

# Kant's Racist Anthropology in Context: Ethnographic Archives of the German Enlightenment

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Moreover, the attached principles of a moral characterisation of the different human races will serve to satisfy the taste of those who do not particularly pay attention to the physical aspects.

IMMANUEL KANT, Letter to Johann Jacob Engel, 1779

## Introduction

Historical context matters. Our judgments about the past, what the past means for a present context, should be informed by how we interpret the past in its own. Applied to Kant's racism,<sup>1</sup> given the state of the academy and the world, this banal proposition

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<sup>1</sup> By 'racism', I mean judging a socio-political group's internal qualities (e.g., intelligence or morality) based on observed or imagined physical features (attributed to climate or biology; mainly skin tone, in Kant's case). Add the principle of hierarchy, and racism is simply the biological idiom for Kant's most original project as anthropologist: 'characterisation' (*Charakteristik*) of humanity, by 'cognising the interior of the human being from the exterior'. This definition of 'characterisation' reflects what Kant does in that part of his Anthropology course/textbook, even if he may not have added that section heading: see REINHARD BRANDT, *Kritischer Kommentar zu Kants Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht (1798)* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1999), 125. Kant's racism, in this sense of 'characterisation', supports a raciology or 'racist theory' per ALBERT MEMMI, *Racism*, transl. STEVE MARTINOT, repr. (1994, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000): a set of 'pure' biological types that are hierarchical and (therefore) should not mix. As conceded even by a relatively sympathetic view of Kant on race (JON M. MIKKELSEN, 'Introduction', in *Kant and the Concept of Race: Late Eighteenth-Century Writings*, ed. JON M. MIKKELSEN, Albany: SUNY Press, 2013, 1–40, at 27), through the 1780s, Kant advanced a racist theory in Memmi's precise sense: 'four "base" races in response to differing climatic conditions [...] reliance on skin colour as the primary "marker" [...] the occasional [*sic!*] arrogant racial slur, and a fear of "racial mixing"'. (His views in the 1790s are disputed; see note 4.) On race mixing, see MARK LARRIMORE, 'Antinomies of Race: Diversity and Destiny in Kant', *Patterns of Prejudice* 42, no. 4–5 (2008): 341–63 (349–50, 359–61); JORIS VAN GORKOM, 'Immanuel Kant on Race Mixing: The Gypsies, the Black Portuguese, and the Jews on Saint Thomas', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 81, no. 3 (2020): 407–27. For a different definition of racism and therefore a different critique, see WULF D. HUND, "It must come from Europe": The Racisms of Immanuel Kant', in *Racisms Made in Germany*, eds WULF D. HUND, CHRISTIAN

becomes more interesting. Whereas his racism's very existence was long suppressed for various reasons,<sup>2</sup> now that it is not,<sup>3</sup> most of the work on the issues that it raises has been done by philosophers or historians of philosophy. Some have traced the development of Kant's racial theory over time,<sup>4</sup> or in relation to other Enlightenment philosophers;

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KOLLER, and MOSCHE ZIMMERMANN (Vienna: Lit, 2011), 69–98. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> This neglect is partly because Kant's anthropology was long seen as marginal and tangential in his philosophy (at least until Foucault's 1964 *thèse complémentaire* connecting it to his *Critiques*), and partly because of its sources. He only published one late book on anthropology, which—some argue, because his views evolved (see note 4), or because this was a textbook which defined race in passing as a merely physical category—trumpets his racism less loudly than other sources: the course announcement for his anthropology lectures and student notes on them; his fragmentary *Reflexionen*; and various essays and lectures on racial theory, or other areas where he invoked race (aesthetics; geography; politics; and his 1785 'The Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy'). On how to locate racial anthropology within Kant's philosophical system, see JENNIFER MENSCH, 'Caught Between Character and Race: 'Temperament' in Kant's Lectures on Anthropology', *Australian Feminist Law Journal* 43, no. 1 (2007): 124–44; WERNER STARK, 'Historical Notes and Interpretive Questions about Kant's Lectures on Anthropology', in *Essays on Kant's Anthropology*, eds BRIAN JACOBS and PATRICK KAIN (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 15–37 (21–26); WERNER STARK, 'Historical and Philological References on the Question of a Possible Hierarchy of Human "Races," "Peoples," or "Populations" in Immanuel Kant—A Supplement', transl. OLAF REINHARDT, in *Reading Kant's Geography*, eds STUART ELDEN and EDUARDO MENDIETA (Albany: SUNY Press, 2011), 87–102 (95–97).

<sup>3</sup> TSENAY SEREQUEBERHAN, 'Eurocentrism in Philosophy: The Case of Immanuel Kant', *Philosophical Forum* 27, no. 4 (1996): 333–56; EMMANUEL CHUKWUDI EZE, 'The Color of Reason: The Idea of "Race" in Kant's Anthropology', in EMMANUEL CHUKWUDI EZE, *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader* (London: Blackwell, 1997), 103–33; ROBERT BERNASCONI, 'Who Invented the Concept of Race? Kant's Role in the Enlightenment Construction of Race', in *Race*, ed. ROBERT BERNASCONI (London: Blackwell, 2001), 11–36; BERNASCONI, 'Kant as an Unfamiliar Source of Racism', in *Philosophers on Race: Critical Essays*, eds JULIE WARD and TOMMY L. LOTT (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 1450–66; BERNASCONI, 'True Colors: Kant's Distinction Between Nature and Artifice in Context', in *Klopffechtereien – Missverständnisse – Widersprüche? Methodische und methodologische Perspektiven auf die Kant-Forster Kontroverse*, eds RAINER GODEL and GIDEON STIENING (Munich: Funk, 2012), 191–207; RAPHAËL LAGIER, *Les races humaines selon Kant* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004); CHARLES W. MILLS, 'Kant and Race, Redux', *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 35, no. 1–2 (2014): 125–57 (on his important 2005 essay, 'Kant's Untermenschen'); FRED MOTEN, 'Black Kant (pronounced Chant): A Theorizing Lecture at the Kelly Writers House, February 27, 2007', PennSound, <https://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Moten.php#2-27-07>, accessed 15 September 2024; MIKKELSEN, 'Introduction'; THOMAS E. HILL JR. and BERNARD BOXILL, 'Kant and Race', in *Race and Racism*, ed. BERNARD BOXILL (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 448–71; BOXILL, 'Kantian Racism and Kantian Teleology', in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Race*, ed. NAOMI ZACK (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 44–53; JIMMY YAB, *Kant and the Politics of Racism: Towards Kant's Racialized Form of Cosmopolitan Right* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021); HUAPING LU-ADLER, *Kant, Race, and Racism: Views from Somewhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023). Beyond the academy, see ROBIN F. C. SCHMAL, 'Was Kant a Racist? The Public Discussion on Germany's Belated Intellectual Decolonization', in *Places in the Sun: Post-Colonial Dialogues in Europe and Beyond*, eds VALENTIN LUNTUMBUE et al. (Brussels: Institute for a Greater Europe, 2021), 37–47, with further sources and discussion in LU-ADLER, *Kant, Race, and Racism*, 1–3.

<sup>4</sup> SANKAR MUTHU, *Enlightenment Against Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 181–84; PAULINE KLEINGELD, 'Kant's Second Thoughts on Race', *Philosophical Quarterly* 57, no. 229 (2007): 573–92, followed by ALEXEY ZHAVORONKOV and ALEXEY SALIKOV, 'The Concept of Race in Kant's Lectures on Anthropology', *Con-Textos Kantianos* 7 (2018): 275–92; KLEINGELD, 'Kant's Second Thoughts on Colonialism', in *Kant and Colonialism*, eds KATRIN FLIKSCHUH and LEA YPI (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 43–67; OLIVER EBERL, 'Kant on Race and Barbarism: Towards a More Complex View on

anthropologists; geographers; and biologists.<sup>5</sup> Others have debated how Kant's racist views bear upon the rest of his system, focusing on their tensions with his critical, moral, and political principles; his cosmopolitanism; and other putatively universalist positions.<sup>6</sup> In general, however, both lines of work return to Kant himself—whether he is framed broadly or narrowly, diachronically or synchronically—as the best context in which to interpret Kant's views. To what extent, these studies ask, were Kant's racism, and other

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Racism and Anti-Colonialism in Kant', *Kantian Review* 24, no. 3 (2019): 385–423. Contrast ROBERT BERNASCONI, 'Kant's Third Thoughts on Race', in *Reading Kant's Geography*, eds ELDEN and MENDIETA, 291–318; BERNASCONI, 'The Place of Race in Kant's *Physical Geography* and in the Writings of the 1790s', in *Rethinking Kant*, ed. PABLO MUCHNIK, 5 vols, vol. 2 (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 274–90; BERNASCONI, 'Heredity and Hybridity in the Natural History of Kant, Girtanner, and Schelling during the 1790s', in *Reproduction, Race, and Gender in Philosophy and the Early Life Sciences*, ed. SUSANNE LETTOW (Albany: SUNY Press, 2014), 237–58; VAN GORKOM, 'Kant on Race Mixing'. See further KLEINGELD, 'On Dealing with Kant's Sexism and Racism', *SGIR Review* 2, no. 2 (2019): 3–22.

<sup>5</sup> BERNASCONI, 'Kant and Blumenbach's Polyyps: A Neglected Chapter in the History of the Concept of Race', in *The German Invention of Race*, eds SARA EIGEN and MARK LARRIMORE (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006), 73–90; BERNASCONI, 'Silencing the Hottentots: Kant's Pre-Racial Encounter with the Hottentots and its Impact on Buffon, Kant, and Rousseau', *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 35, no. 1–2 (2014): 101–24; JORIS VAN GORKOM, 'Skin Color and Phlogiston: Immanuel Kant's Racism in Context', *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences* 42, no. 16 (2020): 1–22; VAN GORKOM, 'The Reddish, Iron-Rust Color of the Native Americans: Immanuel Kant's Racism in Context', *Con-Textos Kantianos* 9 (2019): 154–77; JOHN H. ZAMMITO, 'Policing Polygeneticism in Germany, 1775: (Kames.) Kant and Blumenbach', in *German Invention of Race*, eds EIGEN and LARRIMORE, 35–54; SUSAN MELD SHELL, *The Embodiment of Reason: Kant on Spirit, Generation, and Community* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996); JENNIFER MENSCH, 'Kant and the Skull Collectors: German Anthropology from Blumenbach to Kant', in *Kant and His German Contemporaries*, eds COREY W. DYCK and FALK WUNDERLICH (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 192–210; MENSCH, *Kant's Organicism: Epigenesis and the Development of Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013); MONIKA FIRLA, 'Philosophie und Ethnographie: Kants Verhältnis zu Kultur und Geschichte Afrikas', in *XXV. Deutscher Orientalistentag*, ed. CORNELIA WUNSCH (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1994), 432–42; FIRLA, 'Kants Bild von den Khoi-Khoi (Südafrika)', *Tribus* 43 (1994): 60–94; FIRLA, 'Kants Thesen vom "Nationalcharakter" der Afrikaner, seine Quellen und der nicht vorhandene "Zeitgeist"', *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Wissenschaft und Kunst* 3 (1997): 7–17.

