

Nature,
Human Nature, &
Human Difference

Race in Early Modern Philosophy

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Introduction

I.1. NATURE

In 1782, in the journal of an obscure Dutch scientific society, we find a relation of the voyage of a European seafarer to the Gold Coast of Africa some decades earlier. In the town of Axim in present-day Ghana, we learn, at some point in the late 1750s, David Henri Gallandat met a man he describes as a “hermit” and a “soothsayer.” “His father and a sister were still alive,” Gallandat relates, “and lived a four-days’ journey inland. He had a brother who was a slave in the colony of Suriname.”¹ So far, there is nothing exceptional in this relation: countless families were broken up by the slave trade in just this way. But we also learn that the hermit’s soothsaying practice was deeply informed by “philosophy.” Gallandat is not using this term in a loose sense, either. The man he meets, we are told, “spoke various languages—Hebrew, Greek, Latin, French, High and Low German; he was very knowledgeable in astrology and astronomy, and a great philosopher.”² In fact, this man, we learn, “had been sent to study at Halle and in Wittenberg, where in 1727 he was promoted to Doctor of Philosophy and Master of Liberal Arts.”³

On a certain understanding, there have been countless philosophers in Africa, whose status as such required no recognition by European institutions, no conferral of rank.⁴ On a narrower understanding, however, Anton Wilhelm Amo may rightly be held up as the first African philosopher in modern history. Gallandat tells us that after the death of Amo’s “master,” Duke August Wilhelm of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, the philosopher-slave grew “melancholy,” and “decided to return to his home country.”

¹*Verhandelingen uitgegeven door het Zeeuwisch Genootschap der Wetenschappen te Vlissingen*, Negende Deel, Middelburg: Pieter Gillissen, 1782, 19–20.

²*Verhandelingen*, 19–20. “[H]y sprak verscheiden taalen, Hebreuws, Grieks, Latyn, Fransch, Hoog- en Nederduitsch; was zeer kundig in de Astrologie en Astronomie, en een groot Wysgeer.”

³*Verhandelingen*, 20.

⁴For some reflections on the character and history of indigenous African philosophy, see, among many other works, Placide Tempels, *La philosophie bantoue*, Elisabethville: La Présence Africaine, 1945; Paulin J. Hountondji, *Sur la “philosophie africaine,”* Paris: Maspéro, 1976; Alexis Kagame, *La philosophie Bantu comparée*, Paris: Présence Africaine, 1976; Robin Horton, *Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West: Essays on Magic, Religion, and Science*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993; Kwasi Wiredu (ed.), *A Companion to African Philosophy*, London: Blackwell, 2004; Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, *African Philosophy: An Anthology*, London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1998. See also Justin E. H. Smith, *A Global History of Philosophy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, forthcoming.

What Gallandat fails to mention is that between the time of August Wilhelm's death and Amo's departure from Germany, a scurrilous *Spottgedicht*, a satirical and libelous poem, was published in 1747 by a certain Johann Ernst Philippi. It is not clear whether the events described in the poem ever took place, but this is a question of secondary importance. Amo is accused in the poem of falling in love with a certain Mademoiselle Astrine, a German brunette. At some point the goddess Venus comes to resolve the problematic case, judging unsympathetically that "a Moor is something foreign to German maidens."⁵ She then condemns him to a life of sorrow:

You, Amo, are mistaken; with your vile nature
Your heart will never be content.⁶

The goddess's judgment, or rather that of the author who created her, marks a sharp contrast with everything we know about Amo's earlier life. In his university education, in the appraisal of his works of philosophy and jurisprudence, in the esteem in which he was held as a teacher at Wittenberg and Jena, there is no evidence whatsoever of a perception on the part of the Germans that his African origins, let alone his skin color and other physical features, should serve as an impediment to his leading a full and rewarding life as a thinker and as a human being. To put this point somewhat differently, there was no evidence that Amo's "nature" (*Wesen*) could be judged to be something distinct from his "heart" (where this is understood as a poetic substitution for "soul" or "self," and not, obviously, as a bodily organ). How exactly a person's nature came to be associated with his or her external physical features, and how therefore a person's nature could be said to be vile simply as a result of the conformation, color, size, or shape of these features, has much to do with the very history of philosophy to which Amo devoted much of his life. The question of how "race" came to mean "nature" will be the principal focus of this book.

I.2. HISTORICAL ONTOLOGY

This book aims to do more than one thing. It is however, first and foremost, a work of historical ontology, in Ian Hacking's sense.⁷ That is, it

⁵Johann Ernst Philippi, *Belustigende Poetische Schaubühne, und auf derselben I. Ein Poßirlicher Student, Hanß Dümchen aus Norden, nebst Zwölf seiner lustigen Cameraden. II. Die Academische Scheinjungfer, als ein Muster aller Cocketten. III. Herrn M. Amo, eines gelehrten Mohren, galanter Liebes-Antrag an eine schöne Brünette, Madem. Astrine. IV. Der Mademoiselle Astrine, Parodische Antwort auf solchen Antrag eines verliebten Mohren*, Cöthen: in der Cörnerischen Buchhandlung, 1747, n.p.

⁶Philippi, *Belustigende Poetische Schaubühne*, n.p. "Du irrest, Amo, dich; bey ihrem schändöden Wesen / Wird dein Hertz nie genesen."

⁷See Ian Hacking, *Historical Ontology*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.

aims to show how kinds of things, and kinds of people, that appear to be carved out within nature itself in fact come into being in the course of human history as a result of changes in the ways human beings conceptualize the world around them. As Hacking writes, “My historical ontology is concerned with objects or their effects which do not exist in any recognizable form until they are objects of scientific study.”⁸ Here Hacking emphasizes science, while at other times he allows historical ontology to extend to the emergence of “discourses” in general. But in the example that interests us either the narrower or the broader conception of the project will serve just as well, for the modern discourse of race runs in near perfect parallel to the rise of race as a scientific problem. In some of his most influential work, Hacking has taken the categorization of mental illness as an illustrative case study in the generation of historical, or, as he sometimes calls them, “transient,” kinds.⁹ Yet he emphasizes that transience is not the same thing as illusoriness, that at the very least it serves us well to take seriously and to investigate the reasons why a culture generates new kinds from one era to another, and perhaps even, following upon our investigation, to retain them.¹⁰ Hacking’s approach, which owes a deep debt to Michel Foucault’s work on the history of sexuality and its focus—*inter alia*—on the construction in relatively recent history of the homosexual as a kind of person,¹¹ is certainly fruitful far beyond the study of mental illness.

