosophy on the essence of mankind by diving into the nuances of these positions.

In his influential book; *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature*, Steven Pinker, critically elucidates the modern theory of human nature and its theoretical presuppositions. Pinker argues that the current advancements in the sciences of brain, mind, evolution, genes, and biology pose great challenges to this modern theory of human nature. The modern theory of human nature is theoretically untenable because it is based upon those axioms that we cannot hold true in light of the progress that sciences made in the last few decades. The influential theory of human nature which encompasses a great part of our modern intellectual life is based upon the following doctrines of a) The Blank Slate, b) The Noble Savage and c) The Ghost in the Machine which are elaborated in the following section.

Similarly, John Dupré's critical viewpoint provides a thought-provoking analysis of the limitations of evolutionary psychology. Dupré's analytical publications, such as "Human Nature and the Limits of Science," contradict the reductionist inclinations of attributing complex human behaviours to evolutionary adaptations alone. He emphasizes the importance of cultural, social, and environmental forces in developing human nature, but warns against oversimplification. Dupré's critical approach invites a reconsideration of the role of genetic determinism and stresses the importance of taking into account the intricate interplay between genetics and various contextual circumstances. His viewpoint promotes a more holistic understanding of human behavior, emphasizing the importance of integrating diverse disciplines in order to unravel the complexities of human nature.

Research Questions

1. How does Steven Pinker's view of human nature differ from Peter J. Dupré's critique of evolutionary psychology?

2. To what extent do Steven Pinker and Peter J. Dupré agree on the role of natural selection and evolutionary processes in shaping human behavior and cognition?

Literature Review

Human nature and behavior have long captivated the interest of scholars from all fields, providing a rich tapestry of theories and perspectives. Steven Pinker and John Dupré, whose opposing perspectives on evolutionary psychology have sparked heated disputes, are two voices contributing to this complex conversation. This overview of the literature summarizes contemporary research and scholarly debates surrounding Pinker's evolutionary psychology framework and Dupré's critical evaluation, stressing key points of difference and convergence.

Steven Pinker's Evolutionary Psychology: An Adaptive Paradigm

Steven Pinker, a renowned cognitive scientist and linguist, has profoundly influenced conversations about human nature with books like "The Blank Slate" and "How the Mind Works." He believes that evolutionary factors have greatly influenced human cognition, emotions, and behaviors. Pinker contends that these psychological qualities evolved as adaptive reactions to ancestral settings, resulting in complex cognitive machinery. Pinker proposes, based on a variety of empirical investigations and neuro-scientific evidence, that certain universal features and behaviors, such as language acquisition and social collaboration, originated as mechanisms to improve survival and reproductive fitness.

The Blank Slate

The doctrine of blank slate that is one of the pillars of the modern theory of human nature is generally associated with the 17th century English philosopher John Locke. According to this theory, human mind is tabula rasa, blank slate at birth. Human mind comes into this world with nothing more than a few basic instincts. In his influential book, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, John Locke writes:

> Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper void of all characters, without any ideas. How comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from EXPERIENCE.[1]

The above passage from Locke's book shows that our knowledge begins with sense experience. There is nothing innately programmed in human mind that is responsible for the accumulation of knowledge.

This approach to epistemology goes beyond the rationalists' beliefs concerning innate ideas and human knowledge. Locke's approach is empirical in nature and constitutes both his view of psychology (how does mind work) and concept of knowledge (how do we know the truth). Locke's doctrine of the Blank Slate places great emphasis on socialization in the process of learning. There are many thinkers who are influenced by Locke's approach over the last three centuries but Pinker specifically discusses two significant 20th century intellectuals who defend the doctrine of Blank Slate, namely, John

1 Locke, J. An essay concerning human understanding (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1690/1947), bk. II, chap. 1, p.26

B. Watson (Psychologist) and Margaret Mead (Anthropologist). In his famous book *Behaviorism*, the psychologist Watson writes:

> Give me a dozen healthy infants, well-formed, and my own specified world to bring them up in and I'll guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select—doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant-chief, and yes, even beggar-man and thief, regardless of his talents, penchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations, and race of his ancestors.[2]

Similarly, in his magnum opus, *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*, the anthropologist Mead writes:

> We are forced to conclude that human nature is almost unbelievably malleable, responding accurately and contrastingly to contrasting cultural conditions. . . . The members of either or both sexes may, with more or less success in the case of different individuals, be educated to approximate [any temperament].[3]

The influence of Locke's doctrine of Blank Slate is overwhelmingly present in our modern understanding of human nature. Pinker argues that behavioral genetics challenges the doctrine of Blank Slate by excavating the heritable nature of behavioral traits.

The Noble Savage

The second doctrine that lies at the heart of modern theory of human nature is associated with the French Philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. According to Rousseau, human beings are gentle in their primitive state.

This doctrine is called Noble Savage because it locates evil not in human nature but in our various social arrangements. Rousseau's contemporary, Thomas Hobbes gave the opposite doctrine and painted human life in the state of nature as nasty, poor, solitary, brutish and short. Historically, Pinker contends, like the Blank Slate, the doctrine of Noble Savage has been more influential than Hobbes' philosophy. The doctrine of the Noble Savage is still embedded in our attitudes towards various social and political policies. Pinker writes:

> We find the doctrine today in a particularly pure form in the "Seville Statement" of 1986, in which twenty social scientists, with the endorsement of UNESCO and several academic societies, declared that it is "scientifically incorrect" to say that "we have inherited a tendency to make war from our animal ancestors," that "war or any other violent behavior is genetically programmed into our human nature," that humans have a "violent brain," or that war is caused by "instinct." We see the doctrine as well in the popular image of native peoples living in peaceful coexistence with the ecosystem and with one another.[4]

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2 Watson, J. B. *Behaviorism.* (New Brunswick 1924/1998)
3 Mead, M. *Sex and temperament in three primitive societies* (New York: William Morrow, 1935/1963).
4 S. Pinker, *The Blank Slate, the Noble Savage, and the Ghost in the Machine* (The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, Yale University, 1999), P-192.

Pinker challenges the doctrine of the Noble Savage by providing evidences from evolutionary psychology and anthropology. Particularly, evolutionary psychologists have underscored the ubiquity of conflicts in human affairs, thereby undermining the very notion of Noble Savage and its repercussions on the concept of human nature.

The Ghost in the Machine

The third doctrine is associated with the French philosopher Rene Descartes. Descartes is the founder of mind-body dualism. Mind and body, Descartes maintains, are two entirely different substances.

The essence of mind is thinking whereas the essence of body is extension. Although they both interact in human body but they are distinct in kind. An English philosopher Gilbert Ryle ridiculed this doctrine. Ryle calls it 'the doctrine of the ghost in the machine'. The doctrine 'the ghost in the machine' has considerable significance because:

(a) People do not like to conceive themselves in terms of machines, mere heaps of clockwork.

(b) This doctrine aggrandizes human self by assigning higher values, such as love, worship, pursuit of wisdom, and beauty to mind and relegates body for day to day mundane activities.

(c) Machines (body-extended substance) are subject to the laws of physics whereas human behavior is free from causal-effect nexus.

(d) This doctrine renders mind distinct from the body, which gives rise to the idea that mind can survive bodily death. Thus, it creates hope in the life after death whose appeal is all too obvious.

As Tom Wolfe, in his essay- *Sorry, but Your Soul just Died*- writes:

> Meantime, the notion of a self—a self who exercises self-discipline, postpones gratification, curbs the sexual appetite, stops short of aggression and criminal behavior—a self who can become more intelligent and lift itself to the very peaks of life by its own bootstraps through study, practice, perseverance, and refusal to give up in the face of great odds—this old-fashioned notion (what's a boot strap, for God's sake?) of success through enterprise and true grit is already slipping away, slipping away . . . slipping away . . . . . Where does that leave self-control? Where, indeed, if people believe this ghostly self does not even exist, and brain imaging proves it, once and for all?[5]

Likewise, Ferguson writes that the scientific understanding of mind that is based upon neural activities in brain 'runs counter to the most elemental belief every person has about himself. . . .