<sup>6</sup> MONIKA FIRLA, *Untersuchungen zum Verhältnis von Anthropologie und Moralphilosophie bei Kant* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1981); ALEX SUTTER, 'Kant und die "Wilden": zum impliziten Rassismus in der Kantischen Geschichtsphilosophie', *Prima Philosophia* 2 (1989): 241–65; KURT RÖTTGERS, 'Kants Zigeuner', *Kant-Studien* 88, no. 1 (1997): 60–86; CATHERINE WILSON, 'Savagery and the Supersensible: Kant's Universalism in Historical Context', *History of European Ideas* 24, no. 4–5 (1998): 315–30; TODD HEDRICK, 'Race, Difference, and Anthropology in Kant's Cosmopolitanism', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 46, no. 2 (2008): 245–68; PAULINE KLEINGELD, *Kant and Cosmopolitanism: The Philosophical Idea of World Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 92–123; BERNASCONI, 'Kant and the Distinction between Nature and Culture: Its Role in Recent Defenses of His Cosmopolitanism', *Eco-Ethica* 3 (2014): 23–38; J. K. GANI, 'The Erasure of Race: Cosmopolitanism and the Illusion of Kantian Hospitality', *Millennium* 45, no. 3 (2017): 425–46; LUCY ALLAIS, 'Kant's Racism', *Philosophical Papers* 45, no. 1–2 (2016): 1–36; ELVIRA BASEVICH, 'Reckoning with Kant on Race', *Philosophical Forum* 51, no. 3 (2020): 221–45; CHARLES W. MILLS, 'Black Radical Kantianism', *Res Philosophica* 95, no. 1 (2018): 1–33; LU-ADLER, *Kant, Race, and Racism*, 43–54.

-isms,<sup>7</sup> contagious with respect to his philosophy? Can one excise his texts on race;<sup>8</sup> passages of his anthropology and geography; some lecture transcripts of his students, *Reflexionen*,<sup>9</sup> other ephemera, etc., in order to 'save' the later Kant of the *Groundwork*, the critiques, and other monuments of the Western canon?<sup>10</sup> Or can one, somehow, still make use of Kant's lectures and writings on anthropology, without lapsing into apologetics for the racism that they disproportionately contain?<sup>11</sup> Does Kant's racism vitiate his contributions in those areas? His entire corpus? As our students might ask: 'Is Kant cancelled?'<sup>12</sup>

Many philosophers drive this line of questioning to one or another equally ahistorical end. The irate Scylla insists that Kant's racism was a durable aspect of his thought with far-reaching connections to other aspects that cannot be 'purified' by quarantining it from the rest of his corpus. The pious Charybdis plumbs details for exculpatory historical context: 'only a product of his time' arguments, or delicate reconstructions of Kant's thought which portray him as distancing himself from his racism (without, however, disavowing it nor stopping the republication of his racist texts). I see stronger arguments on the side of Scylla. But I venture that, if we prioritise the contemporary and local cultural context where Kant acquired and expressed his racism, rather

<sup>7</sup> I will examine the convergence of sexism and racism, showing that it would be artificial to divide them too neatly, as their functions in his discourse on human nature intersect. That said, each bias also merits study in its own right, as it illuminates a particular set of his assumptions. For a prescient intersectional critique, see DAVID L. CLARK, 'Kant's Aliens: The *Anthropology* and its Others', *CR: The New Centennial Review* 1, no. 2 (2001): 201–80.

<sup>8</sup> Collected and translated in MIKKEISEN, *Kant and the Concept of Race*.

<sup>9</sup> Particularly #1520, where Kant offers a typology of racial characters, insisting that '[Whites] are the only ones who continuously make progress in their entirety' and that 'all will be exterminated [...], except for the Whites' (KANT, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. ROYAL PRUSSIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, 29 vols, vol. 15, *Anthropologie*, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1928, 878). See MARK LARRIMORE, 'Sublime Waste: Kant on the Destiny of the "Races"', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 29, suppl. 1 (1999): 99–125 (114–15, 118–21). (Compare the critical edition of Kant's anthropology lectures, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 25, *Vorlesungen über Anthropologie*, eds REINHART BRANDT and WERNER STARK, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997, 840.)

<sup>10</sup> For key distillations of these issues, see BERNASCONI, 'Will the Real Kant Please Stand Up?', *Radical Philosophy* 117 (2003): 13–22; BERNASCONI, 'Kant's Third Thoughts on Race'.

<sup>11</sup> ROBERT B. LOUDEN, *Kant's Impure Ethics: From Rational Beings to Human Beings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 98–103, is an instructive example of the problems which can arise from acknowledging Kant's racism while trying to partition it from his philosophy. On one hand, it is impossible for Kant to be racist (as defined at note 1 above), because he defined race only by skin colour (98). On the other, he did not, and he clearly was racist (98–103.) On one hand, Kant's racial theory is 'fairly tame' (98), or even anti-racist, because it is mono- and not poly-genetic. On the other, what Kant in fact said about race is 'not nearly as tame'. This self-contradiction is not itself explained.

<sup>12</sup> This study is a companion piece to a more constructive and comparative use of Kant's anthropology. On how I struggled with his racism by publishing two antagonistic essays, and reflecting their antagonism in rabbinic sources, see JAMES ADAM REDFIELD, 'Pragmatic Points of View: Kant and the Rabbis, Together Again', in *Talmud / and / Philosophy*, eds SERGEY DOLGOPOLSKI and JAMES ADAM REDFIELD (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2024), 112–54 (115–17). For feedback on these papers, I would like to thank Bruce Rosenstock (OBM); respondent Naveed Mansoori and other colleagues in the 'Incapacitations' working group at Princeton (2022–2023); and my colleagues in the weekly seminar of the Cornell Society for the Humanities (2019–2020).

than Kant himself, we can avoid this dichotomy altogether. Rather than the philosophy and legacy of Immanuel Kant, here I situate his racism among competing ethnographic archives in the German Enlightenment; archives which were circulating in the twenty-four years when Kant lectured on anthropology, culminating in his only book on the subject: *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798). In this context, we will see that Kant's views on human nature and human difference were indeed products of his time and place. Yet this focus on context rather than on Kant makes Kant's personal racism more audible, not less, by showing why and how he chose to amplify it.<sup>13</sup> Contextualising Kant's racism historically reveals its sources; its rhetoric; and how it was received.<sup>14</sup> Finally, this will point to new intersections between his racism and his sexism that arose in the same context: lectures where he strove to enliven his 'popular' brand of anthropology with ethnographic titbits.

Building on recent work by Zammito and Mensch,<sup>15</sup> earlier under-cited work by Firla,<sup>16</sup> and going beyond apt but passing remarks that Kant's most virulent racism was self-consciously *unscientific*, directed to a 'popular' student-auditor with 'no interest in the physical aspects' to which he theoretically restricted the *scientific* concept of race,<sup>17</sup> here, I aim to recontextualise Kant's racism by emphasising that, especially in his anthropology lectures, he was acting not as a scientist, nor only as a natural philosopher, but as a provincial Prussian pedagogue. Addressing an audience with limited and rather coarse tastes, his anthropology spawned an *ad hoc* catalogue of human types, and was born from an *ad hoc* archive: a vast cabinet of curiosities that is still gathering dust in studies of his thought.

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<sup>13</sup> Contra, e.g., MARIE RISCHMÜLLER, 'Einleitung', in KANT, *Bemerkungen in den »Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen«*, ed. RISCHMÜLLER (1764; Hamburg: Meiner, 1991), xv. See FIRLA, 'Kants Thesen', 16–17 note 109.

<sup>14</sup> As opposed to the approach of, e.g., THOMAS MCCARTHY, *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 26, 47 note 15, 49, and 49 note 20, who posits that Kant's racial theory does not differ 'in substance' between published and unpublished sources, even if most of the 'details' are in the latter. Similarly, McCarthy imagines a dichotomy between 'popular' sources for Kant's 'racist commonplaces', which Kant 'largely repeated', and their 'reflection' in his racial theory. I emphasise that Kant himself presented his anthropology *as* a 'popular philosophy': both emerging from, and directed to, the same social context as its sources.

<sup>15</sup> JOHN H. ZAMMITO, 'What a Young Man Needs for his Venture into the World: The Function and Evolution of the "Characteristics"', in *Kant's Lectures on Anthropology: A Critical Guide*, ed. ALIX COHEN (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 230–48; JOHN H. ZAMMITO, 'The Forster-Kant Controversy: The Provocations of Interdisciplinarity', in *Klopffechtereien*, eds GODEL and STIENING, 225–43; MENSCH, *Kant's Organicism*; MENSCH, 'Between Character and Race'; MENSCH, 'Kant and the Skull Collectors'. On race in the biological anthropologies of Kant, Herder, and Blumenbach, see JUSTIN E. H. SMITH, *Nature, Human Nature, and Human Difference: Race in Early Modern Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 231–63.

<sup>16</sup> FIRLA, 'Philosophie und Ethnographie'; FIRLA, 'Kants Bild'; FIRLA, 'Kants Thesen'.

<sup>17</sup> KLEINGELD, 'Kant's Second Thoughts', and see notes 4, 13. STARK, 'Historical and Philological References', 96, tries to refrain from asserting whether Kant envisioned a racial hierarchy, but acknowledges that, if he did, it would be in his section on *Charakteristik*. This section, in turn, was based on a section of a 1764 essay advertising his lectures on aesthetics, where he similarly courted 'popular' appeal with racist digressions; see ALLAIS, 'Kant's Racism', 3 note 5.

Gleaning fragments of data from eclectic sources about the world, yet speaking to a small clique of *kleinbürgerliche* Königsberg bachelors, Kant was not only trying to fit his new philosophy of human nature into his evolving philosophical system. He was also admonishing specific auditors to inhabit a specific self-consciousness; to find their own page in his unfolding textbook. In this process of constructing a rhetorical subject for his audience—the ‘we’ behind the Others of Kant’s anthropology—his myriad sources reflect both the presence of competing German ethnographic archives, and a series of frustrated efforts, among both Kant and his contemporaries, to subsume new ethnographic data under abstract anthropological categories.<sup>18</sup>

I argue that Kant’s racism arises at the shakiest junction points between those contradictory aspects of his project. In part, his racism is a symptom of frustration that his ethnographic archive did not fit neatly into his anthropology’s abstract classification of humanity. Racist arguments try vainly to solder the two aspects together by subordinating empirical variation to improvised rules, imposing hierarchies which harmonise the data with his culture’s prejudices. The same can be said for Kant’s answers to questions that were in the air at the time: what might an explosion of new evidence for human variation, such as Cook’s encounters with Tahitians, mean for a Prussian gentleman? Did the ‘discovery’ of alien norms—which Kant quoted second- or third-hand, via not-unbiased Europeans—have any bearing on the sort of man that the auditor of Kant’s anthropology should ‘make of himself’? What role did the varieties of human characters have to play in teaching this lesson? Even as Kant flirted with the desire for new ethnographic archives to play a role in his pedagogy, he resisted them, mingling real curiosity about non-European Others with a racism that doth protest too much; a rhetorical tool of self-containment. In order to open up fresh critiques of that rhetoric and its effects, I first contrast his contemporaries’ uses of the ethnographic archive to theorise human difference. I then critique how Kant himself did so, via both close and intertextual readings of how he changed his most prominent ethnographic source in the *Anthropology* textbook. I end with a glance at a local genealogy of some of his views on human difference (race and

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<sup>18</sup> Since I drafted this article in full (Fall 2019) only to be distracted by a global pandemic and other priorities, one essential study along these lines has appeared that I see as congruent with my thesis: HUAPING LU-ADLER, ‘Kant’s Use of Travel Reports in Theorizing about Race — A Case Study of How Testimony Features in Natural Philosophy’, *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 91 (2022):10–19. (See also SALLY HATCH GRAY, ‘On Specialization and the Dead Eye: Kant’s Race Theory and the Problem of Perception Illustrated in Kleist’s ‘Betrothal in Santo Domingo’’, in *Race Theory and Literature: Dissemination, Criticism, Intersections*, eds PAULINE MORET-JANKUS and ADAM J. TOTH, Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2019, 95–113.) LU-ADLER shows that Kant was so committed to a principled philosophical categorisation (racial difference = skin-colour) that it limited and distorted his reception of competing ethnographies. Her approach to our shared problems in her 2023 book, LU-ADLER, *Kant, Race, and Racism* (focus on Kant’s context as opposed to individualistic critiques or *apologia*; definition of racism as ideology; rejection of ‘contradiction’ between Kant’s racism and moral philosophy; differentiation between racial theories in his work; and anti-racism grounded in a genealogy of Kant’s ideas and their reception) is a potent synthesis of the vital issues.

gender) and an alternative approach to these categories in the same ‘popular’ context as his anthropology—in the writings of his interlocutor, Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel. This contrast further underscores how the intersection of race and gender in Kant was no passive product of his *Zeitgeist*, but resulted from his imposition of hierarchy and teleology, whereas peers were more attentive to contingency and human identity’s social construction. That is, Kant’s own denial of context was not universal.

