

A Green Anarchist Critique Of Science

Autumn Leaves Cascade

Humans use processes where we start from experience, form conjectures, and then test predictions based on tentative explanations. We compare results with our peers. Our evolution of trekking, foraging, tracking, hunting all involved this process. These things constitute a form of “science”. While even this encounters the problem of induction, the problem of the uncertainty of the future remaining despite previously clear experiences, the dominant culture embraces a distinct form of science that has its own features. Harmful features.

Empire has a specific form of science. Imperial science begins by attempting to remove the actual physical world from the understanding by the use of a sterile laboratory to disconnect, isolate, and reassemble parts; these attempts can expedite access to certain claims on knowledge but devalue intimacy, participation, and co-determination, which lead to narcissism and over time cultivate hostility to aliveness and wildness.

Imperial science conceals its implicit values and filters (observability, detachment, objectifiability, quantifiability, predictability, controllability, uniformity), proclaims itself “neutral”, and discards or disciplines the anomalies and mysteries that do not fit in its framework, potentially demolishing their immense subjective worth.

Imperial science prefers unidirectional cause-and-effect understandings while ignoring interdependent, co-determining connections. Imperial science possesses a bias toward instruments and numbers, and assumes a disparate, mechanistic universe. It also often implicitly maintains the philosophical system of Western rationality which reasons through the use of hierarchical binary oppositions, e.g. subject/object, mind/body, matter/spirit, masculine/feminine, even if reality does not always fit such a perspective. And imperial science pushes itself as the only acceptable path to understanding.

Imperial science divides accessibility to methodologies and tools by specialization and class, creating a priestly class of expert authorities that mediate to the public the Discovered Truth of the Universe. With imperial science a small professional cadre actively confines deeper understanding to within their own compartment through models and instruments beyond the lay person’s awareness or access. It moves ever further toward abstraction beyond the lay person’s ability to confirm or refute, developing characteristics of religious dogma.

Imperial science divorces itself from ecological ethics, instead embracing exclusively purposes utilitarian to certain human cultures. It attempts to magnify control over lifeforms and land-bases and further human pursuit of all knowledge regardless of the cost (sometimes excepting

white humans or all humans, othertimes not), facilitating the self-destructive project of Dominion. “Welcome to the Machine”, page 41, [Stanley] Aronowitz speaking: “The point of science – and this may or may not be true of individual scientists – is to make the world subject to human domination. If they can abstract, and then they can predict on the basis of that abstraction, then they can try, at both the human and natural levels, to use that prediction in order to exert control. Genetic engineering is a great example, although almost any field will work as well. The ideology underlying its conceptualization is that we cannot and will not depend on nature to yield its own productivity, both in terms of its own development and human need. We’re going to intervene, because the process of maturation has to be faster, the output has to be more plentiful, production has to be cheaper, humans have to be more in control of the process.” Imperial science promotes the human exceptionalism responsible for leading us to long-term disaster (planetary biotic collapse). But forms of comprehension do not have to yield forms of domination.

Humans also use very unscientific elements to successfully make decisions: intuition, instinct, imagination, inspiration, associations. And we cannot objectively quantify such things as personality (e.g. propensity for self-care), attitude (e.g. optimistic or pessimistic), self-esteem (e.g. desire for self-preservation), stress (e.g. subjective perception of pain), or willpower (e.g. how determined one feels). These fundamentally unscientific elements of decision-making and character prove essential to our own wellness but imperial science pushes them to the margins. Cultures with other forms of science however respect those elements’ place and value. These elements also do not usually or even often fit solidly within the science-or-religion dichotomy; we cannot reduce these decision-making features or influences upon the world to someone’s belief or non-belief in an Invisible Sky Daddy or Magic Man, and yet they remain unscientific.

Imperial science can certainly help us understand certain information and trends, industrial science especially, because it comes at a devil’s bargain of sacrificing any other consideration: we know how calories work because the Nazis wanted to know how little they could feed Jewish death camp laborers. Calories do exist as a concept measuring a phenomenon, and might yield useful insights, but we cannot reduce understanding to just numbered measurements, and viewing lifeforms, landscapes, or the totality of matter in solely utilitarian lenses enables abuse. Imperial science has no conflict with, and in fact has higher compatibility with, for instance, Nazism, whereas the hunting methods of traditional indigenous peoples intimately entwined to their landbases, based at least in some part on empiricism, testing educated guesses, and peer review, have no receptiveness to practices that disregard their spiritual place as members in an interdependent web. We must not accept the reasoning behind attempts to grind up every form of life in machine gears just to squeeze out some new insight that will further a subsection of humans’ control of the world. Imperial science tries as long as possible to avoid philosophical and ethical challenge; as a litany of experiments with coerced use of surgery, pathogens, radiation, psychological torture, physiological torture, and pharmaceuticals under the guise of “necessary research” confirm¹, from antiquity to modernity. Empire makes science a heartless terror; intimacy and balance put it back in its rightful place.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unethical_human_experimentation_in_the_United_States

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