In recent years there has been a great deal of very important research in genetics and related disciplines on the limits and problems of racial classifications, and in philosophy there has been an intense engagement with this research both as a problem in the philosophy of science, as well as with respect to its implications for the social ontology of race. We will be considering some of this research in the following chapter, but at the

⁸Hacking, *Historical Ontology*, 11.

⁹See Ian Hacking, *Mad Travelers: Reflections on the Reality of Transient Mental Illness*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998. For an interesting critique of Hacking’s argument, see Rachel Cooper, “Why Hacking Is Wrong about Human Kinds,” *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 55, 1 (2004): 73–85. For a more recent engagement by Hacking specifically with the question of race as it relates to his broader concern about kinds of people, see Ian Hacking, “Genetics, Biosocial Groups and the Future of Identity,” *Daedalus* 135, 4 (Fall 2006): 81–95.

¹⁰Related to this, Naomi Zack has written of race: “By now, science has moved on, but common sense and humanistic scholarship lag by over a century. . . . *It is the taxonomy of human races that science fails to support, not any one or even many of the hereditary traits that society deems racial.*” Naomi Zack, *The Philosophy of Science and Race*, London: Routledge, 2002, xi.

¹¹See Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité*, vols. 1–3, Paris: Gallimard, 1976–84. For a treatment of the significance of Foucault’s late-period philosophy for thinking about race, particularly in a colonial context, see Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995.

outset it is worth noting that most of it neglects to take seriously the way in which categories of any sort that are deployed by human beings are deeply embedded in history, and require historical research (and ideally also cross-cultural comparison) in order to be fully understood. This is of course not the first book to suggest that the category of race—both the particular racial categories into which we divide the human species today, as well as the very idea that the human species can be so divided—might appropriately be seen as a consequence of concrete changes in modern European discourses, not least scientific discourse, about human diversity. Yet there has been little sustained study of the intellectual history of the period in which the categories of race as we understand them took shape.¹² In part, this absence can be explained by the reasonable perception that the most important factors in the shaping of these categories were not “intellectual” at all, but economic, and indeed that it might even be offensive to think of the history that left us with the horrid legacy of slavery and systemic racism as having anything intellectual about it at all. Accordingly, excellent and abundant scholarship has been produced on the economic and social history of slavery.¹³ In this scholarship, in general, the things that people implicated in this history came to tell themselves and others about what kinds of people there are have been seen, not unreasonably, as at best a posteriori rationalization or coming to terms with a world economic system that had taken shape not as a result of any innovations on the plane of ideas, but as a result of the sum total of practices out of which that economic system emerged. A vivid example of this sort of thinking is offered by the colonial governor in

¹²Some, but by no means all, notable recent exceptions include Katherine M. Faull (ed.), *Anthropology and the German Enlightenment: Perspectives on Humanity*, *Bucknell Review* 38, 92 (1995); Robert Bernasconi and Sybol Cook (eds.), *Race and Racism in Continental Philosophy*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003; Robert Bernasconi and Tommy Lee Lott (eds.), *The Idea of Race*, Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000; Sara Eigen and Mark Larrimore (eds.), *The German Invention of Race*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007; Andrew S. Curran, *The Anatomy of Blackness: Science and Slavery in an Age of Enlightenment*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011; Joan Pau Rubiés, “Christianity and Civilisation in Sixteenth-Century Ethnological Discourse,” in Henriette Bugge and Joan Pau Rubiés (eds.), *Shifting Cultures: Interaction and Discourse in the Expansion of Europe*, Münster: Lit Verlag, 1995, 35–60; Rebecca Earle, *The Body of the Conquistador: Food, Race and the Colonial Experience in Spanish America, 1492–1700*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

¹³Obviously, we can barely begin to summarize this vast literature here, but a few representative works include Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998; David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006; Patrick Manning (ed.), *Slave Trades, 1500–1800: Globalization of Forced Labour*, Brookfield, VT: Variorum, 1996; Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Jamaica, Edward Long, whose 1774 *History of Jamaica* amounts to a long-winded defense of the plantation system: “When we reflect on the nature of [black people],” Long writes, “and their dissimilarity to the rest of mankind, must we not conclude that they are a different species of the same genus? . . . Every member of the creation is wisely fitted and adapted to their certain uses, and confined within their certain bounds.”¹⁴ The uses for which Long saw Africans as suited were plantation labor and servitude, and it is reasonable to suppose that his polygenism, or the theory of separate creations for the different races, offered merely ad hoc theoretical support of an economic order he would have supported no matter what the evidence about human origins seemed to reveal.

The explanatory priority of the economic over the intellectual will not be disputed here. The infamous *Code noir* was established throughout the French colonies, enshrining in law the inequality of both African slaves as well as of free blacks, in 1685, just one year after François Bernier published his “New Division of the Earth,” reducing humanity to four or five biogeographically defined “races or species.”¹⁵ It is hard not to see Bernier’s proposal not as pure disinterested theorizing, but rather as a distillation of the emerging political preoccupation of his time and place: to provide an articulation in words that could impose some sense and legitimacy on an increasingly harsh and unequal system of labor extraction. Yet we will proceed here in the conviction that there is always a complex interplay between what is said, what is believed, and what is done, and that at least part of the study of the history of modern racism must consist in accounting for the way in which early modern thinkers conceptualized and talked about human diversity. There is a problem of philosophical anthropology that would have been there had there been no New World encounter with Native Americans, and had there been no transatlantic slave trade. These were the two events, the one after the other, that directly stimulated the reflections on philosophical anthropology in Europe and its colonies that are of interest in the present study, but the problem would have been there had modern history unfolded very differently, and this is something that it is in many respects easier to see when we begin by focusing our attention on the earliest history, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when slavery had not yet taken on a rigidly racial dimension for Europeans, but was as likely to be associated

¹⁴Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica*, 3 vols., London, 1774, 2:356, 374–75, 53, cited in Paul Stock, “‘Almost a Separate Race’: Racial Thought and the Idea of Europe in British Encyclopaedias and Histories, 1771–1830,” *Modern Intellectual History* 8, 1 (2011): 3–29, 13.

¹⁵François Bernier, “Nouvelle division de la terre,” *Journal des Sçavans* (April 24, 1684): 133–40, 133.

in their minds with the Ottoman slave trade or with the economic system of ancient Rome.¹⁶

By the time Thomas Jefferson wrote his 1787 *Notes on the State of Virginia*, the transatlantic slave trade had come to be seen as something entirely new and unprecedented in global history, rather than simply a later development of a trade that had previously been focused elsewhere and concentrated on different ethnic groups. Thus Jefferson compares the issues involved in Roman manumission of slaves with those in present-day America: “Among the Romans emancipation required but one effort. The slave, when made free, might mix with, without staining the blood of his master. But with us, a second is necessary, unknown to history. When freed, he is to be removed beyond the reach of mixture.”¹⁷ For Jefferson, ancient history could provide no key for dealing with the problems of modern American slavery, since this latter social institution was unique in history, and had no precedent, in view of its racial dimensions. But the Portuguese slave traders who had plied the coast of West Africa a few centuries earlier had by no means conceived of their activity as a radical break with past practices. Somehow, between the 1500s and Jefferson’s 1787 work, modern slavery in the Atlantic world had come to be seen as fundamentally racial, as grounded in racial difference rather than simply rationalized post hoc in terms of it.