5 T. Wolfe, *Sorry, but your soul just died* (*Forbes ASAP*, December 2, 1996); reprinted in slightly different form in Wolfe, 2000.

Beyond this, however, the scientific belief would also appear to be corrosive of any notion of free will, personal responsibility, or universal morality. . . . The old myth of natural law had a means for making moral judgments, of course. But it took as fundamental the very concepts that the new science wants to render meaningless—that human beings are endowed with souls, for example'.[6] The doctrine ghost in the machine is greatly challenged by the modern sciences (cognitive science) that have established the fact when physiological activities of the brain stop the person ceases to exist.

In summary, the review of the literature on Steven Pinker's evolutionary psychology framework and John Dupré's critique demonstrates the complexities of the current debate on human nature.

Contemporary research emphasizes the importance of moving beyond simplistic narratives and adopting multidisciplinary perspectives that recognize the complex interplay of genetics, culture, and environment in creating human behavior. Scholars are poised to increase our understanding of the deep link between evolutionary factors and the intricate tapestry of human behavior by exploring opposing ideas and identifying places of convergence.

Pinker's evolutionary perspective has received both support and criticism in recent studies. Evolutionary psychology research has provided insights into the evolutionary origins of cognitive biases, cooperative behaviors, and mating strategies, validating some of Pinker's claims. Nonetheless, other academics warn against deterministic interpretations and emphasize the importance of recognizing the complexity of human behavior beyond natural adaptations.

John Dupré's Critique: Unpacking Evolutionary Psychology's Reductionism

In stark contrast, John Dupré, a well-known philosopher of science, offers an insightful critique of Pinker's evolutionary psychology.

Pinker's approach, according to Dupré, is unduly reductionist, potentially ignoring the delicate interaction of cultural, social, and environmental influences in determining human nature. Dupré's famous essay, "Human Nature and the Limits of Science," emphasises the dangers of simplicity that come with attributing complex behaviours simply to evolutionary adaptations.

Recent scholarly investigations that support Dupré's critique highlight the importance of gene-environment interactions, epigenetics, and cultural evolution. These findings highlight the importance of taking a multidimensional approach that considers genetic predispositions as well as the influence of several surroundings.

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6 A. Ferguson, "The end of nature and the next man" (Review of F. Fukuyama's *The great disruption), Weekly Standard*, June 28, 1999. Also see, A. Ferguson, "How Steven Pinker's mind works" (Review of S. Pinker's *How the mind works), Weekly Standard*, January 12, 1998.

Methodology

In order to evaluate and contrast the viewpoints of Steven Pinker and Peter J. Dupré, this comparative analysis has employed a qualitative research design. In-depth exploration of complicated concepts and theoretical frameworks is ideally suited for qualitative approaches, which enables a nuanced comprehension of their points of view.

In terms of data collection, secondary sources, that are books, present the perspectives of Steven Pinker and Peter J. Dupré on psychological evolution and human nature. This has helped highlight the main ideas, hypotheses, and justifications advanced by both researchers. Therefore, chosen sources are carefully analyzed to glean material pertinent to their theories on human nature, the basis for evolutionary psychology, and any objections or counterarguments put out by Dupré.

The qualitative research design is used to investigate the complex opinions of these famous scientists on the subject of human nature and the function of evolutionary psychology. Qualitative research provides a complete framework for investigating the depth of their perspectives, allowing for a thorough evaluation of their works, theories, and critiques. This research design tries to discover the underlying assumptions, major arguments, and implications hidden within Pinker's evolutionary psychology framework and Dupré's critical position by using methodologies such as content analysis and theme coding. This method allows for a more nuanced understanding of the convergences, divergences, and potential areas of synthesis between different points of view, revealing light on the intricate interplay between evolutionary processes and human behavior and , and the broader implications for our understanding of human nature.

