MISANTHROPY AND MISANTHROPES

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In this paper, I argue that it is conceptually and ethically good to broaden the conception of misanthropy beyond that of hatred of humans, as philosophers such as David Cooper do. I concur with Cooper that misanthropy in the form of a negative critical verdict of humanity is apt and does not reduce to blame of individual humans. After all, as Claudia Card argues, evil institutions and practices are ubiquitous and systemic. They are both very bad and not simply imputable to individuals. So the judgment that evils are human-caused is not reducible to a judgment of particular individuals.

However, I hope to persuade readers that not everyone with misanthropic thoughts is a misanthrope. Just as philosophers like Card and Kate Manne broaden the conception of misogyny but hold that most who contribute to environments hostile to women are not misogynists, I argue that many of us who hold misanthropic thoughts are not misanthropes; further, we should consider whether we want to be and we should consider when we find it ethically important to attribute the identity of a misanthrope to others. I propose holding the descriptive concept of a misanthrope to characterize anyone who appraises or expresses the moral perception — the negative critical verdict of humanity — to be appropriate, weighty, and governing of other aspects of one's moral outlook or one's character. I conclude that pessimism without misanthropy may be more ethically appropriate for some of us with misanthropic thoughts who reject the identity of a misanthrope. And an identity, it is, or at least an aspect of one's personal identity; the attribution of the concept (misanthrope) to a particular person is an attribution of an identity that occurs in a complex social context in which others may respond to the attribution as wrong or right, even a reason to be a friend or a foe, rather than merely a description of a free-floating concept. In the latter half of this paper, I offer a more prescriptive analysis of a misanthrope, to reinforce my reasons for holding that it is ethically meaningful that concepts attributed to persons can refer to identities. I suggest that thinking of oneself as a misanthrope may be important to one's self-conception, and attributing to others the status of misanthrope is a value-laden attribution of an identity, perhaps merely one among many but an identity nonetheless.[1]

Misanthropy is widely presumed to entail hatred of people. The works of David Cooper, Ian James Kidd, and Raja Halwani, among others, contribute to revisionary accounts of misanthropy, dispensing with the seemingly common-sense view that misanthropy entails hatred in order to achieve more complex, but more accurate, mapping of the moral landscape. The authors in this special issue whose accounts I consider revisionary may suggest that a broader definition of misanthropy that dispenses with hate as a necessary condition is not *revisionary* so much as simply descriptive of underappreciated perspectives, but most revisionary accounts are descriptive of the underappreciated — hence the need to update the concept. For the purposes of this paper, I shall consider their views revisionary insofar as accepting such an analysis involves a departure from ordinary use.[2] I sympathize with revisionists and embrace their accounts to an extent, but before I outline my supplement to the perspectives of Cooper and Kidd in particular, I wish to consider in closer detail why we want to pursue the revision of misanthropy to be much broader than the ordinary-language understanding, adding more occasions of misanthropy to the world. Why might we want more misanthropy?

I appreciate that the intuitions of anti-revisionists, including Lisa Gerber in this issue, may include the thought that a narrower concept of misanthropy as entailing hatred or related negative affects retains the badness one might want to accord to (some or all) misanthropes. In this paper I do eventually describe some misanthropes as the sort one ought not to be. However, I also tend to agree with revisionaries; for example, Claudia Card and Kate Manne develop conceptions of *misogyny* for which hatred is not a necessary condition, not because they want more misogynists in the world, but because their broader conceptions of misogyny as not entailing hatred more accurately capture phenomena in the world and perspectives that it is morally important to attend to.[3] Manne rejects, as simplistic and overly psychologistic, the definition of misogyny as hatred, if that means it is presumed to be an emotion, (or) lodged in an individual's heart, (or) toward the entirety of women, a cluster of criticisms with which I agree (Manne 2018: 39-41, 44-49). Manne is persuasive that if misogyny is

essentially hatred, then we can never be certain anyone harbors it unless they self-report. Card expands

misogyny to refer to "the most deeply hostile environments of and attitudes toward women and girls

and to the cruelest wrongs to them/us, regardless whether perpetrators harbor feelings of hatred"

(Card 2014: 473), because it is more morally and socially important to attend to misogyny's worst

effects; as she says, evils demand our attentional priority (Card 2002: 9, 23).