### **Ethnographic Methods and Archives in the German Enlightenment**

We begin with a glance at the term ‘ethnography’ and competing ethnographic paradigms in the German Enlightenment. This survey will point to an essential tension between the empirical (ethnography) and the theoretical (anthropology) in this emerging field of knowledge. Recognising that both terms are anachronistic in this context—mere shorthand for what was a more complex and rapidly shifting boundary between empirical and theoretical knowledge of humanity—they render my historical critique translatable, which should prompt contemporary scholars of human sciences to question the roots of their own disciplines and thereby, I hope, justify the anachronism.<sup>19</sup>

With that qualification in mind, our first question becomes: how did representative figures of distinct approaches to the novel field of anthropology—Schlözer, Herder, Blumenbach, and Kant—use what we now call ethnographic material: travelogue, anecdote, artifact, skull? How did they integrate this empirical evidence for human variation into their theories of the human? How did ethnography pose a problem for each of their anthropologies? Kant’s context thus sets the scene for the new way in which his ‘pragmatic’ anthropology responded to those timely questions. And it shows how the racist reflexes whereby he tried to contain ethnographic data were, in turn, a response to alternative strategies for ordering human variation among his contemporaries.

#### *Schlözer’s Ethnographie and the Tables of Universal History*

As Vermeulen has demonstrated, the term ‘ethnography’ (*ethnos* + *graphie*) is a scientific neologism of the late eighteenth century.<sup>20</sup> At the time, this term combined and competed with others, largely forgotten, in a struggle which shaped its enduring meanings. *Ethnographia* was coined in a German history of Swabia (1767) and rendered as German *Ethnographie* in a review of the book that same year, without comment. It began as a synonym for ‘description of a people’ or ‘peoples’ (*Volks-Beschreibung*, *Völker-Beschreibung*),<sup>21</sup> terms which went back to the historian and explorer of Siberia, Gerhard

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<sup>19</sup> On this issue, see JAMES ADAM REDFIELD, ‘Ethnography in Antiquity’, *Oxford Bibliographies in Anthropology*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199766567-0214>, accessed 15 September 2024.

<sup>20</sup> HAN F. VERMEULEN, *Before Boas: The Genesis of Ethnography and Ethnology in the German Enlightenment* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015).

<sup>21</sup> VERMEULEN, *Before Boas*, 277–78.

Friedrich Müller (1740).<sup>22</sup> That, as a synonym for *Volks-/Völkerbeschreibung*, is how *Ethnographie* soon surfaced in a German dictionary (1811).<sup>23</sup>

Dictionaries would quarantine *Ethnographie* in appendices on foreign words until as late as 1823,<sup>24</sup> but it quickly gained traction in scientific circles. Just four years after it was coined (1771), the polyglot polymath August Ludwig Schlözer, who had lived and worked with G. F. Müller, laid out a 'synthetic schema of the universal history of peoples' that included his new 'ethnographic' (*ethnographisch*) method. Whereas Schlözer's other methods of universal history (chronological; technological; geographical) had taken as their objects, respectively, the sum of events in a given period; the fruits of material progress; and the earth, Schlözer distinguished his new 'ethnographic' method by its singular focus on the 'people' [*Volk*]. Schlözer demarcated this new object of history in broad brushstrokes: 'more or less arbitrary similarities that are agreed upon by a particular group of people'.<sup>25</sup> He proceeded to exemplify this historical method by, first, distinguishing the peoples of the world and, second, summarising each epoch of their histories. For instance, after extolling the virtues of 'the Hebrews', such as their laws and a state that would (in the days of David and Solomon) have dwarfed Prussia, he divided their history into periods of equal length (450 years each of tribalism; democracy; and monarchy), followed by irregular periods of foreign domination and diaspora.<sup>26</sup> (Schlözer had a knack for new terms: he was also an early adopter of 'ethnology' [*Ethnologie*] as a scientific name for 'folklore' [*Volks-/Völkerkunde*],<sup>27</sup> and has the dubious distinction of coining the term 'Semitic languages'.<sup>28</sup>)

<sup>22</sup> On the transmission of terms among Müller, Schlözer, and contemporaries, see VERMEULEN, *Before Boas*, 281.

<sup>23</sup> Under *volksbeschreibend*, the entry in JOACHIM HEINRICH CAMPE, *Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache*, 5 vols, vol. 5 (Braunschweig: Schulbuchhandlung, 1811), 434, reads as follows (parenthetical insertions in original): '*volksbeschreibend*, adj. Describing a people according to its heritage, its physical and spiritual qualities, the constitution of its mores [*Sitten*], etc.; *völkerbeschreibend*, describing multiple peoples in such a way (*ethnographisch*); so, too, the *Volksbeschreiber* and *Völkerbeschreiber*, who describes one or multiple peoples in such a way (*Ethnograph*) and *Volksbeschreibung* and *Völkerbeschreibung* (Moerbeek), this sort of description of one or multiple peoples (*Ethnographie*'. For Campe's definition of *Völkerbeschreibung*, he seems to draw from the fourth edition of MATTHIAS KRAMER, *Neues Deutsch-Holländisches Wörterbuch*, ed. ADAM ABRAHAMUS VAN MOERBEEK (Leipzig: Junius, 1787), 525 (where it was defined, however, simply as 'description of peoples'. It did not appear in the third edition of Moerbeek's *Wörterbuch*, published in 1768.)

<sup>24</sup> JOACHIM HEINRICH CAMPE, *Wörterbuch zur Erklärung und Verdeutschung der unserer Sprache aufgedrungenen fremden Ausdrücke*, 2nd ed. (Braunschweig: Schulbuchhandlung, 1813); FRIEDRICH ERDMANN PETRI, *Gedrängtes Handbuch der Fremdwörter in deutscher Schrift- und Umgangs-Sprache* (Dresden: Arnoldischen Buchhandlung, 1823).

<sup>25</sup> AUGUST LUDWIG SCHLÖZER, *Vorstellung seiner Universal-Historie*, 2 vols, vol. 1 (Göttingen: Johann David Dieterich, 1772), 99. This first part of the work had circulated in preprint in 1771: see JUSTIN STAGL, 'Rationalism and Irrationalism in Early German Ethnology: The Controversy between Schlözer and Herder, 1772/73', *Anthropos* 93 (1998): 521–36 (522 note 7).

<sup>26</sup> SCHLÖZER, *Vorstellung*, 123–25.

<sup>27</sup> VERMEULEN, *Before Boas*, 295–314.

<sup>28</sup> VERMEULEN, *Before Boas*, 282. On its reception see MAURICE OLENDER, *The Languages of Paradise: Race, Religion, and Philology in the Nineteenth Century*, transl. ARTHUR GOLDHAMMER (Cambridge: Harvard University



Schlözer's definition of *ethnographisch* was enshrined in subsequent lexica. As opposed to 'synchronistic' history, which depicts events as they affect *all* peoples of a given time-period, *ethnographisch* was defined as a method of recounting the entire history of one people in a given period. Ethnographic history, as in Herodotus and later Greco-Roman traditions,<sup>29</sup> was a way to 'narrate, rearrange, represent' the world in relation to peoples,<sup>30</sup> rather than in relation to eras; things; or places. *Ethnographie* was born as a method of history which selects typical aspects of peoples in order to study them in their totality. This holistic but selective way to define a 'people', and totalising way to analyse it, would prove durable—even when ethnography parted from history.

From the origins of *Ethnographie*, in fact, there was a lively debate on this method's role in the sciences. Was ethnography only a method of writing history, or could it also belong to the other sciences? This question was bound up with further questions about the infant science of *Anthropologie*.<sup>31</sup> What was the object of anthropology? How could ethnographic methods—however they might be defined—play a role in the new science? On those questions, three formative figures in German anthropology (Herder; Blumenbach; and Kant) staked out very different positions. Their ethnographic evidence supported very different anthropologies, each of which, in turn, implied a different concept of ethnographic method. As this bond between method and theory developed, their relatively new common object of inquiry, the human, was redefined not only in world-historical but also in *poetic*; *physical*; and *pragmatic* terms.

*Herder's Poetic hodopaideia: Language, Travel, Poetry*

In the *Sturm und Drang* decade (1770–1780), Kant's student Herder found himself in an odd position as the senior member of a junior movement. A traveller-turned-clergyman without a foothold in the university system, confined to the town of Bückeburg, he was suspended awkwardly between camps as he struggled to articulate his vision of human history, language, art, and anthropology. In the breakthrough publication of the *Sturm und Drang* (1772), he took up his pen in a short review of Schlözer's *Universal History* that would have longstanding consequences for his career and for his concept of ethnographic method.<sup>32</sup>

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Press, 1992).

<sup>29</sup> See REDFIELD, 'Ethnography in Antiquity', §General Overviews, for sources and discussion of this genealogy.

<sup>30</sup> CAMPE, *Wörterbuch zur Erklärung und Verdeutschung der unserer Sprache*, 296.

<sup>31</sup> The term *Anthropologium* for a work on humanity by a German author goes back as far as Magnus Hundt (1501); GUDRUN DIEM, 'Deutsche Schulanthropologie', in *De Homine: Der Mensch im Spiegel seines Gedankens*, ed. MICHAEL LANDMANN (Freiburg: Alber, 1962), 357–419 (360). However, *Anthropologie* was not taught as a distinct subject until Kant (1772).

<sup>32</sup> JOHANN GOTTFRIED HERDER, review of SCHLÖZER, *Vorstellung seiner Universal-Historie*, vol. 1, *Frankfurter gelehrte Anzeigen* 60 (28 July 1772): 473–78 (published anonymously). Citations are translated from the scanned original, available at <https://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.27329#0487>, accessed 15 September 2024.