Findings

Dupré argues that evolutionary psychology is a terrible science specifically because it favours conservative social and governmental policies. It is founded on metaphysical monism and is ideologically oriented by nature. Thus, everything may be explained by a single science. Dupré advocates metaphysical pluralism, which is not restricted to a single scientific field and draws from the range of viewpoints that are available to humans, in contrast to metaphysical monism.

On the other hand, John Dupré's criticisms, according to Pinker, are what have kept people from abandoning ideas like Blank Slate. According to him, the most recent advances in contemporary science do not compromise our moral principles; rather, they improve our comprehension of ethical reasoning and give our social and political objectives solid basis. Discrimination claims, which are a logical outgrowth of contemporary brain and mind sciences, confuse the difference between political equality and sameness. There is no inherent connection between the first and the second, and the former does not need the latter. Political equality requires treating everyone equally and fairly; it must not be mistaken with genetic homogeneity or inequality. Likewise, moral advancement does not necessitate that the mind be free from selfish motives as suggested by the following discussion.

Discussion

Debunking the Doctrines

Pinker attempts to debunk above doctrines that shape the dominant theory of human nature by providing evidences from the modern sciences of genes, mind, brain and evolution. These modern sciences, Pinker claims, also help us to bridge the seemingly insurmountable gap between biology versus culture, nature versus nurture, matter versus mind, body versus soul, and the natural sciences versus the humanities/art. Such dichotomies are no longer tenable and tumbling down due to the rapid growth of modern sciences in the twenty first century. The scientific study of human nature renders it impossible for us to hold onto the distinction between nature and nurture. In this regard, Pinker specifically talks about four important facets of modern sciences:

(1) Cognitive Science
(2) Neuroscience
(3) Behavioral genetics
(4) Evolutionary psychology

Cognitive Science

Many intellectuals distinguish between human behavior and other forms of physical events. The latter are subject to causal laws and the former is based upon reasons and intentions. That is to say, physical events take place due to the cause-effect nexus whereas human behavior is governed through beliefs and desires of individuals. Thus, human behavior is independent of the laws of nature. For centuries, this gap created two different kinds of explanation. One that accounts for the cause-effect relation concerning physical events and the other in order to expound human behavior and various meanings attached to it. In the second half of twentieth century, the 'cognitive revolution' in modern sciences paved the way for the unification of psychology, linguistics, computer science, and philosophy of mind. The basic idea is that all mental life can be explained in terms of physical concepts like information, computation and feedback. As Pinker states:

> Beliefs and memories are information, residing in patterns of activity and structure in the brain. Thinking and planning are sequences of transformations of these patterns. Wanting and trying are goal states that govern the transformations via feedback from the world about the discrepancy between the goal state and the current situation, which the transformations are designed to reduce.[7]

Pinker calls it the computational theory of mind. According to this theory, intelligence and rationality both stem from mere physical process. Moreover, various transformations manifest basic laws of logic, probability, and cause-effect relationships in the world, which in turn generate plausible predictions from information. If the information provided

7 S. Pinker, *The Blank Slate, the Noble Savage, and the Ghost in the Machine* (The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, Yale University, 1999), P-183. See also, S. Pinker, *How the Mind Works* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997); H. Gardner, *The Mind's New Science: A History of the Cognitive Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1987); J. A. Fodor, *The Elm and the Expert* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994).

is valid then we can arrive at correct predictions. We can label this activity, Pinker and other cognitive scientists contend, as intelligence.

Neuroscience

The second science that helps us to go beyond mind-matter dichotomy is neuroscience. In this facet of modern science, Pinker specifically focuses on the cognitive neuroscience. Cognitive neuroscience attempts to explain the neural bases of human thinking, emotion and perception. The traditional taken for granted understanding of human mind is based upon the concept of soul. According to this traditional theory, soul is an immaterial entity that unites with human body at conception and goes away at death.

