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CHAPTER 15

Anthropology and Race in the Eighteenth Century

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C15P1 ANTHROPOLOGY as we would recognize it today did not exist in the eighteenth century. In that sense a discussion of "anthropology and race in the eighteenth century" is going to have to be a story about the birth of the discipline, and the way in which various actors—historians, philosophers, doctors, and naturalists—searched for an answer to the question, "what is the human being?" For many European thinkers at the time, the best place to start looking for answers to this question was in the satisfying narrative arc offered up by the bible, for there we find a beginning (the creation of mankind and the rest of nature), a crisis (human corruption swept away by a flood), its resolution (the redemption of humans through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ), and finally, an outline of what Christians could more or less expect to come in the last chapter of their time on God's green earth.

C15P2 The authority of this narrative continued to hold sway throughout much of the eighteenth century, such that leading scientists and thinkers throughout Western Europe, in fields ranging from geology to physiology, continued to take biblical instruction seriously in their respective investigations. It was not until well into the nineteenth century, for example, that the "flood geologists" would accept that mounting fossil evidence pointed undeniably to a long pre-human history of the earth, one far surpassing the biblical measure of some six thousand years.[1] Christian doctrine was central for interpreting data in life science investigations as well.[2] Scientists examining the freshwater hydra's amazing capacity for regeneration had to wonder, therefore, at God's decision to allow this small creature to regenerate its limbs while making it impossible for the humans made in His image. As for the missionaries, merchants, and other travellers who had long reported on the wide variations on display in human societies, with their different languages, customs, and indeed diversity in shape and look, their reporting led many people to ask how all of this difference had come from the one original pair, Adam and Eve. And *many* theorists in these years held it as the most plausible hypothesis at the time to suppose that God had formed each individual member of the human race at creation, leaving these sub-microscopic, pre-existing entities in a kind of suspended animation until their preassigned moment arrived, and they could begin the mechanical process of "unfolding" themselves until their birth.[3] The importance of Christian teaching, in other words—whether it was regarding an original pair as founders of the entire human family, or events such as the flood as an explanation for both fossils and human migration patterns, or most importantly, of a generic sense of providential oversight, of something inherently benign ensuring the species' material and moral progress—was significant. Christian beliefs, in other words, were factored into the way the majority of scientists and philosophers at work in the eighteenth century interpreted the "facts" at hand in their various investigations, and should, therefore, be kept in mind in what follows.

C15P3 Another point to hold onto ahead of this discussion is the fact that there are many ways to approach a question such as "what is the human being"? Researchers could certainly consider the species from a theological angle, but they could also think about human life through the lens of history or medicine. Was the best approach the one that looked at humans as creators of culture or rather the one that viewed them as shaped primarily by nature? During the course of the eighteenth century there would be many entrants aiming to establish anthropology as the special purview of disciplines ranging from linguistics to ethnography, history, statistics, physiology, or philosophy. And as for data collection, there was no clear demarcation made between field observations focused on collecting information about cultural activities as opposed to ones describing the physical features of different human groups. This meant that much of what might be designated from our own point of view as "cultural" fieldwork included a lot of data on the physical traits of people as well, and all of this information was eagerly sifted through for evidence suitable to the aims of the various interested parties.

C15P4 All that said, we can start to map out a portion of the field by focusing on one early forerunner of the view that cultural perspectives might be wholly relative to one's own perspective when it came to ranking them against each other. Appreciating that Europe might seem to be just as odd, and as full of as many outlandish beliefs as any other culture, Montesquieu published a book of *Lettres Persanes* in 1721 that was surprising and outrageous and immediately adored for its satirical reports on the religion, government, and customs observed by a pair of Persians travelling through France.[4] Montesquieu's text marks an important moment in the history of cultural anthropology insofar as it created a vantage point from which Europe could be scrutinized for the sake of comparison to any other culture. In one of his more famous passages, we read for example that

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> It seems to me, Usbek, that we never judge anything without secretly considering it in relation to our own self. I am not surprised that black men depict the devil as brilliantly white, and their own gods as coal-black, that the Venus of certain peoples has breasts that hang down to her thighs, and, in short, that all idolaters have depicted their gods with human faces and have endowed them with their own propensities. It has been quite correctly observed that if triangles were to make themselves a god, they would give him three sides.[5]

C15P6 This effort to put cultures side by side, became a central if not defining preoccupation for many investigators in the early decades of the century, though it was not always clear at first that there was a larger goal beyond the collection of data itself. That is, by the end of the century, many travel writers were concerned to be seen as something more than just "specimen collectors"; they wanted to offer a more synthetic, even philosophical account of what they had seen. At the start of the century, however, the goal was often indeed just collecting and reporting, with the main job left to others when it came to sorting it all out.[6] Thus while cabinets of curiosity were extremely popular for those who could afford to create them—the initial funding for Buffon's volumes on natural history, for example, came from his agreeing to produce a descriptive catalogue of the king's cabinet—they were generally made up of oddities and other natural treasures, with not much rhyme or reason to either the principles of selection or the eventual presentation of these curios. In this sense the gradual move towards tables of comparison offered if not a method, then at least a mode of organization. This is nicely illustrated by the history of efforts made towards collecting languages. A few early examples of this kind of collection appeared already in the Renaissance, but things really took off in the eighteenth century, with the production of volumes offering translations of the "Lord's Prayer" in all known languages, printed side by side, page after page, for the sake of comparison. By the middle of the century there were books with this prayer in 200 languages, by the end of it, Adelung and Humboldt had added another 700.[7]

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15.1 Too Many Facts

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The need to sort collected data was particularly acute when it came to the study of plants. Plants have been collected for medicinal use throughout human history, but the description of where to find or how to grow these plants, when to harvest them, which parts to use and for what purpose (fevers and purgatives dominated the literature), discussions like these had been traditionally published in the many *materia medica* used by pharmacists throughout Europe. Botany as a field interested in the study of plants *apart* from their medicinal use only emerged slowly as a discipline, and a key advance for the development of the field was Linnaeus' creation of a seemingly simple method for classifying them. Carl Linnaeus was only a 28-year-old medical student in 1735 when he put together an 11-page plan for organizing the data. Reasoning that plants might be best understood according to what he saw as their main function, that is, reproduction, Linnaeus suggested that attention to the sexual organs of plants would allow collectors to compare and thereby group them according to their families. Even better, the chaotic manner in which plants were often named could be brought to order once each was named according to a binomial system of genus-species.[8] In his early sketch Linnaeus included humans, and many have by now remarked on the uncertainty he continued to feel when it came to schematically discriminating between humans and apes.[9] When his 10th edition appeared in 1758, however, we have his final view, with humans classified as falling under "Mammal," then "Primates," and below that as a genus "homo" with the species name "sapiens." Linnaeus had from the start included names for varieties of *homo sapiens* and while the four racialized types were mapped against the four parts of the earth in 1735 (i.e. Asia, Africa, Europe, and America), he continued to develop his ideas on additional characteristics to include such as humoral temperament and phenotypic traits such as facial hair. These additional characteristics were clearly fluid for Linnaeus, as can be seen from the changes and other annotations added by him to his own copies of the successive editions.[10]