Herder's criticism of Schlözer's new 'ethnographic' method of history was simple: it is one thing to display history, quite another to actually describe it. Whether one organises history into a 'synchronistic' or 'ethnographic' schema—terms of which Herder feigned equally mocking incomprehension—it remains no more than a schema. Herder's prime target was not simply the content of Schlözer's history but its form: a *table* which purported to represent phenomena while, in fact, merely presenting them in a crudely reduced and haphazard aggregation. As he said:

That little fable about the fox who dragged his tail to cover his tracks is so well known, and behind everything that Herr Schlötzer [*sic*] here claims as his own—the spirit, plan, or ideal of history; treating all history as a great whole ('synchronistically', 'ethnographically', and other such hard words, for which we cast about in vain for a whetstone [to sharpen their meaning]<sup>33</sup>)—has already, in fact, largely been accomplished—and not even by way of advice, command, or suggestion, but rather (and this is much harder, hence, less flashy) by way of generally 'failed attempts'.

So shouldn't it be easy [...] to show [...] that the true ground-clearing for all ancient history is still lacking? That the coordinates for a synthesis—once one grasps them—grow heavier than they appear in a table, and that the prospect of an *aggregation* of many individual histories all too often produces a hodgepodge of parts which will not hold together but instead dissolve and collapse?<sup>34</sup>

Herder's polemic against the 'ethnographic' method of Universal History was not against 'the people' as a new unit of analysis—a term that he would vigorously adopt—but against the lack of nuance and false equivalences between peoples that resulted from inserting them into a single comprehensive table. It was just as much a polemic against Enlightenment science, from which Schlözer took his use of the table; specifically, against the zoological and botanical tables of Linnaeus, in which 'knowledge of empirical individuals can only be reached through a continuous, ordered, and universal table of all possible differences between them'.<sup>35</sup> For Herder, what was at stake in history was the *particularity* of human beings and groups, not only their theoretical comparability. Herder could have seen Schlözer's invention of ethno-history as a step in the right direction, towards a finer appreciation of differences, both within and between peoples. Instead, he rejected its schematism and lambasted it as a mere 'aping of Linnaeus'. He concluded:

Furthermore, is it really so that everything can be demonstrated by this table? Nothing too bold? Nothing due to precious chance? The creation of the earth! The era of obelisks and pyramids in Egypt! Are the Hebrews, together with the Parsis [*Gauren*],<sup>36</sup> the only people

<sup>33</sup> My conjectural gloss of this idiom ['Worte, für die wir hie und da keinen Schleifstein wissen'] added in brackets.

<sup>34</sup> HERDER, review of SCHLÖZER, *Vorstellung seiner Universal-Historie*, 475–76.

<sup>35</sup> MICHEL FOUCAULT, *Les mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 157.

<sup>36</sup> STAGL, 'Rationalism and Irrationalism', 530, misses the reference to Parsis—not just Hebrews—as a stateless people.

whose laws and customs have survived its state? [...] Isn't it all too artificial to have the Pope as High Priest, Bishop, Patriarch, Head Patriarch, and Dalai Lama—among other places where this aping of Linnaeus rears its head, and ten more besides?<sup>37</sup>

Herder countered Schlözer's 'ethnographic' method of universal history with an eclectic approach to tracing cultural particularities. This approach took as its model, not the table of possible differences between peoples, but the language of each people as a unique and essential index of their spirit. Herder further promoted a novel method to gather such evidence when he argued that travel, properly conducted, could be a valid source for the study of humanity. He had already reflected on language as a model for studying humanity in *Fragments on Recent German Literature* (1767–1768), where he hoped that 'a man of *philology*, historical knowledge, and taste' would investigate words for core domains of life, such as honour and virtue, in order to unlock 'the secret of the nation'.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, in correspondence during his own journey from Riga to France (1769), he acknowledged that travel had planted a seed in him that he would harvest richly later.<sup>39</sup>

In fact, in a typically confused and grandiose passage of this travelogue,<sup>40</sup> he had fantasised about a curriculum for his future students that will extend prior studies of the earth's physical geography to the study of humanity. This anthropology (what he called, in a pre-Kantian sense, the 'natural history' of mankind), would in effect plot human beings onto the map of nature. Excluding their political organisation (perhaps a synecdoche for all *non*-natural features of humanity), Herder proposed that a natural historian of humanity would gather the main features of each group (appearance; clothing; lifestyle; mores; institutions; conditions), in order to assess 'to what extent everything in them forms or does not form a whole'. He seems to have imagined that human groups (their political boundaries erased) would surface on the globe like anthropological continents, bounded and brought into relief by what Schlözer, as we saw, termed 'ethnographic' features ('more or less arbitrary similarities that are agreed upon by a group'.) To bring out those shared features, Herder added, 'stories and pictures will help; all geography will become a collection of pictures.'<sup>41</sup> Little reflection, and none of it enforced; no characterisation of

<sup>37</sup> JOHANN GOTTFRIED HERDER, review of SCHLÖZER, *Vorstellung seiner Universal-Historie*, 478.

<sup>38</sup> JOHANN GOTTFRIED HERDER, 'Fragments on Recent German Literature', in HERDER, *Philosophical Writings*, transl. and ed. MICHAEL N. FORSTER (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 33–64 (47). Emphasis in original. Here, too, Herder counselled travel among 'savage' peoples, praising 'the useful work of [Antoine Yves] Goguet, who has collected all the passages' about their condition, which he takes as evidence for the original condition of humanity (59).

<sup>39</sup> Even if, during his actual journey to France, he wrote on India and the East; immersed himself in French literature out of disdain for actual Frenchmen; and did not record his observations as a methodical ethnographer but as a vague, spasmodic, rather jaded outsider. See the introduction to JOHANN GOTTFRIED HERDER, *Journal of my Travels in the Year 1769*, transl. and ed. JOHN F. HARRISON (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1952), 5–205 (49–57). Herder praised travel literature (*Journal*, 235–37; 260) and language as a key to knowing a culture (*Journal*, 242).

<sup>40</sup> HERDER, *Journal*, transl. HARRISON, 261–63.

<sup>41</sup> He pointed to Picart as his model: 'What Picart is for religion alone, this will be for everything!' (263). See

peoples or lands [*Charakteristik*],<sup>42</sup> but facts, stories'. The ultimate payoff of this approach, Herder imagined, would not be purely intellectual, but moral: studying humans should foster greater openness to humanity as such. He went on:

Then the youth will learn to look beyond his own little corner of the world; he will learn humanity, not to despise or mock anything blindly, but to get to know everything—and either to enjoy his own situation or to seek a better one for himself. A great study! Who will become weary of it?

In this cosmopolitan goal, one shared by Kant, Herder's ethnography was not distinctive. Yet as a method, what distinguishes his ethnography in this early work is precisely its rejection *of* method. There shall be no method, he insists, but only 'facts, stories'. Similarly, extending his reverie from the natural history of humanity to human history itself, Herder rejected Gatterer's methods and envisioned the epitome of universal history that he would cull from all prior collections: an 'instructive, concrete history of the human race, full of phenomena and facts'.<sup>43</sup> His sources of ethnographic and historical studies might come from anywhere, and his approach to the distinctive status of ethnographic evidence was rather vague.

With his essay *On the Origin of Language*, published the same year as his critique of Schlözer (1772), Herder began to develop a robust idea of ethnography, centred around language and travel.<sup>44</sup> There, he argued that language was not divine but human in origin, as the variety and mutual incomprehensibility of human languages must be a product of natural growth and change rather than design. Therefore, we can use language as the key to the unfolding of the human spirit in various conditions—rather than assimilating these differences to a deterministic origin; claiming that they are merely superficial; or resorting to analogies with the animal kingdom. Differences between languages thus become differences between aspects of humanity ('human nature—in all its parts a texture for lan-

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Picart's illustrations of Jean-Frédéric Bernard's *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde* (1723–42) at <https://digital.library.ucla.edu/catalog/ark:/21198/zz0002gx8m>.

<sup>42</sup> 'Of peoples or lands' is the translator's silent gloss by Harrison, in HERDER, *Journal*, 263. By this term, however, Herder may already refer to his teacher Kant's method of *Charakteristik*, which analyses human beings according to general characteristics, including sex; race; and nation. For the debate on when Kant first employed this method in his Anthropology course (1772–1781?) see ROBERT B. LOUDEN, 'Translator's Introduction', in IMMANUEL KANT, *Lectures on Anthropology*, eds ALLEN WOOD and ROBERT B. LOUDEN (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 283–87 (286).

<sup>43</sup> HERDER, *Journal*, transl. HARRISON, 268.

<sup>44</sup> An unsystematic thinker, who did not devote any writings to the term *Ethnographie* (though he did coin the durable term *Naturvölker*), Herder's idea of ethnography is tricky to reconstruct. See PETER HALLBERG, 'Johann Gottfried Herder on European Ethnographic Representation', *Intellectual History Review* 26, no. 4 (2016): 497–517. On Herder as anthropologist, see JOHN ZAMMITO, *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 309–45; ANIK WALDOW and NIGEL DESOUZA, eds, *Herder: Philosophy and Anthropology* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017); NICHOLAS A. GERMANA, 'Herder's India: The "Morgenland" in Mythology and Anthropology', in *The Anthropology of the Enlightenment*, eds LARRY WOLFF and MARCO CIPOLLONI (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 119–40; KARL J. FINK, 'Storm and Stress Anthropology', *History of the Human Sciences* 6, no. 1 (1993): 51–71 (54–57).

guage!'),<sup>45</sup> inviting comparison and mutual illumination. As each language adapts to its speakers' needs, it also attests to the course of their inner development. The study of language is the study of human spirit over time.

In his later attempt at a universal history, Herder synthesised his survey of the world's peoples on the same note: language alone 'renders a history of mankind, in transmitted modifications of heart and mind, possible'.<sup>46</sup> As for the method with which to collect these observations of the human spirit—whether in language or in other forms—Herder continued to advocate *travel* as a source, so long as it was properly constrained and guided. While he did not discuss or use the term *Ethnographie* for his own method, he did propose a *bodopaideia* (Herder writes *bodopaedia*), or 'education in traveling', that one could extract from the better travelogues and use as a canon for further inquiry. In travel, he hoped, one might seek 'first principles concerning how human beings and animals should be considered and treated'.<sup>47</sup> Central to *bodopaideia*, like the relativism of later ethnographers, was a suspension of hierarchy between observer and observed: 'A describer of travels ought actually to have no exclusive fatherland'.<sup>48</sup> Herder was not so naïve as to imagine that travellers could approach foreign lands and peoples without a trace of self-interest, even bias: 'The base person seeks bad company, and of course among a hundred nations one will be found there that favours *his* prejudice, that nourishes *his* delusion'.<sup>49</sup> But he hoped that they might draw from their own subjectivity in order to access something deeper, more poetic, than a catalogue of humans as specimens of natural history. Equipped with *bodopaideia* ('a pure eye and in their breast universal natural and human sensitivity'), one could draw from 'the inner content of the travel describers themselves' and savour the full range of human experience—redeeming apparently inferior aspects of other peoples by discerning their originally good principles of organisation. He hoped that ethnography would thus be a spiritual balm, not only for the traveller, but also for his own people: a 'distracted flock of readers who do not know right from left'.<sup>50</sup> In sum, the method, object, and *telos* of Herder's ethnography (*bodopaideia*) were structured by poetic principles. Replacing Schlözer's schematic history-of-nations with the ear of an erratic muse, he kept faith with the ideal of progress, yet redefined progress in terms of a bond between the poet and the folk.

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<sup>45</sup> JOHANN GOTTFRIED HERDER, 'Essay on the Origin of Language', in *On the Origin of Language*, transl. and ed. JOHN H. MORAN and ALEXANDER GODE (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), 87–166 (147).