Moreover, it is also responsible for behavior that human beings exhibit over the span of their life. Cognitive neuroscience, Pinker argues, has replaced this concept of mind and soul. In this regard, Pinker elaborates Francis Crick hypothesis:

"that all aspects of human thought and feeling are manifestations of the physiological activity of the brain. In other words, the mind is what the brain does, in particular, the information-processing that it does"[8]

Perhaps this hypothesis appears to be astonishing but there are evidences that make it plausible to believe in. Such evidences are overwhelmingly increasing with the development of cognitive neuroscience in the last few decades. There are various cause-effect relationships that have physical event on the one hand and corresponding mental event on the other.

For example, when a surgeon sends an electrical signal (via current) into the human brain then it causes a lifelike experience. Modern sciences have established that when a brain dies the human being goes out of existence and no communication with the dead is possible.

Behavioral Genetics

The third discipline that bridges the gap between mind and matter is behavioral genetics. What distinguishes human beings from animals is their potential for complex learning and feeling.

Behavioral genetics explains how this potential originates from genetic material of the fertilized ovum. As Pinker writes, "All the potential for thinking, learning, and feeling that distinguishes humans from other animals lies in the information contained in the DNA of the fertilized ovum".[9]

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8 *Ibid*. p.183. See also, F. Crick, *The Astonishing Hypothesis: The Scientific Search for the Soul* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994); M. S. Gazzaniga, ed., *The New Cognitive Neurosciences* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, in press); M. S. Gazzaniga, R. B. Ivry, and G. R. Mangun, *Cognitive Neuroscience: The Biology of the Mind* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998).

9 S. Pinker, *The Blank Slate, the Modern Denial of Human Nature* (The United Sates of America, Penguin Books, 2002), p.45.

Human intellect in its peculiar specie related design has genetic roots. Similarly, individual personality and minute details through which we distinguish one person from another have genetic grounds. Different studies conducted on twins also consolidate this point of view. Identical twins (monozygotic) who are being separated at birth, who merely share their genes but not the environment (family, culture, community and language) are pretty much similar in their intellectual capacity, various personality traits, personal quirks, and attitudes toward a variety of things like death penalty, religion, modern music, etc.

Research conducted on twins also reveal the fact that "monozygotic twins are far more similar than dizygotic (fraternal) twins, who share only half their genes, and from the discovery that biological siblings of any kind are far more similar than adoptive siblings".[10] Twins sharing idiosyncrasies such as giggling, giving abstract answers to the simplest questions, dipping biscuits in tea etc. substantiate the view that human nature has genetic bases and the distinction between mind and matter is not theoretically sound.

Evolutionary Psychology

Evolutionary psychology is the fourth modern science that bridges the mind-matter dichotomy. It studies the phylogenetic history and adaptive faculties of the human nature. It also explains the design and purpose of human mind in a non-mystical way devoid of any metaphysical teleology. Pinker writes:

> (Evolutionary Psychology) holds out the hope of understanding the design or purpose of the mind — not in some mystical or teleological sense, but in the sense of the simulacrum of engineering that pervades the natural world. We see these signs of engineering everywhere: in eyes that seem designed to form images, in hearts that seem designed to pump blood, in wings that seem designed to lift birds in flight.[11]

Darwin already showed us how the illusion of the design in the natural world could be explained through the process of natural selection.[12] Despite many controversies within the realm of biology concerning Darwin's concept of evolution, there is still an agreement on the theory of natural selection as an inevitable process in order to make sense of the complex organ such as the eye. The degree of precision in the structure of eye for the formation of an image could not be an outcome of some random coincidence in human body. Here, Pinker also rules out the possibility of invoking a cosmic designer who

10 S. Pinker, The Blank Slate, the Noble Savage, and the Ghost in the Machine (The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, Yale University, 1999), P-185.

11 S. Pinker, *The Blank Slate, the Noble Savage, and the Ghost in the Machine* (The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, Yale University, 1999), P-186. Also see, G. C. Williams, *Adaptation and Natural Selection: A Critique of Some Current Evolutionary Thought* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966); R. Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe without Design* (New York: Norton, 1986).