What reasons might philosophers have for similarly revising misanthropy? It is not for all of the

same ameliorative reasons that Manne and Card hold, since they aim to make the world safer from

misogyny, and they are not sympathetic to misogynists' justifications. My revisionist fellow contributors

to this issue are not hoping to make the world safe from (all forms of) misanthropy, and they often

express sympathy with some misanthropes, as do I. Yet like Manne and Card, revisionists of misanthropy

do aim to develop a more complex account and a less emotion-dependent account, capturing moral

phenomena more accurately and highlighting perspectives that demand moral attention. Cooper, like

Manne, offers his account of misanthropy as a perspective rather than a feeling, and he centrally

features a negative verdict of humanity; Cooper rejects affect as a necessary component, saying

philosophical misanthropes' mission is "not to work themselves up into lather of emotion" (Cooper

2018: 4). Unlike Manne, Cooper also aims to "defend [the] appraisal of humankind" at issue (4), in part

because "humankind is answerable and rightly held to account" for the failings that Cooper's

misanthropist finds to be due to humanity (6). Misanthropy "is a critical judgment on human life" (7),

Cooper says.

Kidd adds that the critical judgment is not always light on one's heart (Kidd, this issue, [page

tbd]). So I would add, to Kidd's and Cooper's justifications for their views, that revisionist conceptions of

misanthropy primarily ameliorate the state of misanthropists and those with misanthropic thoughts, and

secondarily, sometimes, improve the state of the world that has misanthropic thinkers in it. My

ameliorative aims in revising misanthropy, in other words, include the ethical aim of easing the pain of

what I consider to be a kind of philosophical loneliness, the loneliness of those with the heavy

knowledge that humanity bears responsibility for great moral failures coupled with the more irksome

knowledge that to identify with misanthropists is to risk dismissal as one with hatred in one's heart, as if

a stereotypically bad affect was one's problem rather than the failures of humanity. Revising the

concept creates more opportunities for misanthropic thinkers to find each other and discuss how better

to live with and ethically respond to heavy knowledge. For some of us, as Kidd says of the philosopher

with the "misanthropic predicament" ([tbd]), misanthropy is hard to live with, for some of the same

reasons that awareness of atrocities is hard to live with, and must be dealt with similarly when one

cannot deny the truth and prefers to confront its harshness rather than to diminish its force or

sequester its presence in one's mind.[4] As Joshua Foa Dienstag relatedly said of his reasons to revive

discussion of pessimism, doing so "may offer us resources for coping with our condition" (Dienstag

2006: 271). To the extent that the critical judgment of misanthropy can be painful to hold, Dienstag's

concluding quotation of Camus is apt: "In the meantime, …'The important thing… is not to be cured, but

to live with one's ailments'" (Dienstag 2006: 272).

Not everyone will have these ailments, of course. Bodies vary, and some may find living with

misanthropy easy; others may be disinclined to misanthropic thoughts at all for reasons of personality

and physiognomy for which they deserve no special praise to the extent that their positivity may be as

involuntary for them as are more fraught responses for some of us to the critical judgment. I identify

with those who have misanthropic thoughts in Cooper's sense; that is, I consider myself one who holds

an overall negative critical judgment of humanity. However, Cooper and Kidd tend to refer to those with

misanthropic thoughts and to *misanthropes* somewhat interchangeably; I am disposed to resist the

implication that everyone who arrives at the negative critical judgment has the identity of a

misanthrope.[5] In this issue, Raja Halwani similarly identifies misanthropy as, broadly, a justified

judgment of humanity, to the effect that humanity has failed, morally and otherwise; he adds that "soft

misanthropy" is the disposition of "someone who, upon thinking of humanity's failure, reacts with

emotions such as compassion, sympathy, and pity" (Halwani, this issue, [page tbd]). Halwani, Cooper,

and Kidd provide broad characterizations of misanthropy that, unintentionally or not, may end up

encompassing the view of almost any adult who watches the news and involuntarily exclaims, "Oh,

people are awful!" The effect of such revisionary accounts of misanthropy as the negative critical verdict

seems to be that almost every adult *is* a misanthrope, and perhaps that is the aim of most revisionaries.

I disagree (gently) with the breadth of these accounts, and in what follows, I advance reasons to

hold that *misanthrope* should be a threshold concept, a description of a character or identity shared by

members of a more limited subset of all who hold philosophically misanthropic views. In part, I am here

influenced by Manne's view that *misogyny* can be wide while *misogynist* should be "a threshold

concept, and also a comparative one, functioning as a kind of 'warning label,' which should be sparingly

applied to people whose attitudes and actions are particularly and consistently misogynistic across

myriad social contexts… (a) more extreme, and (b) more consistent than most other people in the

relevant comparison class" (Manne 2018: 66). And we do class people, sometimes accurately and

sometimes not, as I discuss in more detail at the end of this paper.