The function of polygenesis as a theory of human origins would also change dramatically from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. The doctrine of polygenesis had its first expression in the sixteenth century in the radical freethinker Lucilio Vanini, who would as a result of this idea have his tongue torn out by the Inquisition. In his mouth, the theory that the Native Americans had a separate and natural origin, that they were earth-born rather than divinely created, let alone descended from Adam, can be seen as a sort of attempt at a thoroughgoing naturalism about humanity’s origins and connection to the rest of the natural world. This thesis is familiar at least since Richard Popkin’s great work on Isaac La Peyrère and the doctrine of pre-Adamism:¹⁸ in the early modern pe-

¹⁶For a classic study of the institutions of slavery in Europe that preceded the Atlantic slave trade, see Charles Verlinden, *L’esclavage dans l’Europe médiévale, vol. 1: Péninsule ibérique—France*, Bruges: De Tempel, 1955; *L’esclavage dans l’Europe médiévale, vol. 2: Italie—colonies italiennes du Levant—Levant latin—Empire byzantin*, Ghent, 1977.

¹⁷Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787), in Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (ed.), *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, London: Blackwell, 1997, 103.

¹⁸Richard H. Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère (1596–1676): His Life, Work and Influence*, Leiden: Brill, 1987. For a similar thesis, see Giuliano Gliozzi, *Adamo e il nuovo mondo. La nascita dell’antropologia come ideologia coloniale: dalle genealogie bibliche alle teorie razziali (1500–1700)*, Florence: Franco Angeli, 1977. For another excellent more recent study of the long-term impact of La Peyrère’s work and of the doctrine of pre-Adamism, see David Livingstone, *The Pre-Adamite Theory*, Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1992.

riod, attributing separate origins to separate human groups often had more to do with questioning the authority of scripture (and, we might add, with exploring proto-evolutionary ideas that ultimately stem from Arabic-Aristotelian accounts of spontaneous generation) than with excluding certain human groups from a full share in humanity. And yet, undeniably, the two go together in surprising ways: when John Locke argues a century after Vanini that sub-Saharan Africans are the product of long, promiscuous hybridism with apes, he is *both* revisiting a Vaninian theme, promoting the non-separateness of human beings from the rest of living nature, *and* engaging in obvious apologetics for the system of slavery which he had extensive personal interests in maintaining. This can't mean that Locke's nominalism is *just* an apology for slavery; after all, he also adduces the example of the cat-rat, alongside the ape-man, in order to make the case that nature itself does not care about the boundaries between "species."¹⁹

That we are limiting ourselves to looking at thinkers here—and in most cases at thinkers who were able to live a life of thought in large part because the category of race was not disadvantageous to them—further distinguishes our focus not only from those who hold that economic history tells us the deepest story, but also from those who believe, again not unreasonably, that it is the muffled voices of those whom this new way of talking about kinds of people silenced and enchained that most need to be recovered by scholars today. But Isaac La Peyrère, G. W. Leibniz, Carl Linnaeus, and J. F. Blumenbach were not just mouthpieces of power. They were also heirs to a scientific and philosophical tradition that made it possible to say some things, and not others, about human nature and human difference, and what exactly they were able to say made a tremendous difference for the perception of the legitimacy of the racist institutions that were in the course of emerging in their era. How and why European authors came to have the beliefs that they had concerning race, in the period around the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, will be the focus of this study.

What we want to understand is the full intellectual background that made this realism possible in general, and that also made the particular racial distinctions between, for example, blacks and whites, possible. It is our hypothesis that a crucial feature of the emergence of the modern race concept was the collapse of a certain universalism about human

See also Livingstone, *Adam's Ancestors: Race, Religion, and the Politics of Human Origins*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008.

¹⁹On the relationship between Locke's entanglements in the institution of slavery and his philosophy, see Robert Bernasconi and Anika Maaza Mann, "The Contradictions of Racism: Locke, Slavery, and the *Two Treatises*," in Andrew Valls (ed.), *Race and Racism in Modern Philosophy*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005, 89–107.

nature, which had been sustained by a belief in the transcendent essence of the human soul, and this belief's gradual but steady replacement over the course of the early modern period by a conception of human beings as *natural* beings, and thus as no less susceptible to classification in terms of a naturalistic taxonomy than any other natural being, plant or animal or mineral. The peculiarly modern ontologization of human difference, then, was made possible by the rejection of human nature, and the parallel insertion of humans into nature.

According to a certain, broadly Foucauldian view, kinds of people are in no small measure artifacts of social practices—they are, to put it somewhat crudely, written into existence through these practices. At the most general level, we may conjecture that the individual human being is itself such an artifact, that what it is to be an individual human in the modern world is to be registered as such, in a church registry of baptisms or in a file in the department of vital statistics. On this view, the reason why you can drive right past a dead dog on the side of the road, whereas a dead human would require you to stop, is that in the case of the human, unlike the dog, there is paperwork to be completed; the life cannot be closed off without a notation in the vital statistical records.²⁰ In this way, it is not that a being gets the status of a legal being in recognition of its prior status as a moral being, but rather it is precisely the other way around: beings come to have a certain moral charge to them—they may not be arbitrarily killed, and if they are dead their corpses must be treated according to a set of rules, for example—because they are classified as legal individuals.

Of course, the interplay between these two is complex, and here we are emphasizing the priority of the legal over the moral for the sake of argument. To consider another example, in the abortion debate, opponents of the practice have a prior commitment to the moral status of fetuses, and so seek to win a legal status for these entities that would reflect the moral one. But it is quite likely, given the evidence from similar cases, that if fetuses did have a long-established legal status, many who do not in our own culture believe that abortion is a moral issue would think differently. We already do think very differently about our moral commitments to different classes of animals (pests, livestock, vermin, wildlife, zoo animals, to name a few), where clearly the only basis for distinction is a legal or social one, stemming from the position they occupy in human society,

²⁰For an account of the way certain administrative practices (in the event, legal ones) affect the perception of the moral status of animals, see Justin E. H. Smith, "The Criminal Trial and Punishment of Animals: A Case Study in Shame and Necessity," in Andreas Blank (ed.), *Animals: New Essays*, Munich: Philosophia Verlag, forthcoming.

and has nothing at all to do with differences in their internal capacities, their neurophysiology, or the like.