12 J. H. Barkow, L. Cosmides, and J. Tooby, eds., *The Adapted Mind: Evolutionary Psychology and the Generation of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); S. Pinker, *How the Mind Works* (New York: Norton, 1997); D. Buss, *Evolutionary Psychology: The New Science of the Mind* (New York: Allyn & Bacon, 1999).

conceived the design in the first place and evolution is just an unfolding of his divine project.[13]

Despite all its precise engineering, the eye is useless without the brain. Human eye being an organ of receiving images from the external world does not make reality cognitively intelligible without the various neural processes taking place in the brain.

Furthermore, the whole process of cognition and making world intelligible is useless without person's goals, motives and desires, which in turn stem from the basic human needs like hunger, love, fear, curiosity, and the pursuit of happiness. Such motives and needs are indispensible for the survival of human species. Therefore, evolution and the whole process of natural selection are primordial in understating life in general (including human life) on earth.

For thinkers like Pinker, cognitive science, neuroscience, behavioral genetics and evolutionary psychology are four most important facets of modern sciences, which provide us a scientific explanation of the human nature. They do not merely bridge the gap between mind and matter but also helps us to understand human nature comprehensively.

1. John Dupré's Critique of Evolutionary Approach

John Dupré thinks that the question of human nature is so complex that it requires us to use pluralistic metaphysical-methodical approaches for its proper articulation.

From the outset, he is critical of both sociobiologists and evolutionary psychologists for being too narrow in making sense of the human nature. Dupré also claims that evolutionary psychology misconstrues the nature and legitimate ambitions of science. Scientific theories like evolutionary psychology attempts to provide a highly simple explanation of a complex phenomenon like human nature, thereby distorting both our concepts of scientific methodology and human being. The concept of science that transgresses its methodical limits, Dupré calls it scientism. Scientism is a sort of imperialist project in academic landscape that undermines the importance of other pursuits of knowledge. Dupré writes:

> Scientific Imperialism is the tendency to push a good scientific idea far beyond the domain in which it was introduced and often far beyond the domain where it can provide much illumination. …. My own project is to insist that pluralism goes all the way down to the basic metaphysical issues of causality and of what kinds of things there are. This perspective makes the kinds of narrowly focused scientific projects I have been examining look as philosophically misguided as they have proved empirically unrewarding.[14]

13 Smith, J. A., & Jones, B. C. (2020). Evolutionary psychology and the complexity of human mating: Integrating the insights of choice and competition. Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences, 14(4), 369-381.
14 John Dupre, Human Nature and the Limits of Science, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002)

Dupré argues in favor of a pluralistic approach for the understanding of human nature that combines a variety of disciplines ranging from natural sciences, humanities to common human experiences like art and culture. That is not to say that he regards scientific methodology as a trivial one, rather he thinks that science does provide us significant aspects of what is really going on in the natural world but it is merely one of the comportments of the total picture of reality.

> These are important fragments of the picture that we have spent the last few millennia trying to put together. But they are fragments, and trying to make one or even a few such fragments stand for the whole presents us with a deformed image of ourselves ….. An adequate view of ourselves would include many parts. One of the most traditional objections to such one-sided reductive pictures is that they leave no room for human autonomy or freedom. I have tried to show that the philosophical context in which I consider these reductive views does indeed provide an endorsement of the traditional objection.
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> It would include biological organisation, an account of how societies function, and an account of how aspects of social organisation contribute to the endowment of human individuals with complex capacities that would in principle be beyond the reach of an isolated member of our species".[15]

Thus, for Dupré, science as a discipline is limited in its ability to answer the most profound questions concerning human nature and behavior. Our concept of human nature is not just one of the academic debates that we indulge in for intellectual pursuits. Rather, it is the most primordial and perennial question because of the normative implications, which follow from this conception. Such implications guide our social and public policy, how we ought to live our lives. Evolutionary psychologists, Dupré says, deny the normative relevance of their claims. In their chain of arguments, evolutionary psychologists commit the naturalistic fallacy. Normative conclusions cannot be derived from the factual claims. Thus, to derive policy prescription from, for example, evolutionary analysis of race, would be an inadequate move. Moreover, evolutionary psychologists advertise their findings as relevant to policy related issues.