I am influenced further by Card's arguments that evil persons comprise a more limited set than

the set of all agents of evil; she suggests that "we can distinguish evildoers from evil persons," (Card

2002: 20) and that "our focus should not be too much on evil people" (22), because she considered it

more morally important to attend to victims' sufferings than to visiting evil characters. With Card, I

maintain that our philosophical and moral attention should be directed to what she calls *evils*, and this

will matter to my reasons for being a revisionist regarding misanthropy, so I elaborate on Card's view

before returning to the threshold concept. On her "atrocity paradigm," evils are reasonably foreseeable

intolerable harms produced by inexcusable wrongs (Card 2002: 3-26, Card 2010: 3-35). Card adds,

"There is no need of malicious motives, such as sadism or spite. A practice is evil when there is morally

no excuse for it and acting in accord with it foreseeably does intolerable harm" (Card 2014: 474).

Because evils are ubiquitous and severe, victims of evils ought to receive moral priority in our ethical

attention, she argues, and she focuses on our practical priorities, that is, where we ought to direct our

resources, or how we ought to organize actual moral responses in the world.[6]

Note what I consider to be her ameliorative conceptual project as well; Card says that victims of

evils ought to receive more scholarly attention, including in our conceptual work, hence her focus on

evils as nouns (things suffered) and her injunction to focus less on what makes for an evil character than

on what makes victims' lives intolerable or indecent. Card's philosophical work aimed to ameliorate

states of affairs in part by advancing concepts that would better direct our attention ethically (that is, to

victims whose suffering ought to be our priority). Manne, likewise, advances what she explicitly

identifies as an ameliorative conception of misogyny, for metaphilosophical and metaethical reasons

that include directing our attentions to the effects of misogyny as more morally important than the

accuracy of attributions of *misogynist* to individuals (2018: 33, 42-49). Our conceptual analyses can be

ethically important things. They can do ameliorative work in the moral world. Likewise, I hold that an

ameliorative account of *misanthropy* that contributes to reducing the philosophical loneliness of the

misanthropic thinker is an ethical project worth advancing.

I see Card's and Manne's diversion of attention from characters to systems and victims as very

closely related to Cooper's saying that the negative critical verdict on humanity is not a judgment of

particular individuals but of humanity as collectively or causally responsible for seriously bad states of

affairs. Evil characters and misogynists are only parts of the problems that Card and Manne are urging us

to look at. Evils and misogyny can be structural and ubiquitous things, as well as (sometimes) particular

deeds committed by individuals with overtly wicked intentions. Because evils are my priority as well, I

concur in the need to focus on wider and more problematic states of affairs than those for which an

individual is to blame. Evil practices, laws, and institutions, for example, compel our attention yet do not

always distribute to individuals' responsibilities for their existence or persistence. An institution "or practice is evil … when it is reasonably foreseeable by those with power to change it that intolerably harmful injustices will result from its normal or correct operation," Card says (2002: 20), and many ordinary people with only partial or shared power to make changes can be complicit in contributing to the maintenance of institutional operations.

In short, evils can abound for reasons that trace back to humans' activities, and can persist despite the absence of an intentionally wicked evildoer, because that is the normal operation of an evil institution. Sadly, as students of evil learn well, established institutions or practices with intolerably harmful effects can be perpetuated and maintained without any malicious individual doing an evil deed. Some sort of negative critical judgment of humanity is apt, when one reflects on evils so conceived, even though evils are not always traceable to the actions of particular individuals.

However, anyone who agrees with me that Card has a compelling account of evils as human-caused and intolerably harmful will problematically enter into the broad category of *misanthropes* that revisionists seem to hold. For example, shortly after Cooper says that misanthropy is "a critical judgement on human life, infused … by failings that are ubiquitous, pronounced and entrenched" with a moral valence, he adds, "the term 'moral', even on a fairly expansive understanding of it, is too narrow to encompass all the failings on which *the misanthrope's* case depends" (Cooper 2018: 7, emphasis mine). Implicitly, anyone who holds the negative, critical judgment is a misanthrope.[7] Kidd's "different misanthropes focus on different failings" ([page tbd]) but he seems to include among the set an array of thinkers not all of whom so identified. Admittedly, that a past philosopher (or a reader of this paper) who agrees that evils are human-caused might reject the label of a *misanthrope* is not necessarily a problem for revisionists' perspectives. As Joshua Foa Dienstag says of philosophical pessimists, our main concern is not with practices of self-identification but with the inheritance and perpetuation of a tradition of thought (2009: 118-119). Kidd suggests that the tradition of thought that misanthropists

share is one "of moral condemnation of humanity," especially "that our failings are entrenched,

pronounced, ubiquitous – they are deeply built into our activities and projects and institutionalised ways

of life; they are often pronounced and obvious, as when we talk about 'naked cruelty' or 'blatant

selfishness'; they are also spread throughout our world, except perhaps for a few secluded spaces."