The connection to the problem of race should be obvious: kinds of people are to no small extent administered into being, brought into existence through record keeping, census taking, and, indeed, bills of sale. A census form asks whether a citizen is “white,” and the possibility of answering this question affirmatively helps to bring into being a subkind of the human species that is by no means simply there and given, ready to be picked out, prior to the emergence of social practices such as the census. Censuses, in part, bring white people into existence, but once they are in existence they easily come to appear as if they had been there all along. This is in part what Hacking means by “looping”: human kinds, in contrast with properly natural kinds such as helium or water, come to be what they are in large part as a result of the human act of identifying them as this or that. Two millennia ago no one thought of themselves as neurotic, or straight, or white, and nothing has changed in human biology in the meantime that could explain how these categories came into being on their own. This is not to say that no one *is* melancholic, neurotic, straight, white, and so on, but only that how that person got to be that way cannot be accounted for in the same way as, say, how birds evolved the ability to fly, or how iron oxidizes.

In some cases, such as the diagnosis of mental illness, kinds of people are looped into existence out of a desire, successful or not, to help them. Racial categories seem to have been looped into existence, by contrast, for the facilitation of the systematic exploitation of certain groups of people by others. Again, the categories facilitate the exploitation in large part because of the way moral status flows from legal status. Why can the one man be enslaved, and the other not? Because the one belongs to the natural-seeming kind of people that is suitable for enslavement. This reasoning is tautological from the outside, yet self-evident from within. Edward Long, as we have seen, provides a vivid illustration of it in his defense of plantation labor in Jamaica. But again, categories cannot be made to stick on the slightest whim of their would-be coiner. They must build upon habits of thinking that are already somewhat in place. And this is where the history of natural science becomes crucial for understanding the history of modern racial thinking, for the latter built directly upon innovations in the former. Modern racial thinking could not have taken the form it did if it had not been able to piggyback, so to speak, on conceptual innovations in the way science was beginning to approach the diversity of the natural world, and in particular of the living world.

This much ought to be obvious: racial thinking could not have been biologized if there were no emerging science of biology. It may be worthwhile to dwell on this obvious point, however, and to see what more

unexpected insights might be drawn out of it. What might not be so obvious, or what seems to be ever in need of renewed pointing out, is a point that ought to be of importance for our understanding of the differing, yet ideally parallel, scope and aims of the natural and social sciences: the emergence of racial categories, of categories of kinds of humans, may in large part be understood as an *overextension* of the project of biological classification that was proving so successful in the same period. We might go further, and suggest that all of the subsequent kinds of people that would emerge over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the kinds of central interest to Foucault and Hacking, amount to a further reaching still, an unprecedented, peculiarly modern ambition to make sense of the slightest variations within the human species as if these were themselves species differentia. Thus for example Foucault's well-known argument that until the nineteenth century there was no such thing as "the homosexual," but only people whose desires could impel them to do various things at various times. But the last two centuries have witnessed a proliferation of purportedly natural kinds of humans, a typology of "extroverts," "depressives," and so on, whose objects are generally spoken of as if on an ontological par with elephants and slime molds. Things were not always this way. In fact, as we will see, they were not yet this way throughout much of the early part of the period we call "modern."

I.3. THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE AND THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

It is no exaggeration to say that early modern globalization was one of the most important impetuses behind the radical transformations that occurred within philosophy between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries. To some extent, the importance of intercultural encounters, both the real ones that were related by travel writers with varying degrees of veracity, as well as the fictional ones inspired by these real ones, has been duly acknowledged by political philosophers. Most of us know, for example, that Locke could not have developed his theory of private property in precisely the way he did if he had not had the example of Native Americans, who supposedly lived without private property, as a comparison class.²¹ Social contract theories, it is generally recognized, drew heavily on shoddy ethnographic evidence, though ethnographic evidence nonetheless, from supposedly more primitive groups of people in recently encountered parts of the world. The significance of early modern globalization for the history of moral philosophy has been widely acknowl-

²¹ See John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*, New York: Macmillan, 1987.

edged, too. Michel de Montaigne's argument for relativism based on the supposed cultural practices of New World natives is by now a commonplace.²² The impact beyond political and moral philosophy, however, in epistemology, metaphysics, and natural philosophy, remains dramatically less important among scholars of the history of philosophy.²³

In the present study attention will be paid to both sorts of impact, already considered above, on philosophical reflection concerning human nature and human difference in early modern Europe: taxonomy, or theory of classification, as it developed in European natural philosophy from the Renaissance on, on the one hand; and, on the other, the ethnographic reports that were coming back to Europe from around the world throughout the age of exploration. These might appear to be two very disparate sources, but they are actually interwoven with one another in significant ways. For many years now historians of science have emphasized the crucial importance of colonialism for the growth of scientific knowledge in the early modern period. Ideas about the number and variety of plant species, for example, and thus ideas about the scope of the undertaking of botanical taxonomy, emerged in the course of what Londa Schiebinger has very helpfully dubbed "colonial bioprospecting":²⁴ the task of searching the world for useful plants to be brought back to Europe for a profit. In this respect, historians of science have compellingly argued, we cannot at all adequately understand natural philosophy and natural history as these developed in Europe if we do not look at them as a regional inflection of global developments. One such crucial development was the transformation of the knowledge project of biological taxonomy into a properly global endeavor.

It should not be surprising, in turn, to find that alongside bioprospecting we are able to identify a parallel activity of "ethnoprosppecting": the effort to carry out an exhaustive global survey of human diversity. It should also not be surprising that, like bioprospecting, this parallel project ended up changing the way European thinkers perceived the relevant

²²See Frank Lestringant, *Le Brésil de Montaigne. Le nouveau monde des Essais (1580–1592)*, Paris, 2005.

²³This lacuna is significantly less noticeable outside the Anglophone world, and outside the discipline of philosophy narrowly conceived. See, for example, Sergio Landucci, *I filosofi e i selvaggi, 1580–1780*, Bari, 1972; Tzvetan Todorov, *La conquête de l'Amérique: la question de l'autre*, Paris: Seuil, 1982; Stuart B. Schwartz (ed.), *Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting, and Reflecting on the Encounters between Europeans and Other Peoples in the Early Modern Era*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

²⁴See Londa Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007. For an excellent study of the connection among early modern commerce, colonialism, and science, see Harold J. Cook, *Matters of Exchange: Commerce, Medicine, and Science in the Dutch Golden Age*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.

variety of diversity—human or plant—itself. That is, going out into the world, and undertaking an exhaustive survey of the variety of kinds, could not but impact the way in which people interested in this project thought about the nature of kinds themselves. In particular belief in the fixity and discreteness of biological species grew increasingly difficult to support in the face of massive new information about the plenitude of kinds in nature, which strongly suggested the possibility of finding intermediate kinds between any two given kinds. This possibility, in turn, strongly motivated a view of the variety of kinds on which any given kind is a variation on other kinds, rather than a sharply cordoned off, eternally fixed class.