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Linnaeus agreed with mainstream opinion at the time that God had given mankind two books: the bible and its complement, the book of nature, and like most other natural scientists he believed in the essential fixity of all species produced by God at the creation. Linnaeus was not under the impression, therefore, that his own classificatory schema was necessarily accurate as a report on the real nature of those species' lines, on the contrary, he understood perfectly well that the schema's attention to the sexual organs of plants, for example, was entirely arbitrary as the chosen set of characteristics that mattered. His system, in other words, was an epistemic tool for collectors and other investigators hoping not just to organize their findings, but to easily communicate with each other when referring to species.[11] With the species lines fixed by God, and their "noteworthy" characteristics arbitrarily chosen by Linnaeus, the resulting classification system was both static with respect to the existence of the various species and artificial in terms of their proposed sets of affinity (this latter point was most clearly displayed in the noticeably odd groupings that were sometimes created by Linnaeus' focus on the reproductive organs of plants). That said, the successful spread of the binomial classification system created the false impression that the plants and animals (and indeed humans) charted within the system had a determinate set of relations to each other, even as Linnaeus was himself alive to the fact that species could be "moved around" his system depending on the set of characteristics chosen by systematists when sorting them (a reality underlying classificatory debates even today). As he put the problem facing naturalists at the time,

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> [God] created one man only, dictates Scripture to us, yet if the slightest trait was enough, there would easily stick out thousands of different species of man: they display, namely, white, red,

> black and grey hair, white, rosy, tawny and black faces; straight, stubby, crooked, flattened, and aquiline noses; among them we find giants and pygmies, fat and skinny people, erect, humpy, brittle, and lame people, etc., etc. But who with a sane mind would be so frivolous as to call these distinct species?[12]

The main task for systematists, therefore, was deciding which traits to use as the most reasonable ones for creating their categories. Reproductive organs seemed appropriate for plants; upright stature and a capacity for reason distinguished humans from apes, and as Linnaeus also saw it, geographic location understood in the broadest possible sense could be used to locate the varieties of mankind.

Linnaeus's placement of humans firmly within the natural order would have profound consequences for subsequent investigations into the "natural history of mankind" with all of the species' cultural and physical variations. But while naturalists such as Georges-Louis Leclerc Comte de Buffon took up the challenge to describe the human in nature, that is, as a species importantly shaped by its environment, others asked in these years if we ought not rather consider humans to be more significantly shaped by culture. Here it is important to remember that "culture" did not yet mean what we think of when we use the term today. Someone looking up the word "culture" in the middle of the eighteenth century would find information about the cultivation of crops, the germination of seeds for the production of cultivars, and so on. The kind of cross-cultural perspectives introduced by Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes*, therefore, were not yet denoted as "cultural" comparisons but rather simply as depictions of difference in the customs, dress, and morality (including importantly the place and treatment of women) in a given society in order to underscore the relativity of perspective.

15.2 Shaping the Species

The first sets of works that were no longer engaged in describing social diversity for the sake of external comparison appear as we get closer to mid-century. Here we find reflective analyses as to the reasons behind diversity, and a sense, whether critically adopted or not, of societies being implicitly ranked by authors according to scales: of civilization, scientific advancement, refinement, commercial advances, etc. These were the metrics on hand for writers relying as much on historical accounts of Rome and other ancient societies, as they did on contemporary reports coming back from travellers and missionaries when it came to assessing cultural outputs. Into this category falls Montesquieu's *De l'esprit des loix* (1748; in German in 1753), Hume's essay "On National Characters" (1753 second edition; in German in 1756), Rousseau's *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de linégalité parmi les hommes* (1755; in German in 1756), Hume's essay "On the Standard of Taste" (1757; in German in 1759), and many pieces, literary, philosophical, and occasional by Voltaire, including his own take on cultural relativism in the *Micromégas* (1752; in German in 1768), and his instant classic, *Candide, ou l'optimisme* (1759; in German the same year, 1759).[13]

Immanuel Kant was closely familiar with each of these texts, referring to them regularly in both his lectures and his publications, but more than that, he was *interested* in these writers: he read their novels, he emulated their essayist style, and in the 1760s especially, he wanted like them to be less confined by the university with its codes and cliques, and to be less defined as a member of some scholarly tribe peddling monkish virtues and scholastic pedantries—indeed, he gave Voltaire the last word in Kant's critique of academic life, *Träume eines Geistersehers, erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik*. It is no surprise, therefore, to find references in J. G. Herder's notes in 1764 taken from Kant's lectures on physical geography to Hume's essay "On National Characters."[14] And in his 1775 lecture on the same topic, Kant

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asked the students directly to consider the opposing positions put forward by Montesquieu and Hume with respect to the greater shaping effects to be had on the character of a people: climate or government (cf. AA 26:513). Kant clearly took himself to be contributing to the kind of analysis initiated by Montesquieu and the others, moreover, when he published his own *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen* in 1764. In this text Kant argued that by observing others, especially when it comes to tastes and customs, we can gain insight into human nature. After an opening section devoted to the difference between the beautiful and the sublime, therefore, Kant moved to an analysis of the feelings differently evoked by each when comparing the different characteristic features of the sexes, the nations, and the races. Kant's most detailed discussions in these parts of the text concentrated on the characteristics of European nationals, with attention to peoples outside of Europe's political borders sketched more briefly.[15]

C15P14 Some of these discussions, as already intimated by reference to Herder just now, had worked their way into Kant's long-running course on physical geography, a course which he had taught since his first years as a *Privatdozent* and would continue to teach every year until his retirement from teaching some 40 years later in 1796. As Kant became more interested in the role played by culture as a shaping force for human life—as a case of "what man makes of himself" as he put it—discussions of Rousseau, Hume, and the others were steadily added into the course. In 1772 Kant decided that the discussions had grown too large to be accommodated in the original course on physical geography, so he created a companion course called "anthropology," which he then continued to teach every year until 1796. Given the origin of the new class, there would continue to be overlapping themes between it and the lectures on physical geography, but Kant's discussion in the *Beobachtungen* of aesthetic feeling and the formation of character figured centrally in the anthropology classes as well.[16] Outlining his vision for the new field of study in 1773, Kant explained to his friend and former student Marcus Herz that "The intention that I have is to disclose through it the sources of all the sciences, the science of morals, of skill, of social intercourse, of the method of educating and governing human beings, and thus of everything that pertains to the practical," in other words, it would provide Kant's students with "knowledge of the world" (AA 10:145–146).[17] After Kant's retirement from teaching he published his manual for the course as an *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*.[18]