(Kidd, this issue, [page tbd]) This thought is one that is inescapable for anyone who agrees with Card

that evils are ubiquitous.

Yet it would be odd to me to class, for example, Card herself as a misanthrope, despite her own

arrival at the weighty truth of the negative verdict that humans cause and maintain evils.[8] Kidd does not

include Immanuel Kant among misanthropists, but his account is so very generous that it's not clear how

Kant escapes the descriptive form of the misanthrope even as he recommends better moral choices as

to what perspectives to adopt.[9] Indeed, many philosophers and theologians have held firmly in view that

humankind is responsible for much wickedness.[10] Perhaps this is as it should be, and solves the problem

I identified of philosophical loneliness; if everyone clued in to the ubiquity of human-caused evils is a

misanthrope, then we all have lots of company! And if Cooper, Halwani, and Kidd successfully

destigmatize membership in the class, then what is the harm in identifying most thinking adults as

misanthropes, including sunny figures such as Card?

But I am interested in building on some of Kidd's insights about "internalized" misanthropy in

order to distinguish misanthropes from just anyone with misanthropic thoughts, because I concur with

Manne and Card that the wider word for a phenomenon is important to revise in the direction of

breadth, while the related word for those with particular characters should say something more

meaningful about the identities or commitments of moral agents whose misanthropy is consistent,

governing, and at times extreme. The term should direct our attention to morally important aspects of

the persons to whom we attribute the concept. That some persons seem more misanthropic than others

admits of comparison classes. Where there are comparison classes, there should be more and less

misanthropic thinkers. And some of us may wish to take very seriously whether we want to identify as misanthropes or not, or whether it is morally important to identify or class another as a misanthrope who does not so identify themselves. I am dissatisfied with what seems to be Kidd's and Cooper's assumption that the identity of a misanthrope can rest on the basis of a moral perception such as the source of evils in humanity; it is morally meaningful not just to perceive, but to reflectively take up an attitude toward one's perception, that is, to lay claim to or aim to develop a character or an identity as someone with a particular disposition relative to the facts of the world, or to be beheld as someone with such a character. This is not a great departure from Cooper's position that misanthropy is a perspective of sorts, but I add to his account that a *misanthrope* has a perspective on the salience of the negative critical verdict itself, that is, the importance of the verdict to one's governing attitudes or practices. Again, where the verdict is important to one's governing attitudes or practices, an attribution such as misanthrope is not merely a usefully descriptive concept, but more importantly takes on the weight of an aspect of one's identity in complex social contexts in which the attribution of 'misanthrope' to a specific person is taken to say something ethically important about their characters or practices.

In the remainder of this paper, I argue for a more robust account of misanthropes that will exclude more philosophers from the category than revisionary accounts sometimes do. I recommend distinguishing misanthropy as an appraisable moral perception from one's attitudes toward one's moral perceptions, and further distinguishing one's ethical recommendations as to what to do in moral practice from one's attitudes toward one's perceptions.

Kidd offers clues of his own as to how we might begin to identify a misanthrope more carefully. He notes in his contribution to this issue that "if [misanthropy] starts to become authentically internalised, one's experience of the world changes, too. One cannot live as one did before; deep and disturbing aspects of the world are now in view that cannot be 'unseen', hence Schopenhauer's talk of the 'melancholy mood' which precedes and, often, characterises a misanthropic outlook" ([page tbd]).

With the counterfactual, Kidd provides me with an opportunity to distinguish between the moral perception of human responsibilities for bad things, and the outlook that may or may not result. I apply the work of Charles Starkey to misanthropy's negative critical verdict in order to describe misanthropy as an *appraisable moral perception*; indeed, for Starkey "the category of moral perception is constituted by those perceptions with the property of moral appraisability" (Starkey 2006: 95).