Thus, we will be looking at early modern taxonomy, along with the project of bioprospecting that feeds into it, as an endeavor with significant similarities to and connections with early modern travel writing, conceived in part as the project of “ethnopropecting.” It will be argued that in order to understand the forces that shaped thinking about racial difference in early modern philosophy, we must look to the philosophers’ own interest in the projects of scientific classification and physical anthropology, with an eye to the way these projects were influenced by early modern globalization and by the associated projects of global commerce, collection, and systematization of the order of nature.

So far, we have claimed to be principally interested in the history of philosophy, yet have also been moving fairly nonchalantly between this history and the history of science. It is easy to explain why we are permitting ourselves to move so freely in these two worlds, without much attention to the boundary that supposedly divides them: methodologically, the approach here is one that takes actors’ categories seriously, and as a matter of simple historical fact early modern philosophers conceived of the domains of scientific inquiry mentioned above as very much part of the project of philosophy. They did not call these domains of inquiry “science,” let alone “biology” or, more narrowly, “taxonomy.” They called them, variously, “natural philosophy” and “natural history,” the former implying a search for the general principles of nature, the latter usually involving a cataloguing of particulars. Both of these terms were rich with significations that have been lost in the intervening centuries, and part of the aim of this book is to reconstruct these significations to the point where we become able to see how and why thinkers from Pierre Gassendi and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz up through Johann Friedrich Blumenbach and Immanuel Kant were able to conceptualize questions of what we would call “physical anthropology” as part and parcel of the project of philosophy.

As we will see, it is not simply that they took an interest in questions of measurable human variation as Renaissance men, they did not see

these questions as side interests or digressions from their main project as metaphysicians, any more than Aristotle saw his own interest in, say, marine invertebrates as a hobby rather than as a constitutive part of his overarching philosophical project. Physical anthropology, taxonomy, and natural history (conceived, with Leibniz, as the surveying and cataloguing of “singular things”) simply *were* philosophy for the people we all recognize today as the great modern philosophers, and to neglect to study these areas of inquiry *as* philosophy is to fail to take an interest in the scope and aims of these thinkers’ philosophical projects. Moreover, even if respect of actors’ categories is not part of your own scholarly approach to the history of philosophy, it is undeniable that the physical anthropology, taxonomy, and other endeavors of the philosophers we are considering were in fact integrated with the concerns of theirs that we are all still perfectly capable of recognizing as philosophical. Most pertinently, all of these domains of inquiry were centrally focused on the problem of human nature—*Quid sit homo?*—and the philosophers who pursued them simply took for granted that the study of physical anthropology and related areas had an important role to play in the answering of this fundamental philosophical question.

Once we recognize that inquiry into the natural world was in part constitutive of early modern philosophy, it becomes easier to map this inquiry in relation to other concerns of early modern philosophers. Some of these concerns will be easily recognizable from today’s perspective as philosophical, but others, like much of natural science itself, will have also, in the intervening centuries, lost their evident philosophical relevance. One of these faded concerns of early modern philosophy, whose relevance we will attempt to recover here, indeed lies very close to natural history on the conceptual map of early modern philosophy: the humble genre of travel writing. In fact, far from being the mere early modern equivalent of tourist guides, travel reports are the closest thing we have from that era to what would later develop into comparative ethnography. Exposure to other cultures, as well as the attempt, though often crude and judgmental, to make sense of their beliefs and practices, was an extremely important source of reflection on the nature of morality, reason, and other key notions of Western philosophy. With very few exceptions, early modern philosophers were explicitly and deeply interested in figuring out the implications of contemporary encounters with other cultures—both with their “folk science” or knowledge systems, as well as with their customs and morality—for the understanding of basic philosophical questions. Consider, for example, two of the most significant texts of Renaissance and early modern philosophy: Thomas More’s *Utopia*,²⁵ and a century later

²⁵Thomas More, *De optimo rei publicae statu deque nova insula Utopia*, Leuven, 1516.

Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*,²⁶ both of which construct their visions of the philosophical project around the fictional artifice of an ethnographic encounter with inhabitants of islands, each said to be located somewhere in the New World. The few cases in which philosophers exhibit no such interest, such as that of René Descartes, far from being the norm, amount to exceptions that are themselves in need of explanation.²⁷

It is at least true that for the most part, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century naturalists gave short shrift to the variety of cultures encountered throughout the world, preferring instead to devote their attention to the botanical and geographical features (and, to a lesser extent, to the zoological varieties) they came across. When “natives” figure at all in utopian fictions, they are generally so removed from the ethnographic information that was already available as to warrant the conclusion that they are intended simply as projections of European aspirations, and not as in any way modeled after the New World inhabitants themselves. Indeed, most typically the inhabitants of distant islands off the coast of South America were imagined as descending from ancient seafarers who originated in the Old World, and thus who had access to ancient learning, as well, perhaps, to ancient revelation. But this fictional imagining of origins also reflected a quite legitimate theory of human monogenesis current in early modern ethnography. Native Americans triggered a lively debate in sixteenth-century Spain and the Spanish colonies concerning whether or not Americans are natural slaves in Aristotle's sense, or whether they are fully equal to Europeans.²⁸ *Libres esprits* of the same era, such as Montaigne, were, again, interested in the figure of the New World “cannibal” as a challenge to the universality of moral principles.

In the early to mid-seventeenth century, for some philosophers the very existence of cultural difference seems to have presented a troubling obstacle to their own claim on universality. Whether or not one is correct in describing the early seventeenth-century as a “counter-Renaissance,” in which humble curiosity about particulars—including particular cultural practices—is replaced by an ambitious quest for an absolute and universal certainty that would not mesh well with any interest in cultural

²⁶Francis Bacon, *Nova Atlantis. Mundus alter et idem, sive Terra australis antehac semper incognita: longis itineribus peregrini Academici nuperrime lustrata Authore Mercurio Britanico . . .*, Utrecht: Apud Joannem a Waesberge, 1643 [1624].