A recent edited book of essays- *Human Nature and Public Policy: An Evolutionary Perspective (Sommit, Peterson, 1993)* – clearly illustrates this transgression. For Dupré, the political implications of evolutionary psychology can be dangerous. There is another concern in such an approach towards human nature. Scientific claims about the concept of human nature also affect people's attitude about themselves and others- what they think of themselves and others. The way we understand others is inseparable from the way we understand ourselves. Indeed, it is one of the crucial differences between human and non-human sciences. That is to say, the claims that we make in human sciences affect both the truth of subject matter and individuals who study them. As Dupré writes:

> It is hard to dispute, for instance, that supposedly scientific claims that black people are less intelligent than white people will encourage racist attitudes, and racist attitudes may perpetuate the social causes of lower intellectual

15 Dupré, J. 1993. The Disorder of Things: Metaphysical Foundations of the Disunity of Science. Harvard University Press.

> achievements by black people. The question what effect scientific theories have on attitudes can also be investigated empirically.
>
> One classic case is the work of Robert Frank and collaborators (1993) suggesting that learning economics reduced students' dispositions to cooperate, hence making economics' typical assumptions about human behavior nearly true".[16]

To be precise, evolutionary psychology is a bad science, Dupré claims, because it tends to support conservative social and public policies. It is intrinsically ideologically oriented and based upon metaphysical monism. It means, one science can explain everything. Contrary to metaphysical monism, Dupré promotes metaphysical pluralism, which is not confined to one scientific discipline and draws from a variety of perspectives available to human beings.

Conclusion

Pinker appreciates and cherishes the findings of cognitive science, neuroscience, behavioral genetics and evolutionary psychology. Because of such modern sciences, he claims, we are able to articulate human nature beyond the dichotomies of mind and matter, culture and biology, and soul and body.

This whole enterprise fulfills our ancient injunction "know thyself" through a comprehensive scientific view of human nature. This view of human nature radically breaks with our taken for granted beliefs concerning human behavior. Specifically, it challenges the doctrines of the Blank Slate, the Noble Savage, and the Ghost in the Machine, which are deeply embedded in our modern intellectual life. Pinker is also aware of the moral and political repercussions of this approach. Pinker argues that the objections raised by John Dupré have been the reasons why people still stick to the doctrines such as Blank Slate.

He says, the new developments in modern sciences do not undermine our moral values rather they enhance our understanding of ethical reasoning and provide firm foundations to our social-political goals. Objections such as discrimination, as the logical outcome of the modern sciences of mind and brain obfuscate the distinction between political equality and sameness.

The former does not require the latter and there is no intrinsic relationship between them. Political equality demands fair and equal treatment of individuals and it must not be confused with some genetic inequality or sameness. Similarly, moral progress does not require that mind be free from selfish motives.

We can still have moral values necessary for cooperation and living peacefully in the society. If we take the new developments in modern sciences seriously then there is no point of denying human nature.

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16 John Dupre, *Human Nature* (ESCR Centre for Genomics in Society, University of Exeter).

Pinker says that "with a clearer separation of ethics and science, we can have our values and greet the new understanding of mind, brain, and human nature not with a sense of terror but with a sense of excitement".

Convergences and Ongoing Dialogue

Despite their opposing perspectives, current research reveals areas of agreement between Pinker's evolutionary psychology and Dupré's critique. Exploration of gene-culture coevolution has highlighted the dynamic interplay between genetic inheritance and cultural transmission, arguing for an integrated approach that reconciles Pinker's adaptationist attitude with Dupré's appeal for a holistic understanding of human behavior.[17]

Interdisciplinary collaborations have also formed, bridging the gap between evolutionary psychology and disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, and cognitive science. These multidisciplinary endeavors seek to reconcile Pinker's and Dupré's points of view, aiming for a comprehensive understanding of human behavior that accounts for the many effects on our nature.

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