That the negative critical verdict on humanity is a moral one is agreed upon by revisionists of misanthropy. That the verdict is a "moral perception" in Starkey's terms includes two further features: First, he says "a moral perception is a *perceptual apprehension* in that it is a perceptual taking-in and assessment of what the moral perceiver encounters" (2006: 88), and that assessment may not be the only one possible or the most salient one in considerations as to what one ought to do. This will be important for my purposes. Second, Starkey says, "moral perception is morally appraisable in that it is morally appropriate (or inappropriate) or morally commendatory (or condemnable) perception" (88). This is a less friendly amendment to revisionist accounts, perhaps, but I think it a good one, precisely because whether or not the assessment is morally appropriate seems built into the very definition of misanthropy as a verdict with moral import rather than merely a bare causal claim. Further, to see the misanthropic verdict as appraisable accommodates Kidd's interest in identifying plural varieties of misanthropists. Depending on whether the verdict is hateful or pitying, framed as a justification for withdrawal or for genocide, one can appraise the moral perception involved in misanthropy as condemnable (say, on the part of the genocidaire) or commendable (say, on the part of Kant's fugitive from humanity hoping to avoid acting badly on his assessment). And appraisability captures the contentiousness of the negative critical judgment; that misanthropy is appropriate is something we revisionists have to argue for, and it is possible and reasonable to advance arguments that we are wrong to so assess humanity (as Lisa Gerber (2002), for example, argues).

One may have the appraisable moral perception that humanity bears responsibility for great

failures without necessarily taking up the attitude that this is an overriding assessment or the most

important one to adopt into one's character. A misanthropic thought is moral, and appraisable, but can

be one thought among many rather than silencing other reasons to think or act. As Starkey says,

> it may be the case that we can only act within the world we see, but sometimes it is
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> better to recognize that there is more than one value at stake in a situation or that more
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> than one possible course of action has a moral claim on us. The ability to recognize the
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> complexity of the situation in addition to the ability to deliberate and weigh the possible
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> courses of action is an important part of moral character. In such situations, a
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> perceptual state … may result in too blunt an understanding of the complexities of the
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> situation. So though silencing may be appropriate at times, it is not an essential feature
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> of moral perception, let alone appropriate moral perception. (Starkey 2006: 87)

This helps me to clarify why it seems to me that misanthropy does not make one a misanthrope.

Misanthropy can be a sort of moral perception and can occur as one among many possible value-laden

perceptions, while a misanthrope is one who not only has the appraisable moral perception, but adopts

it as the appropriate perception in order to be a certain sort of person, live a way of life, or pursue

particular activities.

Kidd identifies several "ways of trying to live out an internalised misanthropic vision of the

human world as one finds it," and one's embrace or deep acknowledgement of that vision may

constitute internalization, a good starting point for identifying oneself as a misanthrope.[11] For self-

identification purposes, I propose that those of us who arrive at Cooper's negative critical verdict on

humanity may count ourselves as persons who have *misanthropic thoughts*. Since the thoughts of

misanthropy may come with other, competing moral perceptions, one can have them without being a

misanthrope. A further task for us, as we each sort out whether our thoughts make us misanthropes, is

to ask ourselves whether our misanthropic moral perceptions are in competition with other perceptions, and to consider whether we are being perceptive enough. Kant seemed to be strongly sympathetic with some varieties of the appraisable moral perceptions of misanthropy, and also to seriously consider that he should reject them for ethical reasons, including, as Kidd notes, "the importance of *humanitas* – 'the cultivation of humanity as such', 'the first duty of man towards himself' … – which for Kant makes misanthropy 'a hateful thing'" (Kidd, forthcoming). Since Kant both beheld and ultimately rejected the outlook as the best or most appropriate one to have, I find that he nicely illustrates my account of misanthropic thoughts as perceptions that can be correct insofar as they are prudent and based on good evidence, but not governing or acknowledged as deeply informative of the person one aims to be. Again, the perception is not yet an outlook.

We can and, if we want to build our characters in deliberate ways,[12] we should reflect on the importance and the role of misanthropic thoughts in our worldviews. It matters what roles we want our moral perceptions to take in our characters. Is the misanthropic verdict to be action-guiding, to be a way of living, to be an aspect of one's character that one holds as dear, or regrettable? I can imagine one taking the view that the misanthropic verdict is important to one's understanding of the world or one's place in it. To the extent that one considers it commendable – because it is unfortunately accurate about something of overriding importance, because it justifies one's conduct, or simply because it is who one wants to be, a cool, discerning, misanthropic cat unsurprised by human failures – one may want to declare oneself a misanthrope. I can also imagine taking the view that the misanthropic verdict is important to one's aims to reject. To the extent that one considers it condemnable --- because one is committed to a religious or philosophical tradition that entails the adoption of a more positive view of humanity, because it diminishes one's motivation to be an activist, or simply because it is not who one wants to be --- one may want to determinedly reject the identity of a misanthrope, without rejecting

one's position that the negative verdict on humanity is a fair one. Misanthropic thoughts can be right in

some sense while being a misanthrope can be wrong.