²⁷Franklin Perkins has interestingly contrasted Descartes's style and aims as a philosopher with those of Leibniz, in particular with an eye to explaining why in the former case we find scarcely any mention of the non-European world (or, one might add, any particular interest in European customs, tradition, etc., as worthy of attention). See Perkins, *Leibniz and China: A Commerce of Light*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

²⁸See Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

diversity,²⁹ the absence of references to non-European cultures in figures such as Descartes is at least noteworthy. The world outside Europe, Descartes may well have thought, could only provide complicating and messy evidence against the universality of his claims, and, more damagingly, against the a priori method of producing claims about what sort of entity a human being is. Descartes was not a skeptic (other than in a methodological sense), and perhaps correspondingly he was defiantly uninterested in the social world beyond the Republic of Letters. Those, in contrast, who believed in the importance of the accumulation of particulars, rather than in adherence to “notions” or concepts of reason, were intensely interested in gathering ethnographic information from explorers, and in acquiring natural knowledge indirectly from the subjects of ethnography themselves.

Scientific institutions such as the Royal Society of London—whose members were all, by seventeenth-century standards, philosophers—were by contrast intensely interested in collecting data on the flora and fauna, climates and cultures, of faraway places. And Locke, returning to the same sort of ethnographic evidence to which Montaigne had appealed a century before, makes the case for the absence of universal human essence on the grounds that cultural norms are radically different throughout the world. “There is scarce that Principle of Morality to be named,” he writes in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* of 1690, “or Rule of Vertue to be thought on which is not, somewhere or other, slighted and condemned by the general Fashion of whole Societies of Men.”³⁰ There seems indeed to be a direct correlation between the basic epistemological position taken up by seventeenth-century thinkers as to the usefulness of knowledge of particulars in contrast with universal principles, on the one hand, and on the other those thinkers’ interest in drawing upon examples from the nascent (and largely fantastical) ethnographic literature for the purpose of illustrating some point of practical or theoretical philosophy.

Even in the case of Descartes, we are not dealing with someone who simply has no interest in the study of other cultures. Rather, the philosopher initially takes a deep interest in cultural difference, but consciously determines not to place it at the center of his philosophical inquiry, precisely because, in its variability, it seems unable to offer any answers to the universal questions that are of interest to him. Thus Descartes writes in chapter 1 of the *Discourse on Method*,

²⁹Such an account was offered in Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.

³⁰John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, book I, chap. 3, 16, in *The Works of John Locke Esq; In Three Volumes*, vol. 1, London: John Churchill, 1714.

It is true that, while busied only in considering the manners of other men, I found here, too, scarce any ground for settled conviction, and remarked hardly less contradiction among them than in the opinions of the philosophers. So that the greatest advantage I derived from the study consisted in this, that, observing many things which, however extravagant and ridiculous to our apprehension, are yet by common consent received and approved by other great nations, I learned to entertain too decided a belief in regard to nothing of the truth of which I had been persuaded merely by example and custom.³¹

It is thus not that Descartes's deductive method, his approach to philosophy as an activity for the cloistered meditator, is in no way a result of a lack of interest in human cultural diversity, but rather of a concern, not at all unfounded, that the human species is simply too diverse to yield up answers to fundamental questions about human nature through the study of this diversity.

Some philosophers might object that to focus on the way race occurs in historical philosophical texts not centrally concerned with race is to mistake contingent or trivial features of a work for its actual substantial content. This is a common complaint leveled by philosophers against scholars who engage with philosophical texts from a position outside of philosophy narrowly conceived. Thus Martha Nussbaum has criticized Judith Butler's view that J. L. Austin heterosexualizes social bonds by taking "I thee wed" as the paradigmatic example of a speech act. Nussbaum comments, "It is usually a mistake to read earth-shaking significance into a philosopher's pedestrian choice of examples. Should we say that Aristotle's use of a low-fat diet to illustrate the practical syllogism suggests that chicken is at the heart of Aristotelian virtue?"³²

Yet, pace Nussbaum, one might also reasonably suggest that the significance of examples should be judged on a case-by-case basis. The stock examples of chalk, tables, and desks that philosophy instructors employ in teaching in fact say quite a bit about our ontology, and it is not at all a disruption of philosophical reflection, but indeed a deepening of it, to ask what the taking of these mundane classroom objects as paradigmatic instances of thing says about our ontological commitments. Aristotle and Leibniz both, for example, would have seen chairs and chalk as each in need of a different sort of ontological analysis, whereas we tend to run them together. When it comes to examples touching upon race or gender, philosophers tend to be somewhat more tolerant than Nussbaum is here of Butler, and indeed many people working very much from within the

³¹René Descartes, *Discours de la méthode*, in *Oeuvres de Descartes*, ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, Paris: Léopold Cerf, 1902, 6:10.

³²Martha Nussbaum, "The Professor of Parody," *New Republic*, February 22, 1999.

discipline of philosophy, rather than picking away at it from outside, as Nussbaum supposes Butler to be doing, have acknowledged that examples drawn from racial or ethnic others in the history of philosophy may be more relevant to understanding this history than chicken is to Aristotle's virtue theory. Charles W. Mills, for example, argues that the offhand comments about race in classical philosophical works, far from being tangential to the main concerns of the authors, in fact express the overall systematic aim of these works: to perpetuate a social contract that promotes the interests of whites over other people.³³ We do not need to scrutinize his argument in order to appreciate that at the very least there are serious philosophers who are rather more interested in drawing out the significance of examples than Nussbaum thinks we ought to be.

In the present study, we are approaching the history of the concept of race as a problem for philosophy itself, and are taking treatments of race in philosophical texts in history as significant, even where race is not the principal topic of explicit concern for the author. It is hoped that in so doing we are not working against the texts, or proceeding deconstructively or antiphilosophically or anything like that, but only trying to understand the complex history of a difficult problem by paying attention to all the traces it leaves. As the nineteenth-century Haitian philosopher Anténor Firmin wrote of the science of anthropology (in which he included the historically grounded defense of the equality of races): "No study was ever more complex. Here, one must reason with confidence about all subjects, whether they are concerned with mind or with matter . . . , with phenomenon and with noumenon, following the terminology of Kant. Not everyone has it in them."³⁴

I.4. AIMS AND OUTLINE

Until now, we have painted a fairly detailed picture of many of the theoretical concerns in the background of the present study. We have yet to make our positive theses explicit, and we have yet to spell out how, concretely, we will go about arguing for them.

There are in fact three interwoven argumentative aims of this book. The **first** is that, whatever its philosophical shortcomings and whatever ill consequences its corollary theses had, metaphysical dualism in fact

³³ Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997.