C15P15 The question debated by Hume and Montesquieu regarding the relative force of climate and governance for understanding the history of human life is worth highlighting for a moment insofar as it captures the central, even defining, focus of theorists working in these years to make sense of the data and other reports received from abroad. These reports conclusively showed that humans all over the world were organizing themselves and living their lives in a variety of ways. They also demonstrated that humans looked very different depending on where you were looking: from the pale redheads in Ireland, to the dark Senegambians, to the glossy-haired beauties in Tahiti, where you lived seemed to be connected to how you looked. This easily led to the conclusion that soil (i.e. the food grown in it) and climate might have a strong determining effect on the peoples living in a given geographic location. But if that went some way to explaining diversity in the way people looked, how were we to explain a diversity in how people behaved? The Athenians and the Spartans lived in similar conditions, to use a representative example from the debate on this issue at the time, but they had completely different forms of social organization and this seemed to have a deep impact on the nature of these different peoples. And it was certainly easy enough for everyone to notice cultural differences between the Scottish and the Italians, or between the Portuguese and the Prussians, but how could this be the result of geography when they all lived on more or less the same part of the globe? It was these types of culturally identifiable differences in personality or "habit

of mind" as opposed to anything else—to be phlegmatic, moody, meticulous, or morose—that interested people such as Hume and Kant when it came to evaluating national character. But just as the travel reports contained a jumble of information on everything from flora and fauna to language and religious practices, and included reporters' observations on the physical and supposedly related character traits (dispositions, temperament, etc.) of a people, theorists similarly failed to disambiguate their own attention to cultural versus physical traits, even while raising the issue of "climate or government" as the decisive factor for shaping a people.[19]

C15S3

15.3 Mapping the Species

C15P16 It was in these same years that German historians began to think more deliberately about the nature of their work to account for the history and shape of a people. For just as Linnaeus recognized that any set of criteria could in some sense be used to categorize items, historians realized that peoples too could be grouped and compared by geography, but also and just as reasonably by religion, or form of government, or their use of technology, or their husbandry practices, and so on. More than this, however, was an increasing sense that the fullest description of peoples should include their historical change over time. This mirrored Buffon's work between 1749–1788 to reorient natural history away from Linnaeus's static categories towards a richer approach to understanding species in terms of their location, mode of life, migrations, and indeed their morphological changes over time. Description, in other words, in both its natural and cultural application, was gradually understood to require a temporal dimension if it was to be comprehensive.

C15P17 But what approach should be taken here, and what traits mattered over time? The natural historical model provided by Buffon was not inherently progressive, for while development from gestation to death figured in his discussions, Buffon was in fact interested in change per se, and this could be a change away from the original shape of a species (whether artificially, thanks to breeders, or via natural adaptation to new selective pressures), or it could mark a return. For Scottish historians, the best method seemed to be one that compared peoples according to their progress on what appeared to be a set of universal stepstones on the path of civilization. The stages of this progress were fourfold: from primitive nomads engaged in hunting and gathering, to peripatetic shepherds (the pastoral stage), to the first real leap towards civilization in the settlements created by the development of agriculture, to the last stage: the commercial exchange of goods between settled human groups. Like Linnaeus's system, stadial history offered an immediately graspable schema for sorting data. And in an age of exploration such as the eighteenth century, the discovery of new peoples who could be located in one stage or another, fed into the spread of it. As Edmund Burke summarized it to the Scottish historian William Robertson:

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> Now the Great Map of Mankind is unrolled at once, and there is no state or Gradation of barbarism, and no mode of refinement which we have not at the same instant under our View: the very different Civility of Europe and of China; the barbarism of Tartary, and of Arabia; the Savage State of North America and of New Zealand.[20]

C15P19 The impact of the Scottish theorists was especially felt in Göttingen, which thanks to Hannover's "personal union" with Britain, was flush with news and books and other ideas coming from the United Kingdom.[21] Kant too was well-versed in this approach—he owned William Robertson's two-volume history of America (1777, translated into German that same year, 1777), and Adam Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767, translated into German in 1768)—and it is easy to see their influence in several of Kant's well-known shorter

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pieces such as his "Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht" (1784) and the "Muthmaßlicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte" (1786).[22]

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15.4 Language

C15P20 As influential as the Scottish historians would prove to be, however, for several of Göttingen's foremost thinkers such as the biblical scholar and linguist (or "Orientalist"), Johann David Michaelis, and the historian August Schlözer, it seemed that *language* might be the best trait for assessing the history of a people. Travellers had of course been collecting data on different languages for decades already—we saw the example of the Lord's Prayer earlier—but the notion that language might be unique in identifying something essential about the character of a people, and just as importantly might lend itself to a historical understanding of the migratory patterns and other changes undergone by them over time, this notion spread in tandem with the recovery and publication of key texts by the German polymath Leibniz. In 1755 Michaelis's nephew August Benedict Michaelis published Leibniz's correspondence with the Orientalist Hiob Ludolf. The correspondence between the two men lasted five years, from 1687–1702, and included some 60 letters, many of which contained Leibniz's expansive notion of the aid provided by language when researching the history of a people (during these years Leibniz was employed in researching the House of Brunswick), and the value to be had for all researchers if a common tongue could be found for communicating, something like a calculus for words which he described as a "universal language."[23]

C15P21 While Leibniz was engaged in this exchange, he became familiar with John Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1690), which included lengthy discussions of language in line with Locke's nominalist stance. Leibniz responded to Locke by writing his own *Nouveaux essais sur l'entendement humain* (1704), but Locke's death led Leibniz to refrain from publication of his response. In the *Nouveaux essais* Leibniz opposed the English empiricist, insofar as he took the pre-existence of conceptual categories (including linguistic ones) to be a requirement for any meaning to be made of sensible experience. But more relevant here is the stance he took against Locke's nominalism since Leibniz believed that names had a non-arbitrary connection to the things in the world they were meant to represent. What is more, the oldest language—Leibniz took it to be the case that just as humans all came from an original pair, so too was there an original language in use between them—would have had the most immediate relationship to the things it represented. Originally descriptive, the oldest names would have imitated the sound of a thing—"Thus the Latin *coaxare*, applied to frogs, corresponds to the German *couaquen* or *quaken*. It would seem that the noise these animals make is the primordial root of other words in the German language"[24]—with adjectives such as high or white or big-headed simply becoming over time the names of them.[25] Rivers and forests and mountain ranges, that is, physical features of the earth that had been around since the beginning, their names were clues pointing back to the most ancient languages, clues that, according to Leibniz, could be used in turn to track a people's subsequent migration history. In his words,

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> Languages in general, being the oldest monuments of peoples, earlier than writing and the [practical] arts, best indicate their origins, kinships, and migrations. This is why etymologies rightly understood would be interesting and important; but one must interrelate the languages of various peoples, and one should not make too many leaps from one nation to another remote one unless there is sound and confirming evidence—especially evidence provided by intervening peoples.[26]

C15P23 Leibniz returned to the line of reflection begun in his correspondence with Ludolf in a 1710 essay by him that was included in the first volume of papers written for the newly formed

Berlin Academy of Sciences (which Leibniz had co-founded). In this piece he repeated the main points regarding the development of language, the process by which naming occurred, and most importantly, the opportunity that such study provided when it came to the history of human life, for "Since the distant origins of nations transcend history, languages take for us the place of old documents. The most ancient vestiges of languages remain in the names of rivers and forests, which very often survive the changes of populations."[27]

C15P24 It is unclear how many of the people working in Göttingen at mid-century would have known of Leibniz's piece from 1710, but 10 years after the publication of the Leibniz–Ludolf correspondence appeared, Leibniz's *Nouveaux essais* were finally published in 1765. The French edition was quickly reviewed in the *Göttingisches Anzeigen*, with particular attention to Leibniz's discussion of language and its significance for research into questions of origin, with the reviewer noting "The fact that nearly all languages have common root words and other evident agreements seems for Leibniz to prove a common origin of mankind, against which many consider the diversity of languages an objection."[28] Three years later, Louis Dutens published the complete works of Leibniz, which received numerous German reviews, reviews that in the manner of the time included extensive excerpts from Leibniz's texts themselves.[29]