<sup>46</sup> JOHANN GOTTFRIED HERDER, *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, transl. T. CHURCHILL (London: for J. Johnson by Luke Hansard, 1800), 234.

<sup>47</sup> JOHANN GOTTFRIED HERDER, 'Letters for the Advancement of Humanity (1793–7) – Tenth Collection', in HERDER, *Philosophical Writings*, ed. FORSTER, 380–424 (397 note w). Herder here cites Georg Forster, another key figure in German anthropology of this period, as a travel writer of exemplary sensitivity.

<sup>48</sup> HERDER, 'Letters', 397 note w.

<sup>49</sup> HERDER, 'Letters', 397.

<sup>50</sup> HERDER, 'Letters', 397.

*Blumenbach's Physical Anthropology*

While Johann Friedrich Blumenbach is known as the first modern physical anthropologist, his work on comparative anatomy also shows a lively interest in ethnographic evidence; its function in his work is understudied.<sup>51</sup> Beyond his extensive collection of skulls and *dissecta membra*,<sup>52</sup> Blumenbach was also an avid collector of ethnographic materials. His dissertation *On the Natural Variety of Mankind* (1775) engaged, for instance, up-to-date literature on the figure of the 'wild child';<sup>53</sup> a rumour that some Indian women have sex with apes (of course they don't);<sup>54</sup> legends about giant Patagonians;<sup>55</sup> the affective qualities of each racial countenance (like the eyes of Jews, which 'breathe of the east');<sup>56</sup> diverse literature on haircuts, fingernails, circumcision, castration, tattooing, teeth-sharpening, and penis-stretching, drawn from both ancient and modern travellers, scientists, and more.<sup>57</sup> Particularly relevant in this context are Blumenbach's detailed discussion of leprosy-like skin diseases and 'albinos', where he again drew on many travellers' observations, and considered the hypothesis that the symptoms are influenced by typical *practices* of certain regions (it cannot be poor hygiene, as the disease afflicts members of royal courts in Africa, India, and Indonesia; nor need it lead to cognitive decline, as one sufferer from Malabar was a skilled poet—here we see ethnography surface as a tool of biological explanation).<sup>58</sup> Yet for all its variety, Blumenbach's use of ethnographic materials always supported his basic anthropological thesis: humankind is one, not many. Its rich variety should not mislead us to misplace any human among the beasts or to posit multiple anthropoid species.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Often, Blumenbach is presented merely as an anatomist, yet he relied heavily—and increasingly—on ethnographic material to contextualise, test, and draw inferences from anatomical evidence. See JOHN H. ZAMMITO, *The Gestation of German Biology: Philosophy and Physiology from Stahl to Schelling* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018), 198–99 and 206. Medical 'anthropologists' like Ernst Platner were actually more like anatomists of the time than this founding physical anthropologist; see ZAMMITO, *Birth of Anthropology*, 221–253.

<sup>52</sup> MICHAEL SCHULZ, 'The Blumenbach Collection of Human Skulls', YouTube video, Universität Göttingen, <https://youtu.be/Z5g6w6sXyQ?si=9j0LZ5VweIOXpSTC>. Blumenbach's collection of skulls also included, e.g., human busts and organs. For the catalogue of Blumenbach's library at auction in 1840, see <http://resolver.sub.uni-goettingen.de/purl?PPN504849050>; for an excellent Blumenbach site, see <https://blumenbach-online.de/Einzelseiten/Blumenbach.php>, accessed 15 September 2024. See MENSCH, 'Kant and the Skull Collectors'.

<sup>53</sup> JOHANN FRIEDRICH BLUMENBACH, 'On the Natural Variety of Mankind', in *The Anthropological Treatises of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach*, ed. and transl. THOMAS BENDYSHE (London: Longman, 1865), 65–143 (89; 129). Blumenbach devoted a separate essay to the 'wild child' in the second part of his 'Contributions to Natural History' (1811); in BLUMENBACH, *Anthropological Treatises*, 329–40.

<sup>54</sup> BLUMENBACH, 'On the Natural Variety of Mankind', 80–81; citing the early-seventeenth-century Dutch traveller, Jacobus Bontius.

<sup>55</sup> BLUMENBACH, 'On the Natural Variety of Mankind', 104–105.

<sup>56</sup> BLUMENBACH, 'On the Natural Variety of Mankind', 122.

<sup>57</sup> BLUMENBACH, 'On the Natural Variety of Mankind', 126–129.

<sup>58</sup> BLUMENBACH, 'On the Natural Variety of Mankind', 133–140.

<sup>59</sup> BLUMENBACH, 'On the Natural Variety of Mankind', 98, 140, and *passim*.

Despite this essentially physical definition of the basic object of anthropological knowledge, we are still faced with the fact that, already in this early work, Blumenbach's use of varied ethnographic materials (ancient authors, anecdotes, and travelogues) went far in excess of what he needed to demonstrate that point. Those excesses reflect not only his personal curiosity, but his early reflections on ethnography as a method. He protested repeatedly that he must stop distracting the reader from his argument for mankind's inner unity by cataloguing its deformities—verging on monstrosities—including tales of cretinism, and the Italian boy with horny black skin, not to mention 'centaurs, sirens, cynocephali, satyrs, pigmies, giants, hermaphrodites, and other idle creatures of that kind'.<sup>60</sup> Yet they are methodologically significant: why mention all these aberrations, if not to carve out a niche for ethnographic sources within the new science of physical anthropology?

This ambition is clear in his conclusion to the book where, rather than restate his anthropological thesis of the unity of mankind, Blumenbach embarked on a final digression about men with tails and African women with inverted labia. Both reports, he insisted, are pure fiction; mere fantasies of travel writers, where they were already becoming widely diffused racist tropes.<sup>61</sup> But here, unlike his prior digressions on ethnography, he took another step: he proposed criteria for evaluating ethnographic materials as evidence in physical anthropology. Such accounts are not credible, he insisted, because their authors either 'bear no very good reputation' or 'depend on the accounts of others'. Further, he argued, we can reconstruct the gradual corruption of their sources to show how, in the first place, an image of an ape was corrupted into that of a man with a tail, or an elongated coccyx was blown out of proportion; and, second, how 'the pendulosity of the labia seems to have imposed upon the older travellers'.<sup>62</sup> This digression, a gallery of stock racist images, might seem an odd note on which to conclude the inaugural dissertation on physical anthropology. But perhaps precisely because he knew that he had run up against the ragged seam between fantasy and science, it inspired Blumenbach's early attempt to integrate ethnography into anthropology, via his new criteria for evaluating and integrating ethnographic evidence. If travellers' accounts or ancient authors were to serve anthropological science as more than mere curiosities, their sources would need to be critically scrutinised, as well as compared with direct observations of nature. In the course of his career, Blumenbach would develop his

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<sup>60</sup> BLUMENBACH, 'On the Natural Variety of Mankind', 141.

<sup>61</sup> See ZOË S. STROTHER, 'Display of the Body Hottentot', in *Africans on Stage: Studies in Ethnological Show Business*, ed. BERNTH LINDFORS (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 1–61 (21); JENNIFER L. MORGAN, 'Some Could Suckle over Their Shoulder': Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology, 1500–1770', *William & Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (1997): 167–92; SILVIA SEBASTIANI, 'Monboddos's 'Ugly Tail': The Question of Evidence in Enlightenment Sciences of Man', *History of European Ideas* 48, no. 1 (2022): 45–65 (51–54, and 54 on the fantasy of human cross-breeding with apes, which was equally rejected by Blumenbach).

<sup>62</sup> BLUMENBACH, 'On the Natural Variety of Mankind', 142–43.

reflections along those lines: ethnographic evidence is even more varied and prominent in later editions of this work and his later treatises.<sup>63</sup>

*The Problem of Ethnography for Kant's 'Pragmatic Point of View'*

As we have seen so far, for the German Enlightenment contemporaries of Kant who—unlike Kant—had a lasting impact on what we call anthropology today, ethnographic evidence was useful in different ways. For Blumenbach, the physical anthropologist, it was a means to prove human biological unity and map its variations, countering a merely anatomical view of human difference. For the world-historian Schlözer, it was a new way to organise an inquiry by taking the totality of the life of a nation, with all its vicissitudes over time, as the lens through which to shape a narrative. For Herder, it was the very essence of anthropology: both art and substance of what it is to know humanity. Through ethnography's experience and expression in the mode of travel or poetry, one could disclose the universal human spirit and its irreducibly singular manifestations in individuals—starting with oneself. Whatever disagreements these thinkers had with one another about the science and method that we now call anthropology and ethnography (and, as we saw in the case of Herder and Schlözer, they had many), the utility of ethnographic knowledge was not up for debate.

For Kant, by contrast, ethnography was not a natural or easy accessory to anthropology.<sup>64</sup> On the contrary, he allowed only partial appeals to ethnography as a means to his systematic end—a theory of humanity—and denied it methodological status. Further, because Kant did not envision anthropology as a physical, historical, or spiritual discipline, but as the study of humanity in terms of prudence and practical ('pragmatic') reason, not all ethnographic material was useful for him. He did use travel accounts, anecdotes, and other ethnography as sources from which to glean and refine his portraits

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<sup>63</sup> In the work's third edition (1795), many of the same passages cited above are supplemented by more detailed criteria for evaluating ethnographic evidence (BLUMENBACH, *Anthropological Treatises*, 244–46, 258–59, 272–73). Blumenbach added more explicit reflections on method (e.g., the notion of 'good observers', 251); and privileged the evidence of 'eye-witnesses' (over that of texts) as to whether or not the peoples of the world follow a certain practice (241). In a later treatise ('Contributions to Natural History, Part I', 1811, in BLUMENBACH, *Anthropological Treatises*, 281–324), he again concluded with an ethnographic excursus, this time on Africans and a certain kind of 'albino'. Here, his use of ethnographic evidence was even more radical. To support his thesis that the two groups must be part of a single human species, and not an inferior one, he recalled his personal encounter with a 'creole' woman who—if not for her skin-colour—would have had to be considered universally attractive; 'just as Le Maire says in his travels [...] that there are negresses [*sic*], who, abstraction being made of the colour, are as well formed as our European ladies' (BLUMENBACH, *Anthropological Treatises*, 307). Here, for a moment, the physical anthropologist is himself embodied: his desire becomes a factor in his racial theory. On a similar disturbing note, BLUMENBACH is said to have 'fallen in love' with one of the Caucasian skulls in his collection; see SCHULZ, 'The Blumenbach Collection of Human Skulls', 4:26.

<sup>64</sup> See ZAMMITO, *Birth of Anthropology*, 242–53; THOMAS STURM, *Kant und die Wissenschaften vom Menschen* (Paderborn: Mentis, 2009), 261–91; LU-ADLER, 'Travel Reports'; GRAY, 'Dead Eye'.



of human character. He did consider how to arrange and evaluate such sources.<sup>65</sup> However, he also repeatedly warned against straying so far into ethnography that mere description substituted for the philosophy of human nature. A patient search for the norms and regularities of human thought and conduct, neither mere particulars nor absolute universals, was his approach.<sup>66</sup>

Kant's split between ethnography and anthropology is clear in his acrid review of Herder's *Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of Humanity* (1785), published under a thin veil of anonymity that year. Kant targeted Herder's preferred forms of ethnography: poetry and travel. He held that this method weakened Herder's efforts at anthropological generalisation, especially those which broke with Kant's own. 'The sixth and seventh books' of Herder's *Ideas*, Kant remarked, 'contain almost entirely only extracts from ethnographic descriptions [*Völkerverschreibungen*] [...]'. Praising Herder's choice and arrangement of these pretty extracts, he could not help but wonder whether 'the poetical spirit that animates his expression has not sometimes also invaded the author's philosophy'.<sup>67</sup> Well aware of Herder's vision of ethnography as poetry, Kant insisted that he had been rash to generalise about humanity on that basis. Moving on to Herder's eighth book, he asked if its transition 'from the traveller's remarks about the organisation of different nations and about the climate to a collection of commonplaces based on them [...] is not too *epic* [...] whether the stream of his eloquence does not here and there involve him in contradictions'.