In saying the above I am influenced in part by Jennifer McKitrick's and Katharine Jenkins'

accounts of gender identity as dependent in part upon the norms relevant to an identity (McKitrick

2015; Jenkins 2018). McKitrick describes a dispositional account. "When someone has a disposition, he

or she is prone to act in certain ways in certain circumstances," and because they are so disposed, their

disposition is manifested in behaviors at times; "an attribution of a disposition ... licenses inferences

about what will happen in various circumstances" (2015: 2579). Jenkins' "norm-relevancy" account

develops an account of identity with ameliorative aims, the first of which is as follows: "The definition

should render plausible the idea that gender identity is important and deserves respect" (2018: 731).

Both of these are instructive to me as I reflect on why I hold that misanthrope is a threshold concept;

Kidd and Cooper are all too persuasive that misanthropy is a word for an array of perspectives that

deserve respect beyond opprobrium, and when an individual experiences or expresses not merely

misanthropic thoughts but a disposition to manifest them in a way that governs their conduct, then it

seems morally important to class that person as having an identity and not merely a thought. The

respect may be mere recognition-respect rather than esteem in the case of some sorts of bad

misanthropes I imagine below, but comes with morally weighty recognition nonetheless.

I hasten to add that I agree with my revisionist friends that being a misanthrope admits of such a

plurality of ways of life that it is not always wrong to be a misanthrope. One may adopt the negative

critical judgment into one's worldview because one wishes to ease the suffering of a terribly freighted

humanity that is struggling under its failures and unequal to the task of the necessary rectifications. An

outstanding activist could see humanity as, on balance, having failed its mother earth, and for that

reason devote all her days to activist efforts to building powerful coalitions that ameliorate the effects

of what cannot be undone. A ministering pessimist could see life as torture, and each human's life on

this planet as an extended form of hospice; as a consequence they may compassionately aim to make people's brief times here as easy as possible. And a quietist of the sort that Cooper describes could look at the state of animals and lament to himself, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow," and do no harm or local good, even as he adopts the sorrowfulness of the critical judgment into a worldview that aims not to ignore what people do.

Other forms of misanthropy are arguably very bad. I find that the sort of perfectionist ableism present in some views of humanity is characteristic of the kind of misanthrope that I choose not to be. That is, I reject perfectionist conceptions of objectively true goods that consider the nature of what is good prior to considering what most human beings are or do, when they yield judgments that humans largely fall short of a vision of perfection in human embodiment, failures at being fully able-bodied humans as the best humans ought to be.[13] The "standard view" of disability as undesirable is "openly endorsed by many philosophers, bioethicists, and public intellectuals who favor the reduction or elimination of disability from human experience" (Campbell and Stramondo 2017: 151). Rosemarie Garland-Thomson argues that the adoption of a worldview that disability ought to be eliminated is permissive of "eugenic logic" (2012: 339).

> Eugenic logic tells us that our world would be a better place if disability could be eliminated. Enacted worldwide in policies and practices that range from segregation to extermination, the aim of eugenics is to eliminate disability and, by extension, disabled people from the world. Eugenic logic is a utopian effort to improve the social order, a practical health program, or a social justice initiative that is simply common sense to most people. (Garland-Thomson 2012: 339-340)

Note that a particularly active eugenicist can appropriately be described as "utopian," as Kidd and Cooper also observe of other sorts of misanthropes. One could wish to wipe the disability inherent[14] to a vulnerable species out of existence for remarkably optimistic reasons, such as that one believes a

better future is really possible for humanity so changed. However, I hope it is clear that this is a form of

perfectionist-justified eugenics that can be fairly described as misanthropic even if it is sunny in its

forward-looking claims to completely control the human experience; it is a perspective that justifies

misanthropic pursuits in the service of the optimistic goal that humans can and ought to be changed for

the better, whether they consent or not. In idealizing our nature as not just bodily, but

"characteristically" efficient, unrestricted, unimpeded in its processes (Hurka 1993: 38), a perfectionist

may adopt a perspective that humanity is unsatisfyingly prone to fall short of perfection. Again, this will

not be true of all perfectionist conceptions, which may adopt the overriding view that our imperfections

provide abundant opportunities for achievement that humans take in forms worth celebrating (Hurka

1993; Bradford 2015). The ethical point that concerns me is the juncture at which the dissatisfied

perfectionist chooses to adopt a misanthropic outlook such as eugenic logic as a governing world view

that dictates the pursuit of evil social policies.[15]