³⁴ Anténor Firmin, *De l'égalité des races (anthropologie positive)*, Paris: Librairie Cotillon, 1885, 4. "Jamais étude ne fut plus complexe. Là, il faut raisonner avec assurance sur tous les sujets, qu'ils relèvent de l'esprit ou de la matière; il faut envisager le monde et la pensée, le phénomène et le noumène, suivant la terminologie de Kant. Cela n'est pas de la force de chacun."

served as an important bulwark against the rise of essentialist thinking about human racial diversity, against the possibility of taking, as Philippi did in the case of Amo, the physical body for the “nature.” That is—and this will be shown through a number of historical case studies—so long as the human soul was thought to be something fundamentally independent of the body, physical differences between human beings could not be taken as markers of essential difference.

Correlatively, a **second** thesis is that it was the naturalization of the human being, the discovery of the possibility of the study of human beings as natural entities, that made dualism a moribund research program by the end of the eighteenth century, and that also, simultaneously, made essentialist racial thinking possible. This thinking tracked in unmistakable ways the methods and systems that were actively being applied for the study of other, nonhuman domains of nature, particularly other domains of the living world, and in this respect we may say that the naturalization of the human being and the corollary rise of racial thinking involved an overextension of systematic scientific thought, in particular of taxonomic methods fruitfully applied in botany and to a lesser extent in zoology, chemistry, and other domains, to the human species. To put this second argument somewhat more succinctly: when human beings were fully inserted into nature, the unity of the human species was lost, and different groups were now held, themselves, to have different “natures.” Humanity became, to use what is now a very polysemous word, as “diverse” as nature itself.

Third and finally, it will be argued that, while a commitment to the existence of a body-independent rational soul was in certain important respects a bulwark against the rise of modern racism, the interactions between this commitment and the rising naturalism of the modern period helped over the *longue durée* to generate the modern,³⁵ racially charged dichotomy between two basic varieties of people: the people of reason and the people of nature, so to speak. This is where the role of philosophy in the history of the concept of race is particularly important, and very much in need of excavation and analysis, for it was a conceit of the philosophical project itself, a project conceived as central to the identity of Europeans and generally conceived as nontransferable and unshareable with non-Europeans, that helped to strengthen the appearance of a fundamental difference between “the West” and “the rest.” This ignoble contribution of philosophy was not in itself racial, but it helped to

³⁵This term is of course most closely associated with Fernand Braudel and the *Annales* school of history, whose members sought to emphasize long-term processes in historical scholarship over the study of singular events or *histoire événementielle*. See in particular Braudel, “Histoire et sciences sociales: la longue durée,” *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 13, 4 (October–December 1958): 725–53.

ground in something apparently eternal and foundational the parallel project of natural science, which in the same period was actively seeking to establish essential differences between human groups by appeal to ever more fine-grained descriptions of minor, which is to say nonessential, differences. This contribution, moreover, is most evident in modern philosophy's engagement, or, more often, failure to engage, with the indigenous knowledge systems of the non-European peoples who had, since the end of the fifteenth century, been thrust into complicated, and generally disadvantageous, forms of contact and exchange with Europeans.

These theses are not entirely new. In a quite different and perhaps more appropriate scholarly idiom, Denise Da Silva has forcefully argued in her 2007 book, *Toward a Global History of Race*, that the purported universalism of the modern idea of "humanity" has been compromised all along by the fact that it is in its essence a racial idea. She argues, in particular, that from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, science and philosophy were committed to "protecting *man*" by "the writing of the subject as a historical, self-determined thing—a temporary solution consolidated only in the mid-nineteenth century, when man became an object of scientific knowledge."³⁶ She goes on to show how the sciences of man dealt with the fundamental ontological problem of "humanity" by "deploy[ing] racial difference as a constitutive human attribute."³⁷ Da Silva's argument is subtle and impossible to summarize here, but from what has already been mentioned, the overlap with the present project should be clear. One significant point of disagreement, however, is that while she sees the fragmentation of the species into races as an extreme measure taken to "protect man," here it will be argued that this fragmentation was itself a consequence of a forceful rejection of an older and time-honored conception of humanity.

We are covering a very broad time period and a great number of authors, and are moving fairly freely between these. Such an approach is of course discouraged for many scholarly purposes. Our period extends, roughly, from the early sixteenth to the late eighteenth century, or, to put it handily, from Columbus to Kant. Other than for the middle of this span, namely, the second half of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth, and in particular the work of Leibniz and his contemporaries, we can claim to offer no truly original scholarship, and are instead relying on the tremendous amount of interpretative work that is already available. But if our approach to these periods is avowedly derivative, it is

³⁶Denise Da Silva, *Toward a Global History of Race*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007, xiii.

³⁷Da Silva, *Toward a Global History of Race*, xiii.

nonetheless justified in relation to the methodological aims and objectives of the present study.

This is so for at least three reasons. First, by taking the wide-focused perspective, it becomes possible to make out the true nature of the detailed contours of the period we know best and are most concerned to interpret correctly—namely, again, the period marked out by the mature work of Leibniz and various of his contemporaries, *the* period, as will be shown, in which the most important developments in the history of the concept of race were occurring. Second, the majority of scholarship on the history of the concept of race has taken the eighteenth century as the most pivotal period for understanding the concept's legacies today. By anchoring ourselves here in the seventeenth century, and erring into the high Enlightenment principally in order to make sense of *longue durée* developments that gave their first signs far earlier, we are helping to re-orient the discussion of the history of the race concept chronologically, and in particular are helping to decouple it from the handful of authors, such as Denis Diderot, David Hume, Blumenbach, and Kant, who are generally taken to have contributed significantly, for better or worse, to the concept's legacy, rather than being taken as having jumped into the discussion of a topic that already had a long independent history before them. Finally, it is only by sampling freely from such a wide array of anecdotes, examples, and arguments that we gain the sort of clear picture, following a sort of Baconian method, that enables us to move to the level of generalities, that justifies our attempts to identify broad historical trends. This is certainly not how all scholarship proceeds, and narrow and focused studies are certainly of value. But the survey has its place as well.

In the first chapter, we will engage with current philosophical accounts of racial categories, paying particular attention to the relevance for recent philosophy of both social constructionism as well as the cognitivist approach in understanding categorial schemes such as that of modern racial classification. Our principal concern in this chapter is to show that, while much of the recent literature in fields as diverse as cognitive anthropology, analytic philosophy of race, and postcolonial theory has been tremendously useful in clarifying the precise nature and function of racial categories, and in accounting for their tenaciousness in a world in which they are recognized to be of little scientific value (with a few caveats, as we will see), nonetheless these approaches must be complemented by a deepened understanding of the historical development of the categories they call into question, and of the way current thinking about race is shaped and also constrained by a past of which we remain largely unaware.