The contradiction in question was Herder's misunderstanding of Kant's second proposition, in Kant's *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim* (1784), that the faculty of reason is not fully developed at the level of the human individual, but only of the species.<sup>68</sup> In this book of Herder's *Ideas* he held, to the contrary, that happiness pertains to the individual and *not* the species.<sup>69</sup> Herder saw the end of human nature, happiness, in

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<sup>65</sup> E.g., IMMANUEL KANT, 'Review of J. G. Herder's *Ideas for the philosophy of the history of humanity. Parts 1 and 2*', in KANT, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, transl. ROBERT B. LOUDEN (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 121–45 (139), envisioned something like an archive (amassing, selecting, and placing these sources side-by-side with 'remarks on the credibility of each narrator'). For the German, I cite the original (bibliographical details in *Anthropology, History, and Education*, 570–71), available at [https://archive.org/details/bub\\_gb\\_4Sw-AAAAYAAJ/page/206/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_4Sw-AAAAYAAJ/page/206/mode/2up), accessed 15 September 2024.

<sup>66</sup> 'General knowledge always precedes local knowledge here, if the latter is to be ordered and directed through philosophy: in the absence of which all acquired knowledge can yield nothing more than fragmentary groping around and no science'. KANT, *Anthropology*, 4.

<sup>67</sup> KANT, 'Review of J. G. Herder's *Ideas*', 137–38.

<sup>68</sup> See KANT, 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim', in *Anthropology, History, and Education*, transl. ALLEN W. WOOD, 108–20 (109–10) and the editors' note to this volume, 502 note 43.

<sup>69</sup> JOHANN GOTTFRIED HERDER, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, 2 vols, vol. 2 (Riga: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch, 1785), 206, available at [https://www.deutschestextarchiv.de/book/view/herder\\_geschichte02\\_1785?p=218](https://www.deutschestextarchiv.de/book/view/herder_geschichte02_1785?p=218). Compare Herder's letter to Hamann (14 February 1785) in JOHANN GOTTFRIED HERDER, *Briefe. Gesamtausgabe, 1763–1803*, eds WILHELM DOBBEK and GÜNTER ARNOLD, 9 vols (Weimar: Böhlau, 1977–1988), vol. 5, *September 1783–August 1788*, 106: 'fortunately, I have no need of his infantile program, according to which the human being was created for the sake of the species and as the most perfect

relativist terms, as realised in the individual and taking diverse forms among nations of the world, rather than being fulfilled at the level of 'humanity' in general. Kant—adding, wryly, that he preferred humble prose to lofty poetry—retorted that Herder had misunderstood him. He cited a suggestive counter-example from Herder's own *Ideas*: 'discoverers often had to leave the utility of their discoveries more to posterity than discovering it for themselves'.<sup>70</sup> What Herder had called, there, 'governing fate' [*das waltende Schicksal*], Kant had called 'the wisdom of nature',<sup>71</sup> or simply 'God'.<sup>72</sup> In other words, just as discoverers do not reap the fruits of their own travels, which accrue to their successors, so does the development of human reason pass *through* the individual, only to reach its fruition in the species. This progression is not accidental but necessary (whether one attributes it to fate, God, or nature). Herder had not shown that happiness or reason are fulfilled, neither for the individual nor for the people. He had shown only that their conditions of *possible* fulfilment are to be found there—just as Kant had already said. No amount of poetic evocation could conceal that.

Kant's disdain for this figure of the 'discoverer' reflects his general stance on ethnography. Continuing his harsh review of his erstwhile student, he inveighed against not only ethnography-as-poetry but also ethnography-as-travel (recall Herder's neologism: *hodopaideia*). Neither method surpassed the merely particular.<sup>73</sup> Kant compared Herder to a lost explorer, a man without a map:

In an untrodden desert, a thinker, like a traveller, must remain free to choose his own path as he thinks best; one must wait to find out how successful he is and whether, after he has reached his goal, he will in due time find his way safely home again, i.e. to the seat of reason, and hence can count on having followers.<sup>74</sup>

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engine of the State until the end of time'.

<sup>70</sup> KANT, 'Review of J. G. Herder's *Ideas*', 138; Herder, *Ideen*, vol. 2, 248.

<sup>71</sup> KANT, 'Idea', 110 (German original at [https://archive.org/details/bub\\_gb\\_4Sw-AAAAYAAJ/page/n143](https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_4Sw-AAAAYAAJ/page/n143)).

<sup>72</sup> KANT, 'Review of J. G. Herder's *Ideas*', 139. It is 'blasphemy' [*Gotteslästerung*] to suggest that nature is less-than-perfect with respect to humans by holding, like Herder, that nature does *not* aim to develop the idea of the human beyond its individual form.

<sup>73</sup> KANT, 'Determination of the Concept of a Human Race', in KANT, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, transl. HOLLY WILSON and GÜNTER ZÖLLER, 143–59 (145), criticises travels as 'exciting the understanding' but not 'satisfying it' ('one finds in experience what one needs only if one knows in advance what to look for'). See also the Preface to KANT, 'Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View', in *Anthropology, History, and Education*, transl. ROBERT A. LOUDEN, 227–429, at 232: 'But if one wants to know what to look for abroad, in order to broaden the range of anthropology, first one must have acquired knowledge of human beings at home [...] (which already presupposes knowledge of human beings) [...]'. See further 'Anthropology-Mrongovius (1784–1785)', in KANT, *Lectures on Anthropology*, transl. ROBERT R. CLEWIS, 335–510, at 346: 'Anthropology educates human beings for social intercourse and is a preliminary practice for the extended knowledge of the human being that one attains through traveling [...]'. Finally, and most negatively, 'Anthropology-Friedländer (1775–1776)', in KANT, *Lectures on Anthropology*, transl. G. FELICITAS MUNZEL, 37–255, at 49: 'we should not travel to study human beings, but can examine their nature everywhere'.

<sup>74</sup> KANT, 'Review of J. G. Herder's *Ideas*', 141.

### Kant's Warped Archive; Or, Tahiti in Königsberg

Yet travel was not only a general metaphor for knowledge that had strayed from the path of reason (in Kant's case), nor an appeal to direct personal experience as a genuine source of knowledge (in Herder's). It was also a growing archive. Both Kant and Herder cited copious travels of others—contemporary Europeans with imperial and colonial gazes—as sources for their own study of humanity. Here, too, Kant subordinated ethnography to his systematic, rational, and abstract anthropological categories. For instance, he responded to Herder's criticism of another proposition in Kant's *Idea for a Universal History* ('The human being is *an animal who has need of a master* and expects from this master, or from their connection, the good fortune of his final vocation'),<sup>75</sup> by dwelling on the philosophical significance of the recent 'discovery' of Tahiti (1767); a subject to which Kant returned throughout his lectures and writings on anthropology. Herder had objected to Kant's proposition on roughly the same grounds as the one discussed above. That is, for Herder, a human individual is the end of his/her own happiness, and therefore has no need of a master.<sup>76</sup> Kant countered that, in Tahiti's indigenous feudal form of government, humans could never be happy *as humans*, but only live in a 'tranquil indolence' no different than that of 'sheep and cattle'. This, he held, is because true happiness beyond the individual (only at the level of the species, in his view) requires another political order: 'a state constitution ordered in accordance with concepts of human right...'.<sup>77</sup> Since Tahitians would never have come up with this superior government on their own, he insisted, they did 'have need of a master', i.e., Europeans, if they were to fully realise their humanity and rise above the illusion ('shadowy image of happiness') of their original state.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>75</sup> KANT, 'Review of J. G. Herder's *Ideas*', 141 (emphasis added; German ed., 235). Kant's proposition appears in his 'Idea for a Universal History', 113 (German ed., 143) and Herder's criticism in his *Ideen*, vol. 2, 260.

<sup>76</sup> Herder's point was developmental rather than political. Human beings, in some roles, need masters (e.g., children need teachers; perhaps an allusion to his 'master' Kant). Yet it is also their nature to grow to independence: 'Just as it is a bad father who raises his child so that it remains immature [*unmündig*] and in need of a teacher its whole life'. On 'maturity' [*Mündigkeit*] see KANT, 'An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?' (my translation in JAMES ADAM REDFIELD, 'A Talmudic commentary to Kant's "What is Enlightenment?"', lecture, Stanford University, 2013, available at <https://jamesadamredfield.omeka.net/items/show/2>, accessed 15 September 2024). As WERNER STARK notes ('Historical Notes and Interpretive Questions?', 36 note 34), he introduced this term in his anthropology lectures (KANT, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 25, *Vorlesungen über Anthropologie*, eds BRANDT and STARK, 43. See also KANT, 'Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View', in KANT, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, 227–429, at 333).

<sup>77</sup> KANT, 'Review of J. G. Herder's *Ideas*', 141. See also KANT, 'Idea for a Universal History', 113: here, he envisions a civil society where the principle of Right is enshrined in the constitution of the people as a whole. By contrast, he calls the Tahitian state 'feudal', citing this as proof that Tahitians descend from Malaysians, because they also had a feudal state, and also wore beards (as opposed to the indigenous peoples of the Americas, for whom neither was supposedly the case, and who, on the strength of these differences, must be a distinct 'race'.) KANT, 'Of the Different Races of Human Beings', transl. HOLLY WILSON and GÜNTER ZÖLLER, in *Anthropology, History, and Education*, 82–97 (88).

<sup>78</sup> See also KANT, *Groundwork*, 33: '(as with the South Sea Islanders) the human being [must consider whether

The racism in Kant's use of 'Tahiti' here, as Eze and more recently Zammito have noted,<sup>79</sup> reflects his narrow position on an underlying question: What should be the role of the ethnographic archive in a philosophy of humanity?<sup>80</sup> Both Kant's anthropology and his critical philosophy emerged in a context: lecture halls of provincial young *bourgeois* men; in effect, paying customers, for whose hearts and ears he vied with medically minded anthropologists of his day. To slake his students' thirst for the 'exotic', not to mention racy gossip and other curiosities closer to home, Kant punctuated his book and years of lectures with apparent digressions on ethnographic sources like these 'Tahitians'. This material reflects the marginal status of ethnography within Kant's anthropology, even his hostility to it. Although he used a miscellany of ethnographic data (poetry; travel; anecdote; aphorism; commonplace), his readings of accounts of other cultures are, like this one, thin and selective to the point of violence. In his role as anthropologist, Kant curated such materials: pruning, repeating, and refining them for the ears of his students in the lecture-hall.