So misanthropy is not necessarily pessimistic. Cooper rightly observes that pessimism and

misanthropy do not entail each other, although they "are typically found in harness" (2018: 6). Many of

us who become overwhelmed by the full scale of evils and the likelihood of their continuation or

recurrence come to accept some pessimism with respect to evils. Adjusting our moral expectations of

humanity in light of harsh realities can still be done compatibly with rejecting the identity of a

misanthrope even as we embrace pessimism, however. A de-idealized conception of human nature and

moral life can be accepting, rather than rejecting, of human tendencies to be destructive, imperfect,

wrong, and so on, not because humans are always delightful when they're contributors to evils, but

because reducing our high attention to a desired alternate reality in which humans fit some other

conception of what they're supposed to be would avoid excessive despair at humans' current condition,

recommend against efforts to try to change humans to make them better, and redirect attention to

ameliorating suffering and arranging social institutions that bring out our better rather than our worse

tendencies. I urge attention to one's choices as to whether to be a kind of misanthrope, a pessimist, neither or both, because our choices to adopt particular perspectives are ethical choices, and can affect our capacities to be moral agents, rendering quietism more rational or activism more urgent.

I retain great sympathy for misanthropes even as I distance myself from the membership, because many misanthropes share with me deep concerns about things that are very bad. Indeed, many misanthropes seem more concerned to actively address the world's ills than do some who presume that they're good because they're not misanthropes, yet pretty clearly have abjectly failed to do much about climate change, displaced peoples, poverty, famine, or widespread animal suffering.[16] Since purported humanism does not seem to have resulted in an evil-free or inevitably progressing world, I'm not as fussed as anti-misanthropy philosophers that misanthropy is an attitude that inclines to indifference. Weakness of will, collective apathy, and indifference to strangers appear to thrive among sanguine positive thinkers and non-misanthropes just as much (if not moreso), so the reasons to wonder why one ought to bother doing anything about great moral challenges, what to do, and how, will remain ethically burdensome and challenging for everyone whatever their judgment of humanity. One can rationally feel that one can't make much of a difference, one is too busy, or it's too hard to do anything about great moral challenges in the world, and these thoughts are quite separate from thoughts as to whether humanity is, on the whole, responsible for serious failings. That is, rejecting the negative critical verdict is no guarantor of caring or ethically acting. To put it even more briefly and bluntly, not being a misanthrope does not make one good.

As readers may surmise, I do not conclude that there is a universally right answer as to whether one ought to be or become a misanthrope. Embodiments differ. What may be a liberating or vindicating perspective for some may be a depressing or demotivating outlook for another. Not all perspectives are chosen, and some may find that they adopt misanthropy over time whether they want to or not. I am more comfortable recommending wider and deeper appreciation of the pervasiveness and recalcitrance

of evil practices and institutions, because indifference to suffering is morally worse than occasional

misanthropic thoughts that humanity regularly fails at goodness. I do not enjoy the heavy knowledge

that evils recur, but I appreciate the efforts of revisionists of misanthropy to ensure that I'm not alone in

feeling it. What to do about it is the business of moral life.[17]

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[1] My thanks to an anonymous reviewer who pressed me on the question as to whether *misanthrope* is an identity rather than, more thinly, simply a concept; the referee suggested this as a quick question to dust off at the outset but it is too important to set aside and my response to this recurs throughout my paper as it develops.

[2] It is out of the scope of this essay to engage in a wider discussion of what counts as revisionary, and I'm not a conceptual engineer by trade. I limit myself to the determinedly simple notion of a revisionary concept as one that departs from ordinary use; for more complex treatment of revisionary accounts, see Ball (2020).

[3] Card (2014) is the first that I'm aware of to broaden the concept of misogyny so as not to entail hatred. I engage with Manne's (2018) account at just a bit more length because Manne explicitly heralds hers as an ameliorative and revisionist conception.

[4] To be clear, not all those with great appreciation of atrocities are also those with misanthropic thoughts; Card authored both *Atrocity Paradigm* and *Confronting Evils* yet never mentioned misanthropy and maintained a remarkably positive and optimistic perspective on the human condition. In over one hundred works, the only time I can find that she used the word "hopeless" was quickly followed by her characteristic focus on positive human capacities: "What if cooperation *has been* hopeless? Might the task then shift to proposing principles for coalition building…?" (2014: 479)

[5] One strategy to deal with this discomfort could be to proceed on the assumption that the concept of a misanthrope need not amount to an identity, but I do not believe that is a strategy available to me, for reasons I develop at the end of this paper. My thanks to an anonymous referee for pushing me to articulate this aspect of my perspective.

[6] For example, Card says, we ought to concertedly address, prevent, and respond to domestic violence more than we ought to occupy ourselves with glass-ceiling issues for white-collar women. In this paper I do not further defend the view that evils are ubiquitous; Card seems to me entirely correct that evils are wide, deep, and morally important. Readers wishing further information as to why she and I may perceive much suffering in the world, past and present, are encouraged to read either her *Atrocity Paradigm* (2002) or *Confronting Evils* (2010).