C15P25 The historian August Schlözer was studying at Göttingen during the start of the Leibniz revival which had occurred thanks to A. B. Michaelis' publication of Leibniz's correspondence with Ludolf in the mid-50s. In these years, plans were being drawn up in Göttingen for a Danish-German expedition to Arabia, with the Orientalist David Michaelis involved in putting together a set of ethnographic questions—with central attention to language—for the team to have on hand when collecting field data. The Continental theatre for the Seven Years War (1756–1763) disrupted the start of the expedition, but Michaelis published his 100-point questionnaire in 1762, and the document went on to influence subsequent large-scale expeditions.[30] When Schlözer returned to Göttingen in order to take up a professorship in history in the late 1760s, he began work that would bring together the three streams we have just been rehearsing: the method for organizing data provided by Linnaeus's binomial system (Schlözer aimed to create a table of linguistic families), the notion of identifying peoples by their stage of historical development as described by the Scottish historians, and now also Leibniz's provocative directives regarding language as a keystone for historical research into a given people (*Völker*, *Ethnos*) or tribe (*Stamm*).[31] As he described this part of the new programme already in 1768, "Just as Linnaeus classifies animals according to the teeth, and plants according to their stamina, the historian could arrange peoples according to their languages. This is what Leibniz so explicitly and often insisted on, but to which almost no one listened because the study of languages and the study of history are heterogeneous."[32] Schlözer was in fact critical of Scottish theories of stadial progress insofar as he thought such "universal histories" ignored the underlying interconnection between nations: only attention to the interconnected events unfolding in a "world" history could explain how and why certain nations had achieved progress or blocked the advancement of another. As he went on to develop his position, the effort to uncover the causal relationships—"the real connection of events"—between nations became central to the historical project and positioned the German historian as one offering an amendment to the Scottish approach. Han Vermeulen summarizes Schlözer's achievement in finally establishing ethnography as a field of study firmly anticipating today's cultural anthropology thus:

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> Schlözer's research practice consisted of the methods of Leibniz's historical linguistics on the one hand and Michaelis's historical philology on the other. With the help of Linnaeus's taxonomical model, Schlözer transformed these into his own ethno-critical method and the ethnographic method of history. The former aimed at distinguishing peoples in early

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European and Asian history with the help of historical-linguistic analysis and a critical study of the first historical documents. The latter tried to provide a balanced picture of world history by analysing the events twice, at first "ethnographic" (by focusing on diachronic histories of people) and then "synchronistic" (by focusing on parallel events in time). The first approach resulted in a mere "aggregate" of world history, whereas the second produced a "system."[33]

C15P27 But while Schlözer's approach was cementing the shape of the field for historians, philosophers such as Herder and Johann Georg Hamann—no less influenced by Leibniz's focus on language as the key to unlocking the history of a people—pushed back on central elements of the new programme. For Herder, in particular, the heart of the problem lay in the retained elements of progress and, by implication, the creation of global hierarchies of relative advancement.[34]

C15P28 Before developing this last point a bit further, we should pause and take note at this juncture of the historical inflection point represented by Herder and Kant as the two German philosophers most clearly identified with eighteenth-century anthropology and race.[35] To see why their work is of particular significance, recall my earlier comment regarding a consistent feature of traveller reports, namely the inclusion of physical and mental observations alongside descriptions of the cultural practices of a people. When Kant introduced a new course on "physical geography" in the mid-1750s, he was pulling from Buffon's natural history volumes—with attention therein to "the varieties of mankind"—as much as he was from travel reports on the customs and material cultures of various far-flung nations. This meant that Kant's discussions in the classroom offered a mix of topics, albeit with a general tendency to see geography and climate as the principal drivers shaping not just the mode of life for a people but indeed their physical look.[36] By the middle of the 1760s, however (and remember that Herder was attending Kant's classes between 1762 and 1764), Kant was reading Montesquieu, Hume, and Voltaire as closely as he was reading Rousseau. This affected Kant's classroom materials, particularly after he had published the *Beobachtungen*. As was said earlier, this seems to have led Kant to decide that two distinct classes were necessary: one class to focus on geography (including, and in line with Linnaeus therefore, a discussion of peoples insofar as they could be found in the four parts of the earth), and another one to focus rather on the human as a product of *cultural* history. As Kant developed his thinking on this topic, with notions of the inherent perfectibility of the species, its inexorable if uneven moral progress, and other ideas taken from the French and Scottish thinkers he knew best, what Kant produced was a distinctive set of moral, historical, and political writings that together formed Kant's own "philosophical anthropology."[37] What about the work Kant was doing under the title of "physical geography"? This takes us to the inflection point.

C15S5

15.5 Racializing the Species

C15P29 With the creation of the two courses, Kant was a participant in an emerging distinction in Germany between theorists such as Leibniz, Michaelis, and Schlözer who were focused on the cultural history of human life, and those working on the other side of campus, so to speak, the physiologists, anatomists, and other members of the medical faculty, who were more directly interested in viewing man as a species best described by its natural history. In this vein, Buffon's work was invaluable, but Linnaeus too offered a template for considering the variations of the species according to geographical location. With a steady supply of information coming back from the largescale expeditions being funded by the wealthiest colonial powers of the day, scientists had a surplus of phenotypic descriptions, scientific illustrations, and indeed bones and skulls for comparing the peoples of the world. As we saw already, by the 10th edition of Linnaeus' taxonomical tables, descriptions of the four variants of mankind included a number

of physical traits for distinguishing them. The collective effort to compare and classify human difference created a new scientific lexicon and Kant was an early contributor to this work.[38] His own approach followed Linnaeus closely in asserting four types of variation in the human species, with colour, according to Kant, as the decisive biometric for classification. In the mid-1770s, however, there was fresh reporting from James Cook's second voyage to the South Pacific, with enough information on Pacific islanders for many to add a fifth, "brown" variety to Linnaeus' original cast of red, black, yellow, and white. As noted earlier, the artificiality of Linnaeus' system meant that decisions regarding the relative importance of any given characteristic were entirely arbitrary. Systematists could decide, therefore, to add features when constructing their own tables of unity and difference: adding more characters to be included in an assessment invariably created a greater number of varieties, whereas reliance on one characteristic (such as colour), would produce fewer. By the time Darwin came to consider the issue in 1879, he noted that the number of varieties of the human species had so far been counted from four all the way up to 63![39] Nature, as Darwin, wisely put it, only produced individuals; lumping them together into groups was a human game. Of course, Darwin had the luxury of hindsight here, for in the decades we have been considering, a proper understanding of physical differences was taken to be of unquestionable medical and scientific value. Reflecting on the gentle gradation of skin colours on view everywhere, scientists looked for harder features such as facial geometry (Petrus Camper), comparative anatomy (Samuel Thomas von Soemmerring), and skull shape (Johann Friedrich Blumenbach) for the creation of a reliable biometrics for discerning human difference.[40] And what was the result? Here again hindsight is of service. For while Blumenbach, for example, remained uncertain as to the classificatory value of adding "race" to a schema that already included "variation," and though he was critical of the racism exhibited by colleagues in Göttingen such as the philosopher Christoph Meiners, and although Blumenbach not only supported the abolition of the slave trade but decried the inhumane treatment of slaves caught up in the plantation economies of the West Indies, the fact remains that all of the work done at the time by Blumenbach and the others in this vein created a robust scaffolding for nineteenth-century racial pseudoscience and its ready uptake by supporters of racial hierarchies that placed whites at the top.[41]