This process led to the formation of what I call his *warped ethnographic archive*: a stock of descriptions that are radically decontextualised with respect to both the sources and the cultures from which they eventually reached Kant's auditors and readers. He pares each of these morsels down to one anthropological point. Yet his ethnographic materials, in both their Kantian and their present contexts, leave a troubling remainder. Something in Kant's ethnography escapes reduction to his anthropology. This remainder, this something, raises questions in turn about the meaning of the material for his audience. What

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he] should let his talents rust and be concerned with devoting his life merely to idleness, amusement, procreation; in a word, enjoyment...'. As noted by GÜNTER ZÖLLER ('Kant's Political Anthropology', *Kant Yearbook* 3 (2011): 131–59, at 144), Kant's polemical equation of happiness-as-leisure ('indolence'), on one hand, with inferior government, on the other, was axiomatic to his political anthropology. This does not mean that it was not also a product of racism: it is no coincidence that Tahitians, Africans, and other 'southern' peoples (including Europeans) are his target for this attack, drawing as it does on a thick stock of caricatures. (See further SEREQUEBERHAN, 'Eurocentrism in Philosophy', 38–48; MENSCH, 'Caught between Character and Race', 130 notes 15 and 18, and, on the link between these racist tropes and Kant's critique of Herder, JENNIFER MENSCH, 'Kant's Four Examples: On South Sea Islanders, Tahitians, and Other Cautionary Tales for the Case of 'Rusting Talents'', *Goethe Yearbook* 31 (2024): 115–26 (118–20); see further ROBERT BERNASCONI, 'Why Do the Happy Inhabitants of Tahiti Bother to Exist at All?', in *Genocide and Human Rights: A Philosophical Guide*, ed. JOHN ROTH (London: Palgrave, 2005), 139–48; HUAPING LU-ADLER, 'Kant on Lazy Savagery, Racialized', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 60, no. 2 (2022): 253–75. In an apologetic like Zöller's, ROBERT LOUDEN ('Introduction', in *Anthropology, History, and Education*, 1–17, at 9) emphasises that Kant did not see western Europeans as superior *only* to Tahitians. Yet Loudén's defence of this passage in relativist terms, that Tahitians can develop 'within their own cultural traditions and practices' (see also MUTHU, *Enlightenment Against Empire*, 177), is off base. Kant insists that, if not for contact with 'more cultured nations', Tahitians would never have been able to achieve the ideal 'state constitution'. There is no gradualist view of human progress here, and Kant's 'anti-paternalism and commitment to freedom' (MUTHU, *Enlightenment Against Empire*, 161) are absent. (Contra Loudén, see further BERNASCONI, 'Will the Real Kant').

<sup>79</sup> EZE, 'Color of Reason', 127–30; ZAMMITO, 'What a Young Man Needs'.

<sup>80</sup> On Kant's attack on what Diderot called 'the myth of Tahiti', in defence of Eurocentric ideals of cosmopolitanism and progress, see MUTHU, *Enlightenment Against Empire*, 147; MCCARTHY, *Race, Empire*, 61–62.

exactly was Kant looking for in these ‘Tahitians’? Was his anthropology a normative project, an account of human nature that these young men were meant to embody? Or were the norms that he derived from ethnography mere ‘popular’ fluff, quite apart from Königsberg? What were his young men to ‘make of themselves’ in light of this fragmented ethnography? The relatively small literature that takes Kant’s anthropology seriously in its own right has asked this question philosophically;<sup>81</sup> but in context, we may benefit from a case study of how and why Kant fashioned his ethnographic set-pieces into norms and abstract concepts of the human being.

*Violent Delights: Cook’s Tahiti Comes to Prussia*

The way in which Kant derived his anthropological principles of relations between men and women from Captain Cook’s travels in Tahiti, and elsewhere in the Pacific, is another case in point of how his ethnographic archive was warped by this palpable tension between normative and empirical views of human nature. Here again, the theme of domination versus liberation is central. Here again, it is inverted, such that the impotence of one ethnographic subject provides a clue to a teleological principle for all society. Here again, the turn to teleology justifies their domination anthropologically. But at this new nexus of gendered/racial difference, there is an ironic twist. Where the ethnographic subject was the Tahitian, now it is Kant’s own audience: the German man.

In the section of his textbook on ‘the character of the sexes’ (which consumed, he noted,<sup>82</sup> a disproportionate share of his attention), Kant added an aside on sexual jealousy and marital abuse:

The old saying of the Russians that women suspect their husbands of keeping other women if they do not get a beating now and then is usually regarded as fiction. However, in Cook’s *Travels* one finds that when an English sailor on Tahiti saw an Indian punishing his wife by beating her, the sailor, wanting to be gallant, attacked the husband with threats. The wife turned on the spot against the Englishman and asked how it concerned him: the husband must do this!<sup>83</sup>

Neither this ethnographic source, nor the anthropological argument that it supports, are straightforward. For his ethnography, Kant has cobbled together a datum of Russian folklore and two of Captain Cook’s travels. They likely reached him from translations, an anthology, and a journal article (all appearing in German in the 1780s, while he was

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<sup>81</sup> NURIA SANCHÉZ MADRID, ‘Prudence and the Rule for Guiding Life: The Development of Pragmatic Normativity in Kant’s *Lectures on Anthropology*’, in *Kant’s Lectures/Kants Vorlesungen*, eds BERND DÖRFLINGER, CLAUDIO LA ROCCA, ROBERT LOUDEN, and UBIRAJARA RANCAN DE AZEVEDO MARQUES (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015), 163–78; ROBERT B. LOUDEN, ‘The Second Part of Morals’, in *Essays*, eds JACOBS and KAIN, 60–84; PATRICK R. FRIERSON, *Freedom and Anthropology in Kant’s Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); PATRICK KAIN, ‘Prudential Reason in Kant’s Anthropology’, in *Essays*, eds JACOBS and KAIN, 230–65. See further REDFIELD, ‘Pragmatic Points of View’.

<sup>82</sup> KANT, *Anthropology*, 406–407.

<sup>83</sup> KANT, *Anthropology*, 401.

teaching anthropology).<sup>84</sup> Yet Kant did not merely reiterate this raw material; both the forms in which it reached him, and his decontextualisation of it, have already subjected it to new interpretations. In order to recover how Kant constructed his warped archive, it is first helpful to retrace how he stripped away prior layers of description and interpretation to arrive at, normatively, ambiguous conclusions for his audience.

To begin with Polynesia: in this aside, Kant has condensed and conflated two extracts from Cook's journal, one set in Hawai'i and the other in Tahiti. Their common denominator is sexual jealousy—in both sources, Cook cites 'jealousy' as a possible motive for the peculiar association of wifely affection and husbandly abuse.

Here is the extract from Tahiti:

As in such a life, their women must contribute a very large share of its happiness, it is rather surprising, beside the humiliating restraints they are laid under with regard to food, to find them often treated with a degree of harshness, or rather brutality, which one would scarcely suppose a man would bestow on an object for whom he had the least affection. Nothing, however, is more common than to see the men beat them without mercy; and *unless this treatment is the effect of jealousy, which both sexes pretend to be sometimes infected with, it will be difficult to admit this as the motive*, as I have seen several instances where the women have preferred personal beauty to interest; though I must own that, even in these cases, they seem to be scarcely susceptible of those delicate sentiments that are the result of mutual affection; and I believe, that there is less Platonic love in Otaheite than in any other country.<sup>85</sup>

And here is the extract from Hawai'i:

It will not be improper in this place to take notice, that we were eye-witnesses of a fact, which, as it was *the only instance we saw of any thing like jealousy among them*, shows at the same time that not only fidelity but a degree of reserve is required from the married women of consequence. At one of the entertainments of boxing, Omeeah was observed to rise from his place two or three times, and to go up to his wife with strong marks of displeasure, ordering her, as it appeared to us from his manner, to withdraw. Whether it was, that being very handsome he thought she drew too much of our attention; or without being able to determine what other reason he might have for his conduct, it is but justice to say that *there existed no real cause of jealousy*. How ever, she kept her place; and when the entertainment was over joined our party, and soliciting some trifling presents, was given to understand that we had none about us, but that if she would accompany us toward our tent she should return with such as she liked best. She was accordingly walking along with us, which Omeeah

<sup>84</sup> On the sources, see notes to IMMANUEL KANT, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. ROYAL PRUSSIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, 29 vols, vol. 7, *Der Streit der Fakultäten; Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, ed. OSWALD KÜLPE (Berlin: Reimer, 1917), 368; BRANDT, *Kritischer Kommentar*, 304–305.

<sup>85</sup> *Captain Cook's dritte und letzte Reise*, ed. and transl. JOHANN LUDWIG WETZEL, 4 vols, vol. 3 (Anspach: auf kosten des Uebersetzers gedruckt mit Messererischen Schriften, 1789), 44–45; *The Three Voyages of Captain James Cook around the World*, 7 vols, vol. 6 (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1821), 149–150 = JOHANN WILHELM VON ARCHENHOLZ, *Litteratur und Völkerkunde: ein periodisches Werk* (Leipzig: Göschen, 1786), vol. 8, 965–66. Emphasis added ('Otaheite' = Tahiti).

observing, followed in a violent rage, and seizing her by the hair began to inflict with his fists a severe corporal punishment. This sight, especially as we had innocently been the cause of it, gave us much concern, and yet we were told that it would be highly improper to interfere between man and wife of such high rank. We were, however, not left without the consolation of seeing the natives at last interpose; and had the farther satisfaction of meeting them together the next day, in perfect good humour with each other; and what is still more singular, the lady would not suffer us to remonstrate with her husband on his treatment of her, which we were much inclined to do, and plainly told us that he had done no more than he ought.<sup>86</sup>

As we can see from the original entries (translated faithfully by Johann Wilhelm von Archenholz, likely Kant's source),<sup>87</sup> the focus of both stories is Cook's and his sailors' own preoccupation with the sexual mores of the islanders. They marry monogamously, yet also sleep with other partners. How, then, do they see fidelity and jealousy? In the first extract, from Tahiti, Cook observes that, in some cases, women slept with other men ('preferred personal beauty to interest') but did not associate sex with romance ('Platonic love' was rare in Tahiti),<sup>88</sup> so perhaps this explained the lack of jealousy. For him, the Tahitian case therefore proves that sexual jealousy is *not* the motive for beating, and it remains unexplained. Yet in the second extract, from Hawaii, Cook notes an exceptional case in which a husband *was* seized by jealousy, *did* abuse his wife, and she later confirmed this as a valid norm. Cook is doubly surprised by this exception: he never saw jealousy in Hawaii either, and does not understand why the woman validated her husband's conduct—rather than allowing his sailors to intervene. He explains the exception in terms of the class-status of the couple, concluding that only married women 'of such high rank' should not sleep with other men. Cook's ethnography, unsystematic and absurdly un-self-critical as it is,<sup>89</sup> does yield an anthropological rationale for his anecdote: sexual jealousy in Hawaii is limited to the upper classes.

A variation on the same explanations for violent sexual jealousy—class-status and ethnic difference—appears in Kant's second case: that of the Russian wife who 'expects' to be beaten. Brandt found this anecdote attested in German as early as 1567. Notably,

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<sup>86</sup> *Three Voyages of Captain James Cook*, vol. 7, 152 = *Capitain Cook's dritte und letzte Reise*, vol. 4 (Anspach: auf kosten des Uebersetzers und in Commission bey dem Commerzien Commissair und Hof-Büchhandler Hauelsen), 394–96 = ARCHENHOLZ, *Litteratur und Völkerkunde*, vol. 8, 860–61. Emphasis added. NB: this incident is set in the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii), not the Friendly Islands (Tonga) *pace* Külpe, the editor to the Academy's edition of Kant's *Anthropology* (and scholars following him—and certainly not in Tahiti, *pace* Kant!). The confusion is symptomatic.