In the second chapter we will consider a cluster of thorny methodological problems in any undertaking to examine the historical and philosophical background of the modern concept of race. In particular, we

will highlight the following problem: if race is acknowledged to not exist in any transhistorical sense, and to have a vague and constantly mutating referent throughout history, then how can we know we are picking out the right textual sources that will tell us what people thought about race and when? A particularly vivid example, as will be shown, may be drawn from early modern medical writing: blackness, here, often has entirely nonracial connotations, and yet often these connotations become overlain or mingled with later strata of racial thought, and it is extremely difficult, as an interpretive matter, to determine in many cases whether there is a racial dimension to a given reference to blackness or not. In this chapter we will also be arguing for the necessity of a sort of casuistical approach, which does not eschew the study of particular cases, anecdotes, offhand examples or remarks that occur in the course of making other philosophical arguments. All of these, it will be argued, should be taken seriously in any attempt to give a general account of the functions race fulfills in the history of modern philosophy.

In the third chapter, with the bulk of our theoretical and methodological concerns by now spelled out, we will turn to the history of the race concept more narrowly speaking. We will first consider the early development of thinking about human diversity and human origins in the context of the Renaissance. In important respects, as we will see, later reflections in European philosophy echo debates that played out a century earlier within the Ibero-American world, largely as a result of the fact that the Iberians were the earliest Europeans to have significant encounters with non-European peoples in the modern era. We will focus in particular on those sixteenth-century engagements with the *novissima americana*, the latest news from the Americas, that dealt with the question of the origins and nature of biological kinds in the New World, and particularly with the origins and nature of New World peoples. One thing that will become clear in the discussion in this and the following chapter is that the possibility of radical or essential difference between different human groups, an essential difference that would be traced back to the different groups' distinct origins, was understood in the Renaissance and at the beginning of the early modern period to be a radically libertine view, and all but the most extreme thinkers held to some sort of conception of all human beings as fundamentally the same in virtue of the fact that they all descend from Adam and all possess saveable souls.

In the fourth chapter, we will follow the development of Renaissance debates about the nature of human diversity into the following century, and particularly as they played out in France and England. We will focus in particular on so-called polygenesis, as represented most famously by Isaac La Peyrère's pre-Adamism, according to which different human groups were created at different moments. On the most common version of this view,

some or all of the peoples of non-Abrahamic faiths were created—and given an oblique and widely interpretable mention in scripture—prior to Adam. We will further consider some of the elaborate attempts to account for the migration of human beings throughout the world in terms of diffusionist models, focusing in particular on the work of the seventeenth-century English jurist Matthew Hale, and arguing that such attempts played an important role in the increasing naturalization of modern paleoanthropology, and therefore also of modern accounts of the nature of human diversity.

In the fifth chapter, we will focus on those early modern accounts of human phenotypic diversity (to use today's terminology) that do not resort to claims of essential difference, but instead appeal to some form or other of degeneration to account for human diversity. Degenerationism is the view that there was an original, ideal type of the human species (and generally also of animal species), but that different groups have deviated from this perfect state as a result of migration, changes in diet and in climate, and hybridity with other species. We will see that degenerationist accounts of human variety are particularly interesting in the way they conflate descriptive and normative claims. This is particularly clear in the work of the mid-seventeenth-century English Baconian philosopher John Bulwer, who effectively accounts for *all* human diversity in terms of harmful cultural practices. We will also consider in some detail the place of apes, and in particular of higher primates, in degenerationist reflections on the lower limits of the human species.

In the sixth chapter, we will turn to François Bernier's contribution to the history of racial thinking. This French physician and traveler is often credited with being the key innovator of the modern race concept. While some rigorous scholarship has recently appeared questioning Bernier's significance, his racial theory is seldom placed in his context as a Gassendian natural philosopher who was, in particular, intent to bring his own brand of modern, materialistic philosophy to bear in his experiences in the Moghul Empire in Persia and northern India. It will be argued that Bernier's principal innovation was to effectively decouple the concept of race from considerations of lineage, and instead to conceptualize it in biogeographical terms in which the precise origins or causes of the original differences of human physical appearance from region to region remain underdetermined.

In the seventh chapter, we will undertake an extensive treatment of the place of Leibniz in the history of the concept of race. In particular the significant points of difference between his own view, on the one hand, and Bernier's biogeographical view, on the other, will be drawn out. It will be shown, in fact, that Leibniz remains thoroughly committed to a conception of race that is rooted in earlier ideas about the temporal succession of members of a family or lineage. It will be shown, moreover, in what

way his analysis of race may be seen as a concrete application of his very deepest philosophical commitment, according to which the order of the world amounts to a multiplicity that is underlain by unity. What we will see, in effect, is Leibniz's application of this philosophical commitment in his own account of human diversity, in particular through an analysis of his view that the human species is best divided up not according to physical differences from one region to the next, but rather according to differences of language, which itself is nothing other than the expression of a universal human reason.

In the eighth chapter, we will focus on the life and work of Anton Wilhelm Amo, to whom we have already been introduced above, who was active in Germany in the period between Leibniz and Kant. We will be particularly interested to see how Amo's identity as an African in Europe helped to shape both his philosophy and its reception, and what lessons may have been drawn in the era for thinking about the relationship between human racial diversity, on the one hand, and the universality of human reason, on the other. It will be argued, finally, that the position occupied by Amo in the philosophical landscape of early eighteenth-century Germany reveals the likely influence of Leibniz, who had provided a model for a nonracial philosophical anthropology for which he has generally not been given much credit.

In the ninth chapter, finally, we will undertake a survey of some of the more important developments in the history of the concept of race in eighteenth-century Germany. There was an interesting inconsistency, we will see, between the desire to make taxonomic distinctions and a hesitance to posit any real ontological divisions within the human species. This inconsistency was well represented in the physical-anthropological work of Blumenbach, one of Kant's great intellectual adversaries and, in many respects, the most important eighteenth-century theorist of human difference. Johann Gottfried Herder, a contemporary of Blumenbach's, was intensely interested in human diversity, but saw this diversity as entirely based in culture rather than biology, and saw cultural difference as an entirely neutral matter, rather than as a continuum of higher and lower. Herder constitutes an important link, it will be argued, between early modern universalism of the sort represented by Leibniz, on the one hand, and on the other the ideally value-neutral project of cultural anthropology as it would begin to emerge in the nineteenth century.

For the most part, the chapters may be read separately, though where fitting there are indications in the text for where to find related discussions in other parts of the book. The aim is to make the case for the three theses identified above not by a single, cumulative argument, but by following these theses like leitmotifs through a wide variety of texts and authors.