[7] At a number of points, Cooper refers to misanthropes as those who hold this view. Cooper never lays out a biconditional relation between negative verdict-holders and misanthropes, but then, he doesn't take care to argue that it's not biconditional, either. My point is that this is concerning for scholars of evil, since almost all of us have some form of the bare negative judgment (assuming that we all agree evil isn't good), yet many of us would be disinclined to agree that we are misanthropes.

[8] At a conference, I did try to persuade Card to hold humans' responsibilities for evils to be more central to her worldview, but she shook her head, smiled and said, "I believe in human capacities to be ethical, rational, caring, and capable of great change." I gave up. She was a hopeless case. (Personal communication, October 2012)

[9] Kidd says "Kant ultimately resists misanthropy" (this issue, p. [tbd]), at least, the forms of misanthropy that Kant himself conceives; it is less clear if Kidd thinks Kant ultimately resists the revised, broad sense of misanthropy, which I don't see how Kant can. Kant's reasons for resisting it turn out to be moral reasons, nicely fitting into my account of those who hold misanthropic thoughts and choose to reject the identity of a misanthrope.

[10] John Calvin exemplifies holding firmly in view our wretchedness: Humanity is a "rubbish bin" and "slave of Satan" (Calvin 2009:96, SC 11/1.59); we are "impure, profane and abominable to God" (Calvin 1972:art 4, CO 5.325). My thanks to Kevin Timpe for providing the example of Calvin to me as an exemplar.

[11] If one counts as a misanthrope when the negative critical judgment of humanity is authentically internalized, then my revisionary-friendly project of getting away from misanthropy as hatred is still a bit overcommitted to knowing what is lodged in a moral agent's heart. Recall that this is the problem that Manne notes of the conception of misogyny as hatred: It relies on self-reporting. But that's more of a problem for those seeking to determine whether *others* are misanthropes, and not an objection when it comes to knowing one's own character, so much as simply the challenging nature of attempting to know the depths of oneself. Kant is right that self-knowledge won't be perfect, but I notice that he doesn't give up on the endeavor to monitor one's adoption of virtues either.

[12] Again, I don't intend this as a universal prescription. One may not want to build one's character in a deliberate way. Readers are welcome to negate the antecedent. That's okay. Doing so doesn't falsify the conditional.

[13] This is not to impugn all perfectionism, as a philosopher's articulation of it may be entirely compatible with theories of well-being that admit of disability. See, for further argumentation in favor of this point, Bradford (2015). My thanks to Kevin Timpe for helpful conversations about our mutual discomfort with some (non-Bradford) forms of perfectionist philosophy.

[14] For development of a view of disability as inherent to the human condition, see Garland-Thomson (2012).

[15] Not all eugenicists are misanthropists, and although my concern here is to reject form of misanthropy that promote eugenic logic, I do not presume that by identifying this sort of misanthrope as bad, I prevent all eugenics or racial or ethnic cleansing. Ian James Kidd points out that "ethnic cleansing isn't misanthropic" when a eugenicist's "*rhetoric* is about the awfulness of human beings - but in practice it's only certain groups of human beings" (Kidd, personal communication, May 20, 2021). Some historical examples of public figures with purported concern that humanity generally reproduces too quickly, but that turn out to regulate the reproduction mainly of poor and non-white people, may be instances of what Kidd describes.

[16] And people can indeed do something. Although I remain a pessimist with respect to whether some types of evils can be eradicated, I appreciate the stoic willingness of activists who individually and collectively indeed do work to make things better and often succeed, improving states of affairs for many in the unjust meantime; give me Robert Redford and Douglas Adams, who expressed their understanding that they may not succeed and that people don't seem to learn from the past but who also contributed to land preservation and species-protection, over the least active non-misanthropic optimist any day. Individuals can act and can combine and move groups to act, and I know this because they have acted; as Alexis Shotwell (2016) notes so eloquently, our own reality is the product of passionate struggle, and to the extent that we are relational and social beings, we have been capable, together, of turning great ships in harbors that no one person can turn, and we could turn great ships again.

[17] Thanks to Lisa Gerber for a very reflective conversation about an early draft of this essay, her comments throughout which were materially helpful as I worked to articulate why one might want to reject the identity of a misanthrope. I am grateful, for engaged and engaging discussions of this paper, to Daniel Hanneman, Katharine Jenkins, Jennifer Saul, and Susan Brison, all of whom made research during a pandemic a good and flowering thing. Thanks especially to Ian James Kidd for thinking of me in connection with the conference session that led to this special issue, and for gleaning from previous work that I have always secretly been taken with this topic.