C15P30 For his own part, Herder seems to have been alert to the problem almost from the start, calling it "the most stupid vanity to imagine that all the inhabitants of the world must be Europeans to live happily," for "He who placed us here, and others there, undoubtedly gave them an equal right to the enjoyment of life."[42] Herder thought that assigning humans to specific races was to treat the species in a wholly undignified manner—as if humans were akin to breeds of dogs or cattle—and so he rejected the adoption of race as an applicable concept altogether.[43] As he saw it, the best way to approach the history of mankind was to understand from the start that each people represented an internally coherent whole; a unity or identity maintained above all by their shared language. "A few have ventured to term as *races* [*Rassen*] four or five divisions of the human species, originally drawn according to region or colour; I see no reason for this designation," he explained. "For every nation is one people, having its own national form as well as its own language."[44] Like Leibniz, Herder placed special emphasis on the most authentic sources for tracing the ethnolinguistic history of a group, in his case it was song in particular that stood out. As he put it, "The songs of a people are the best testimonies of their peculiar feelings, propensities, and modes of viewing things; they form a faithful commentary on their way of thinking and feeling, expressed with openness of heart."[45] By paying attention to such an identifiable part of a nation's character, Herder argued, we could gain a much more informative (and happy) view of human diversity. In his words,

C15P31

> *A philosophical comparison of languages* would form the best essay on the history and diversified character of the human heart and understanding: for every language bears the stamp of the mind and character of a people. Not only do the organs of speech vary with climates, not only are there certain sounds and letters peculiar to almost every nation, but the giving of names, even in denoting audible things, nay in the immediate expressions of the passions, in interjections, varies over all the earth.[46]

C15P32

With this sort of ethnolinguistic approach on view, it makes sense then to see that Herder's understanding of national character and, as he went on to describe it, its development in the wake of inevitable migrations due to famines, wars, and the like, placed him firmly in the trajectory of ethnography or cultural anthropology. And unlike Kant, he saw nothing valuable to be gained from attention to the physical traits of a given people.

C15P33

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that Kant was disappointed by Herder's position, a feeling made public when Kant reviewed the first two parts of Herder's *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* in 1785. Amidst Kant's generally dismissive commentary, he singled out Herder's position on the concept of race in particular, suggesting that perhaps what Herder needed was simply a clearer determination of the concept itself. This prompted Kant to dash off an essay later that year, a "Bestimmung des Begriffs einer Menschenrace," wherein he sought to reinforce points he had made already in 1775. In 1775, Kant had written an essay attached to his course announcement for his physical geography lectures with the title, "Von den verschiedenen Racen der Menschen," an essay that he modified for publication two years later in 1777.[47] In contrast to Herder, Kant believed in the utility of race as a taxonomical category and as we saw already, he followed Linnaeus in the adoption of four races tied to the four parts of the globe. Kant also followed Buffon in his approach to species membership, for although a number of influential thinkers at the time such as Voltaire and Kames believed in a polygenesis of the races—at least insofar as Black Africans were concerned—Kant followed both mainstream thinking and biblical authority in asserting the unity of the species. And, as Kant saw it, support for monogenesis was best boosted by Buffon's well-known "rule": if two individuals could mate and produce fertile offspring, they should be considered members of the same species; a criterion easily met in the case of human varieties. The only problem facing theorists, therefore, was explaining how humans, starting out from one geographic location (Kant seems to have thought the Garden of Eden had lain between the 31st and the 32nd parallel, just north of Jerusalem), had managed to populate the farthest reaches of the earth, and to develop in the meantime such distinctive differences in the way they all looked.

C15P34

Kant's solution to the problem was most fully laid out in his first piece on racial differences from 1775. Realizing that he needed to account for *external* drivers of bodily change as much as the body's *internal* capacities for it, Kant's theory introduced an inner set of provisions granted by nature to the earliest members of the species. Kant named these provisions "germs [*Keime*]" and "predispositions [*Anlagen*]," seeing them as a necessary hypothesis if we were to understand the species' capacity for adaptation. Clearly, there were limits: life on cliffs had not produced wings any more than life near water had bred webbed toes. This did not mean, however, that the adaptations reported on by travellers were unnecessary, on the contrary, each was a response to a specific set of selective pressures created by a people's location. Reading these today, Kant's various explanations of human adaptive response seem both nonsensical and oftentimes racist, but the mechanical and chemical analogies he took to be driving them are relatively straightforward. Why do northern peoples have eyes shaped the way they do? Because they have to squint against the sun glare off the snow. Why are their bodies stocky? Because the cold requires the heart to pump faster, and this body shape makes the heart more efficient. Humoral theory helped Kant sort out the various climatic differences in the four

parts of the world, moreover, insofar as each region was said to be dominated by dry heat, wet heat, dry cold, or wet cold. Here, for example, is how Kant describes the body's adaptation over time to wet heat:

C15P35

> In a people which has grown sufficiently old in the greatest *humid heat* of the warm climate to have adapted completely to its soil, there must be effects entirely opposed to the previously discussed ones. The exact opposite of the Kalmuckian formation [i.e. the "red" race produced by dry cold] will be produced. The growth of the spongy parts of the body had to increase in a hot and humid climate; hence the thick turned-up nose and the thick lips. The skin had to be oiled, not merely to mitigate the too strong evaporation but to prevent the harmful absorption of the putrefactive humid elements of the air. The abundance of iron particles, which otherwise are found in all human blood and which here are precipitated in the reticular substance through the evaporation of the phosphorous acid (of which all Negroes stink), causes the black colour showing through the upper thin skin; and the heavy iron content in the blood appears also to be necessary for preventing the enervation of all parts (2:438).

C15P36

Notice here that Kant opens with a reference to a people grown "sufficiently old." This was an important part of the story for Kant since ideally migration should not have occurred before a racial type became permanent. The Amerindians, as he explained it in 1775, were an imperfectly adapted race, leading to classificatory problems for locating them with certainty as members of either the "yellow" or "red" races. This mattered because of all the ways early human life was shaped by its location, skin colour was unique, according to Kant, as the key racial biomarker.

C15P37

When Kant took up his pen to respond to Herder 10 years later, his emphasis was on the indelibility of racial inheritance, with mixed-race children serving as the proof of concept. Skin colour was singular since it alone represented a "blend" of the parent's physical traits. A child might have brown eyes, like their mother, or be short-waisted or long-legged like their father, but skin colour was a mixture of both. Or so Kant reasoned. Kant granted the fact that race mixing could eventually breed out the *visible* traces of one's race, but if he did not actually advance some early version of the "one drop rule" he seems to have come close to it at least theoretically given his insistence on the "unfailing inheritance" of race. In his words, "these classes are to be called *races* only if those characters are *unfailingly* hereditary (in the same class as well as in the mixing with every other). Thus, the concept of a race contains first the concept of a common phylum [i.e. the monogenesis of the species], second *necessarily hereditary* characters of the classificatory difference among the latter's descendants" (8:99). Unfortunately for Kant, the essay did not work to settle the issue for once and for all.

C15P38

Kant's most famous critic was the naturalist Georg Forster, who had accompanied James Cook on his second voyage to the Pacific (1772–1775).[48] In Forster's view, Kant's theory could be challenged on a number of points—Forster was critical of armchair ethnographers in general—but reliance on skin colour seemed to be the weakest tenet of all. Having spent months in the Malaysian archipelago, Forster easily pictured the tail-ends of each of the supposed racial group members, the brownest white person, the whitest yellow person, etc. and wondered if such a schema could ever be of use for classification. Like his close friend Soemmerring, Forster thought that the effort to identify clear cut differences would have to rely on something deeper, such as bone structure. But what even was the point of these investigations into the unity and diversity of the species? "Let me rather ask if the thought that blacks are our brothers has ever, anywhere, even once, caused the raised whip of the slave driver to be lowered?" Forster wrote. And he singled out Kant, author of a *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (1785), for special censure on the point, for "Human beings from one line of descent who were sharing in the unrecognised blessing of a cleansed moral philosophy do not show

themselves for this reason to be any more tolerant and more loving toward one another."[49] Kant chose to ignore this line of attack when he replied to Forster in 1788, insisting again on the classificatory value to be gained once systematists included race as a tool for sorting humans. Race allowed naturalists to pursue an investigation into human origins in a comprehensive manner, as Kant saw it, allowing them finally to produce a complete natural history of the species and its varieties.

C15S6

15.6 Conclusion

C15P39

Kant continued to teach his two courses, physical geography and the natural history of the species one semester, anthropology and the cultural history of humanity the other semester, every year until he retired from teaching in 1796. When the opportunity arose to publish his teaching "manual" for the anthropology course in 1798, he simply referred readers interested there in what he had to say about racial diversity to Girtanner's 1796 treatise, *Ueber das Kantische Prinzip für die Naturgeschichte: Ein Versuch diese Wissenschaft philosophisch zu behandeln*, explaining that Girtanner had "beautifully and thoroughly" covered the topic in accordance with Kant's principles. Kant's division of labour between the two kinds of investigations captured much of the way in which anthropology developed as a field over the course of the century.

C15P40

As for the collective effort undertaken by so many people to gather data, to order it, and then to create theoretical frameworks capable of explaining a history of human life, in this endeavour those labouring under the title of natural history easily complemented the findings of the cultural historians for most of the century. From this vantage point, Leibniz and Herder emerge as pluralists and even cultural relativists along the lines of Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes*. In the last quarter of the century, however, a split or branching took place as the physical anthropologists began in earnest to create the scaffolding that would go on to undergird a new science of race. Kant, famous for his efforts always to find a middle path—to create a critical approach say, between the empiricists and the innatists—synthesized the branching efforts most fully in his own distinctive version of a philosophical anthropology, a systematic effort on his own part to make sense of humans as both a natural and moral species.

Notes

1. For more on this history, see Martin Rudwick, "The Shape and Meaning of Earth History," and James Moore, "Geologists and Interpreters of Genesis in the Nineteenth Century," in *God & Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter between Christianity and Science*, ed. D. Lindberg and R. Numbers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 296–321, and 322–350, respectively.
2. A good, short overview of the various life science investigations being undertaken in the eighteenth century is provided by Thomas Hankins, "Natural History and Physiology," in his book on *Science and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 113–157.
3. Elizabeth Gasking's older survey remains an excellent starting point for understanding the arguments and main players in this central debate: *Investigations into Generation, 1651–1828* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1967). The fullest histories are provided by Jacques Roger in *The Life Sciences in Eighteenth-Century French Thought* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Shirley Roe, *Matter, Life, and Generation: 18th-Century Embryology and the Haller-Wolff Debate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); John Zammito, *The Gestation of German Biology: Philosophy and Physiology from Stahl to Schelling* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018); and Joan Steigerwald, *Experimenting at the Boundaries of Life: Organic Vitality in Germany around 1800* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019).
4. On Montesquieu as a forerunner of the modern view, see Larry Wolff, who points to Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) as another case in point, in "Discovering Cultural Perspective: Intellectual History of

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Anthropological Thought in the Age of Enlightenment," in *The Anthropology of the Enlightenment*, ed. Larry Wolff and Marco Cipolloni (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 3–32.

5. Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*, trans. Margaret Mauldon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), Letter 57, p. 78.
6. On this point see Michael Harbsmeier's helpful account, "Towards a prehistory of ethnography: Early modern German travel writing as traditions of knowledge," in *Fieldwork and Footnotes: Studies in the History of European Anthropology*, ed. H. Vermeulen and A. Alvarez Roldán (London: Routledge Press, 1995), 19–38.
7. Described by Han Vermeulen in *Before Boas: The Genesis of Ethnography and Ethnology in the German Enlightenment* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 79.
8. I recount this history in *Kant's Organicism: Epigenesis and the Development of Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 16–34.
9. Stephen Gaukroger provides a rich account of Linnaeus's contribution and his influence on the subsequent shape of investigations into the "natural history of man" in *The Natural and the Human: Science and the Shaping of Modernity, 1739–1841* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 217–266. A good analysis of Linnaeus' impact on German thinkers in particular is in Carl Niekirk, *Enlightenment Anthropology: Defining Humanity in an Era of Colonialism* (State College, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2024), 41–79. See also Michael C. Carhart's valuable discussion of "Three Anthropologies," in *The Science of Culture in Enlightenment Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 222–247.
10. Staffan Müller-Wille describes these changes in detail in his "Linnaeus and the Four Corners of the World," in *The Cultural Politics of Blood, 1500–1900*, ed. K. A. Coles (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 191–209, esp. 199–203. The Linnaean Society also has a webpage describing the changes, with good images of Linnaeus's handwritten annotations at https://www.linnean.org/learning/who-was-linnaeus/linnaeus-and-race, accessed February 5, 2025.
11. Staffan Müller-Wille is right to emphasize this, see his "Race and History: Comments from an Epistemological Point of View," in *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 39, no. 4 (2014): 597–606.
12. Quoted in Müller-Wille, "Race and History," 600.
13. See Manfred Kuehn, "The Reception of Hume in Germany" for an interesting account also of Hume's early reception history viz. the reviews of his works in the *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen*, in *The Reception of David Hume in Europe*, ed. Peter Jones (London: Thoemmes Publishing, 2005), 98–138; see xviii–xix for the dates for each of Hume's pieces appearing in German translation. Lina Weber looks at the varying quality of the German translations in "The Reception of Hume's *Essays* in Eighteenth-Century Germany," in *Hume's Essays: A Critical Guide*, ed. M. Skjönsberg and F. Waldmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2025), 36–51.
14. Immanuel Kant, "Ms Herder (1764)," ed. Steven Naragon, ms. p. 8, https://telota-webpublic.bbaw.de/kant/HerderTranscription/PG/Texts/Text-start.htm, accessed January 13, 2025. Herder parroted Kant's deference to Hume in a piece of his own in 1766, "Ist die Schönheit des Körpers ein Bote von der Schönheit der Seele?," in *Johann Gottfried Herder Frühe Schriften, 1764–1772*, ed. U. Gaier (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985), 135–148. For discussion of Herder's text, see Sonia Sikka, *Herder on Humanity and Cultural Difference: Enlightened Relativism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 129–139. The best resource for information regarding Kant's teaching history and the extant student notes and their availability is provided by Steven Naragon via his regularly updated website, "Kant in the Classroom," https://users.manchester.edu/FacStaff/SSNaragon/Kant/Home/index.htm; last accessed January 15, 2025.
15. A thorough rehearsal of Kant's comments regarding the various forms of national character is in Alix Cohen's "Kant's 'Curious Catalogue of Human Frailties' and the Great Portrait of Nature," in *Kant's Observations and Remarks: A Critical Guide*, ed. S. Shell and R. Velkley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 144–162. John Zammito pays important attention to Kant's increasingly negative views on women in the *Observations*, with a focus in particular on Kant's added commentary in the sheets interleaved in his personal copy. See *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 199–135.

16. A clear summary of the connection between this portion of the *Observations* and Kant's new Anthropology course, including the changes made by Kant over the years, is given by John Zammito, "What a Young Man Needs for His Venture in the World: The Function and Evolution of the 'Characteristics,'" in *Kant's Lectures on Anthropology: A Critical Guide*, ed. A. Cohen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 230–248. I discuss the overlapping work provided by Kant's notion of "temperament" between the two courses in "Caught between Character and Race: 'Temperament' in Kant's Lectures on Anthropology," in *Philosophies of Difference: Nature, Racism, and Sexual Difference*, ed. R. Gustafsson, R. Hill, and H. Ngo (London: Routledge, 2019), 125–155. Many of the student lecture notes taken during Kant's years of teaching the Anthropology course have been comprehensively edited and published in the German edition of Kant's works, with a large selection available in English translation as well. See Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Anthropology*, ed. A. Wood and R. Louden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
17. Here Kant was interested especially in distinguishing his own approach from the kind of "anthropology for doctors" produced by Platner (and reviewed by Herz). For discussion of Platner's medical approach (one interested in connecting physiology to mental states), see Zammito, *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology*, 250–253. For the German response to French materialist discourse on the brain (versus the soul) as the key to understanding human life, see Stefanie Buchenau, "Herder: Physiology and Philosophical Anthropology," in *Herder: Philosophy and Anthropology*, ed. Anik Waldow and Nigel DeSouza (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 72–93.
18. Reinhard Brandt traces Kant's development of the course in comparison to the final version of it published in 1798 in "The Guiding Idea of Kant's Anthropology and the Vocation of the Human Being," in *Essays on Kant's Anthropology*, ed. B. Jacobs and P. Kain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 85–104. I focus on Kant's struggle to locate a place for empirical psychology once the Anthropology course is created in "From Anthropology to Rational Psychology in Kant's Lectures on Metaphysics," in *Kant's Lectures on Metaphysics: A Critical Guide*, ed. C. Fugate (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 194–213. For a very good, short overview of Kant's pragmatic anthropology see Robert Louden's book in the Cambridge Elements series, *Kant's Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).
19. A careful discussion of Montesquieu and Hume on this debate is in Silvia Sebastiani's *The Scottish Enlightenment: Race, Gender, and the Limits of Progress* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 23–43. For discussion of the way in which slavery added an extra dimension to this failure to disambiguate cultural and physical traits in the case of Montesquieu, see Andrew Curran, *The Anatomy of Blackness: Science and Slavery in the Age of Enlightenment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 130–137; and Julia Jorati, *Slavery and Race: Philosophical Debates in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 206–218.
20. Edmund Burke, "Letter to William Robertson, June 9, 1777," in *Correspondence*, vol. 3, ed. G. Guttridge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 351.
21. On Göttingen's unique relationship to Britain, see Thomas Biskup, "The University of Göttingen and the Personal Union, 1737–1837," in *The Hanoverian Dimension in British History, 1714–1837*, ed. B. Simms and T. Riotte (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 128–160. Two very good studies of the German reception of Scottish historical theories are Fania Oz-Salzberger's account of Adam Ferguson in *Translating the Enlightenment: Scottish Civic Discourse in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), and László Kontler's *Translations, Histories, Enlightenments: William Robertson in Germany, 1760–1795* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). I discuss Georg Forster's role in transmitting British colonial undertakings to a German readership in "Georg Forster and the Politics of Natural History: A Case Study for Students of Kant," in the *Lessing Yearbook*, ed. C. Niekirk (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2024), 79–89.
22. Corey Dyck has put together a helpful website with all of the books listed in Kant's estate catalogue with hyperlinks to the exact editions where possible: https://publish.uwo.ca/~cdyck5/UWOKRG/kantsbooks.html; last accessed February 15, 2025.
23. This is discussed by John Waterman in "Leibniz on Language and Learning," *The Modern Language Journal* 58, no. 3 (1974): 87–90.

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24. G. W. Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 282. A comprehensive overview of Leibniz's account of natural languages is in Donald Rutherford, "Philosophy and Language in Leibniz," in *The Cambridge Companion to Leibniz* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 224–269. See also two interesting and informative essays by Hans Aarsleff, "Leibniz on Locke on Language," and "The Study and Use of Etymology in Leibniz," both in *From Locke to Saussure: Essays on the Study of Language and Intellectual History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 42–83, and 84–100, respectively.
25. Leibniz, *New Essays*, 288.
26. G. W Leibniz, *New Essays*, 282.
27. G. W. Leibniz, "Brevis designation meditationum de Originibus Gentium, ductis potissimum ex indicio linguarum," in *Miscellanea Berolinensia* (Berlin, 1710), 1–16; the passage cited is Aarsleff's translation in *From Locke to Saussure*, 48.
28. Quoted in Aarsleff, *From Locke to Saussure*, 49.
29. I recount the German review history of Leibniz's collected works in *Kant's Organicism*, 192.
30. Michaelis's questionnaire was translated into French and taken by Bougainville on his trip to the South Pacific, 1766–1769—a journey whose narrative was then translated by J. R. Forster and his son Georg in 1771 ahead of their own journey to the South Pacific on James Cook's second voyage, 1772–1775.
31. The impact of Leibniz on Göttingen's historians and linguists is comprehensively described by Han Vermeulen in *Before Boas* (2015), where he provides a history of not only Leibniz's various contributions to the development of early ethnolinguistics, but the stages of his German reception history in this area according to when the various texts would have become available to readers, 63–81; on Michaelis's questionnaire, 236–238; on Schlözer's adoption of Linnaeus, 283–295.
32. Vermeulen, *Before Boas*, 283.
33. Vermeulen, *Before Boas*, 300–301.
34. There is more to the story here in terms of a difference in approach between Göttingen and Weimar. Schlözer represented the faculty's increasing focus on facts unadorned by interpretation, with the emergence of 'Statistik' as a key part of historical analysis. In Weimar, by contrast, Herder and Goethe valued accounts that centralized a people's felt understanding of their physical and cultural location and produced therefore belletrist histories. Hugh West outlines the difference in "Göttingen and Weimar: The Organization of Knowledge and Social Theory in Eighteenth-Century Germany," *Central European History* 11, no. 2 (1978): 150–161. Johan van der Zande traces the rise of demographic analysis in "Statistik and History in the German Enlightenment," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 71, no. 3 (2010): 411–432. The contrast between Göttingen and Weimar played out between Schlözer and Herder, see Justin Stagl's "Rationalism and Irrationalism in Early German Ethnology. The Controversy between Schlözer and Herder, 1772/73," *Anthropos* 93, nos. 4/6 (1998): 521–536. For a taste of Schlözer's method see his 1783 piece "On Historiography," *History and Theory* 18, no. 1 (1979): 41–51.
35. John Zammito's *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology* remains an invaluable resource here.
36. I review Kant's lectures on physical geography with attention to just this issue in "Kant and Forster on the Unity of Mankind," *Annals of Science* 82, nos. 1–2 (2025). Buffon's analysis was key for Kant, but confusion can arise when tracking this if attention is not paid to the difficulties facing Buffon's German translators. I discuss the importance of Kästner's translation of Buffon for interpreting Kant in "Species, Variety, Race: Vocabularies of Difference from Buffon to Kant," *Dianoia-Rivista di Filosofia* 39 (2024): 155–179. A number of Kant's lectures on physical geography are available with a careful editorial apparatus prepared by Werner Stark, in volume 26.2 of *Kants gesammelte Schriften*.
37. Surprisingly perhaps, Kant did not publish a standalone text on the role of language viz. philosophical anthropology, though he did comment on it in his lectures and elsewhere. I provide an overview of philosophical discussions of language that ran parallel to the work of historians, with close attention to Schlözer, Herder, and Kant, in "The Course of Human Development: 19th-century Comparative Linguistics from Schlegel to Schleicher," *International Yearbook for Hermeneutics*

(Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019): 140–154. Language debates, particularly regarding the origin of language and the relationship between language and reason, were central to philosophical discussions in these years, and a clearly written overview of this history is in Avi Lifschitz's *Language and Enlightenment: The Berlin Debates of the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). Huaping Lu-Adler has reconstructed Kant's views on language from comments made by him in the *Logic* and other sources in a number of recent essays including "Not Those Who 'All Speak with Pictures': Kant on Linguistic Abilities and Human Progress," in *Kant on Language*, ed. K. Pollok and L. Filieri (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2025), forthcoming; "Kant on Public Reason and the Linguistic Other," *The Asian Journal of Philosophy* 3, no. 47 (2024): 1–22; "Kant on Language and the (Self-) Development of Reason," *Kant Yearbook* 15 (2023): 109–134.

38. Robert Bernasconi's essay is seminal for discussions of Kant's contribution to this effort, "Who Invented the Concept of Race? Kant's Role in the Enlightenment Construction of Race," in *Race*, ed. R. Bernasconi (London: Routledge, 2001), 11–36.
39. Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man* (London: Penguin, 2004), 203.
40. The best resource on Camper is Miriam Claude Meijer's *Race and Aesthetics in the Anthropology of Petrus Camper (1722–1789)* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999); on Blumenbach, see *Johann Friedrich Blumenbach: Race and Natural History, 1750–1850*, ed. N. Rupke and G. Lauer (London: Routledge, 2019); on Soemmerring, see *Die Natur des Menschen: Probleme der Physischen Anthropologie und Rassenkunde (1750–1850)*, ed. G. Mann and F. Dumont (Stuttgart: Gustav Fischer Verlag, 1990). There are many books and articles on German discussions of human difference in this timeframe but some places to start would be *The German Invention of Race*, ed. S. Eigen and M. Larrimore (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006); Zammito's *The Gestation of German Biology*, 186–214; and Niekirk's *Enlightenment Anthropology*, 109–142. I put Kant into conversation with Herder and Blumenbach in "Kant and the Skull Collectors: German Anthropology from Blumenbach to Kant," in *Kant and his German Contemporaries*, ed. C. Dyck and F. Wunderlich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 192–210; and Huaping Lu-Adler traces Kant's effort to take on the mantle of *Naturforscher* when developing his theory of racial difference in *Kant, Race, and Racism: The View from Somewhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 111–162.
41. For an accessible introduction to this history, see the "Who's Black and Why?" website for an illustrated timeline of Enlightenment theories of race, including access to many of the central texts themselves. The timeline: https://www.whoisblackandwhy.com/1700-1800-who-is-black-and-why; the texts: https://www.theoriesofrace.com/; both accessed February 17, 2025. A comprehensive database of Blumenbach's writings, material collections, and relata is available: https://blumenbach-online.de/Einzelseiten/Blumenbach.php; accessed February 17, 2025. Despite Blumenbach's antiracist attitudes, he was not immune to Eurocentric biases when it came to assessing what he took to be scales of beauty, and he certainly benefited from colonial adventures so far as these helped to source his collections with both ethnographic materials and human bones (primarily obtained through Blumenbach's relationship with Joseph Banks, the wealthy and well-connected head of Kew Gardens and naturalist onboard James Cook's first voyage to the Pacific, 1768–1771). Further discussion of Banks' relationship to not just Blumenbach but indeed his connection to the development of physical anthropology is in John Gascoigne's *Joseph Banks and the English Enlightenment: Useful Knowledge and Polite Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 119–183; and also John Gascoigne, "The German Enlightenment and the Pacific," *The Anthropology of the Enlightenment*, 141–171.
42. Johann Gottfried Herder, *Outlines of a Philosophy of a History of Man*, trans. T. Churchill (New York: Bergman Publishers, 1800), Book 8, chap. 5, 219.
43. As John Zammito puts the point nicely, Herder was not interested in the varieties of mankind but rather in "the varieties of human excellence," in *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology*, 333. In addition to Zammito's influential treatment, recent interesting work on Herder's approach to the issue has been done by John Noyes, "From Human Diversity to the Politics of Natural Development," in his book *Herder: Aesthetics Against Imperialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 191–245; Sonia Sikka, "The Concept of Race," in *Herder on Humanity and Cultural*

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Difference, 126–159; and Nicholas Germana, "Herder's India: The 'Morgenland' in Mythology and Anthropology," in *The Anthropology of the Enlightenment*, 119–137.

44. Herder, *Outlines of a Philosophy of a History of Man*, Book 7, chap. 2, 168.
45. Herder, *Outlines of a Philosophy of a History of Man*, Book 8, chap. 4, 216. I describe Herder's approach more fully in "Songs of Nature: From Philosophy of Language to Philosophical Anthropology in Herder and Humboldt," *International Yearbook for Hermeneutics* 17 (2018): 95–109. On Herder's indebtedness to Leibniz in particular, see Michael Losoncy, "Leibniz and 18th-century Philosophy of Language," *Rivista di Filosofia* 37 (2023): 111–124.
46. Herder, *Outlines of a Philosophy of a History of Man*, Book 9, chap. 2, 237.
47. Kant published three essays explicitly devoted to outlining and defending his understanding of race, and other terms such as "strain," for the classification of human diversity. These essays are collected and translated in Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, ed. and trans. H. Wilson and G. Zöller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
48. Forster published his response to Kant in 1786, which has been translated as "Something More about the Human Races," in J. Mikkelsen ed. and trans., *Kant and the Concept of Race: Late Eighteenth Century Writings* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013), 146–167. I discuss Kant and Forster's theories of human diversity at great length in "Kant and Forster on the Unity of Mankind."
49. Forster, "Something More About the Human Races," 165–166.

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