<sup>87</sup> KANT, *Anthropology*, 394 cites Archenholz in another connection, supporting this hypothesis.

<sup>88</sup> Clearly, the actual sexual politics of these encounters are a complex subject far beyond the scope of this paper. See DAVID A. CHAPPELL, 'Shipboard Relations between Pacific Island Women and Euroamerican Men 1767–1887', *The Journal of Pacific History* 27, no. 2 (1992): 131–49.

<sup>89</sup> Cook ignores the strong rationale for the husband's jealousy supplied by his own story: he sees his wife accompanying *the English sailors to their tent in expectation of gifts*, yet insists that it had 'no real cause', and his men acted 'innocently'.



that version features a German of the lower classes (a smith). The same observation was reported of Russians, in an article that Kant must have read in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, devoted entirely to this ethnographic datum: 'Women Who Only Love their Husbands If they are Beaten' (1789).<sup>90</sup> Here again, the datum is said to be *not* typical of humans in general, but of 'a certain class of ignoble people, who exist among all nations'.<sup>91</sup> This article also reports the datum among the Peruvians and in comic literature by Europeans (Molière and Cervantes). Here, it is associated with lower classes and passionate Europeans—as opposed to the article's *bourgeois* German public. Yet, as in Cook's *Travels*, the real point of this article (a vernacular ethnography, in the form of a gossip rag) is to explain its odd contradiction. It does so by spinning out a crude theory of power-dynamics between men and women, and concludes by confronting its German readers: *Are you (young gentlemen readers) to be happier in your sexually permissive marriage than these jealous, low-class, non-Germans?*<sup>92</sup>

Here again, just as in the Tahiti material, Kant's ethnographic source not only records an association between wife abuse and sexual jealousy, but also explains it in terms of class, ethnic, and sex difference. His sources' explanations vary only in their particulars. In the German article, the husband's violent sexual jealousy is attributed to lower classes, rather than to 'high rank' as in Cook. Rather than Polynesians, it is attributed to non-German Europeans. Yet both sources set 'us' (the reader) against 'them' (the Other), insisting that only 'they' suffer from violent sexual jealousy. The *Monatsschrift* article takes a further anthropological leap: it interprets the datum in light of a universal sexuality/power dynamic; posits the Other as a reflection of the self in this particular respect; and turns its mirror around to face the reader with a wry critique of their culture.

Kant offered his own anthropological explanation for this warped ethnographic datum, departing from that of the *Monatsschrift* article. To do so, he first had to dismantle the context of his sources and reassemble their data to fit his larger argument about the 'characteristic relations between the sexes'. He brought all of his sources together around the notion of 'jealousy' [*Eifersucht*].<sup>93</sup> He then translated the ethnic and class-based accounts of his predecessors into a universal distinction, grounded in his anthropological theory of sexuality/power dynamics between men and women. The operative distinction

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<sup>90</sup> 'Von Weibern, die erst dann, wenn sie geschlagen werden, ihre Männer lieben', *Berlinische Monatsschrift* 13 (1789): 551–60, available at <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015064565222&view=1up&seq=561>, accessed 15 September 2024. The article is unsigned. Kant surely read it, as he published fifteen articles in this journal from 1784–1796, beginning with 'What Is Enlightenment?'.

<sup>91</sup> Given in quotation marks; seems like an allusion. Molière is prominent in the essay, but I could not find it in him.

<sup>92</sup> Again, the context of the discussion is sexual jealousy, though it is left unsaid. The article concludes: '...the Russian peasant who *wins her* with blows is no less happy than the Gentleman who holds still, who does what he likes and *lets his wife do what she likes*. And who knows which of their wives is happier?' ('Von Weibern', 560, emphasis added).

<sup>93</sup> This concept not only links the Russian and Polynesian material, but also accounts for Kant's conflation between Cook's travels in Tahiti and Hawaii, as 'jealousy' appears in both.



for Kant was no longer German vs Russian, low-class vs *bourgeois*, English vs Polynesian (let alone low-class vs elite Polynesian), but simply an opposition between the ‘character of the sexes’ as natural categories. Rather than ‘explain away’ the datum of violent sexual jealousy by attributing it merely to the Other, he reinterpreted it in terms of the sexes’ universal balance of power, with an evolutionary function.<sup>94</sup>

The starting point for Kant’s analysis was that a woman is driven by nature to reproduce the species, yet she needs a man in order to do so. Therefore, she naturally attracts as many as possible (even after marriage: after all, what if her husband dies?). The man, for his part, becomes the weaker and passive party. She uses her resources to compete with other women, attract him, get him to reproduce with her, and care for offspring, while he exists mainly to serve her reproductive ends. Kant then discussed how this balance of power develops according to different stages of cultural progress.<sup>95</sup> Even at the lowest stage, polygamy, the women struggle to dominate the man; one woman typically wins out. At the second stage, monogamy, each woman secures a man for herself. At the highest stage of culture, what Kant calls ‘gallantry’ [*Galanterie*],<sup>96</sup> women do enter into monogamous marriages, but also sleep with other men in order to maximise their reproductive odds.

This schema fits Kant’s notion of culture as progressing towards a perfect balance of power between women and men. But it reintroduces the problem of violent sexual jealousy at the stage *between* monogamy and gallantry. After all, a man is not being dominated by his wife if he does *not* prove that he is jealous when she takes other lovers (‘abandons his wife indifferently to others to gnaw on the same bone’)—let alone if he takes lovers himself. Therefore, rather than attest to a lower form of culture, on the contrary, it proves that culture is progressing if husbands are jealous (although they are wrong to tar their wives’ gallantry as ‘coquetry’).<sup>97</sup> This is precisely where Kant inserts his aside on Polynesia and Russia. Both cases now prove his anthropological point that the jealousy of monogamous men marks a stage *between* brute domination of women and their proper freedom. Here, for Kant, ethnography is not actually about the Other. Rather, it is a way to theorise an intermediate level of anthropological progress. In humanity’s most

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<sup>94</sup> The following two paragraphs summarise KANT, ‘Anthropology’, 399–407 (‘The character of the sexes’).

<sup>95</sup> In the absolute state of nature, Kant did say that the man is the dominant party by virtue of his physical superiority (‘Anthropology’, 400). But he argued that these characteristic features of the sexes are revealed as soon as culture progresses beyond the point where men are not merely procuring food/protecting the family and women are staying in the home. From that point, women’s ascendancy begins.

<sup>96</sup> The word entered German from French about a century before our context. According to the Grimms’ dictionary, it generally means ‘fashionable’ in speech, dress, or behaviour, with this sexual sense listed as a special usage. The Grand Robert sketches a clearer range of uses in French: courtly manners; seduction of women by men (by flattery, ‘gallant’ gifts or letters, etc.); a euphemism for an affair; and by metonymy (in a nineteenth-century source), a general social norm of heterosexual liberality, which appears to be the connotation here.

<sup>97</sup> KANT, ‘Anthropology’, 406 (see also 401).

evolved state (when it attains enough 'luxury' for people not to 'squabble' over one another) jealousy will be 'ridiculous', and women will be dominant. He therefore rejects the article's conclusion that a wife's 'gallantry' causes unhappy marriages. It is merely a step on the path to a gynocentric social order.

In sum, by excavating Kant's own reworking of his sources, and prior interpretations of his sources, we saw that his 'warping' of the archive arose from his relentless impulse to impose a universal, teleological, natural hierarchy on material that had previously been contextualised in contingent, descriptive, and social terms. Kant's ethnography was subordinated to anthropology from the very beginning. He looked to Tahiti in order to prove that a form like the Prussian state is necessary for all humans to be happy; or conversely, in order to prove that women's extramarital affairs indicate a higher stage of cultural progress (even by non-Germans). Unlike Herder, whose wandering ethnography shirked schematisation, Kant insisted on reduction to principles: 'anthropology is not a description of human beings, but of human nature'.<sup>98</sup> This reduction relied most violently on racist and sexist tropes as shortcuts to organise an uneven ethnographic dataset.

Yet the question remains: why did his readers/auditors find this form of knowledge useful? Why not elaborate such principles based on further principles rather than sally into tales of Tahiti? And after the lecture, having grasped his anthropological argument on 'the character of the sexes', what were his (mostly young, male, unmarried, provincial) students to make of all this?<sup>99</sup> They might draw the conclusion that they should let their wives practice 'gallantry' (or help other wives to do so). But is that all it meant to become the normative subject of a Kantian anthropology? Here again, the intersection of racism and sexism, and a consistent cultural tension that it masks, make better sense in context.

### *Hippel and the Reception of Kant's 'Popular' Anthropology*

A gold mine of evidence for the context as well as the reception of Kant's warped archive on race and relations between the sexes has long been hiding in plain sight in the works of Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel. Hippel is already familiar to Kant scholars as author of an autobiographical novel (*Die Lebensläufe nach aufsteigender Linie*) where he uses his own notebooks from Kant's lectures in the 1770s, perhaps similar to the various student 'transcriptions' which still form our official record of the anthropology course.<sup>100</sup> Allusions to Kant's popular anthropology course, specifically, are scattered through the first part of

<sup>98</sup> KANT, 'Anthropology Friedländer', in *Lectures on Anthropology*, eds WOOD and LOUDEN, 48.

<sup>99</sup> See ZAMMITO, 'What a Young Man Needs'; Stark, 'Historical Notes', on his specific students and their backgrounds; and, for Kant's students generally, EMIL ARNOLDT, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. OTTO SCHÖNDÖRFFER, 11 vols, vol. 5 (Berlin: Cassirer, 1909), 331–43.

<sup>100</sup> See HAMILTON H. H. HECK, *The Elusive T in the Novel: Hippel, Sterne, Diderot, Kant* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), 99–126; WERNER STARK, 'Die Formen von Kants akademischer Lehre', *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 40, no. 5 (1992): 542–61 (560 note 65).

Hippel's novel, and fuelled rumours that Kant was the author—ultimately quashed by Kant himself.<sup>101</sup> Whereas scholars have focused on what Hippel took from Kant, however, it is seldom asked what Kant took from Hippel, with whom he dined often, and who became President of Königsberg;<sup>102</sup> or more precisely, how these peers drew from and reacted to a common culture in comparable but meaningfully divergent ways. As both auditor and amplifier of the cultural context where Kant's anthropology was circulating, Hippel's own use of ethnography on similar subjects can help us to appreciate the rhetoric of Kant's. Hippel's twists on Kant's ethnographic archive reveal how Kant's 'warping' or distortion of ethnography—its reduction to principles by racist/sexist shortcuts, even as it stubbornly refuses to be thus reduced—continued to be felt and to generate new meanings for its (*bourgeois* young German male) subjects.

Recall that the common denominator of Kant's ethnographic examples from 'Tahiti' was his argument that the unfreedom of one ethnographic subject (the Tahitians in general, in one case; the cuckolded German married man, on the other) was, upon his proper anthropological reduction, intelligible as a clue to a teleological principle of social order. Because, he argued, the Tahitians are indolent ('happy'), and because they and others of their race have a feudal form of government, this proves that their race has no internal principle of political development that could ever drive them to change to the form of government essential for the happiness of all members of the species, which is the only true happiness, not specific to their 'race' alone. As that form of government more closely resembles European forms than theirs (e.g. Prussia's constitution), this, he concluded, proves that their domination by the European 'master' is needed for the happiness of all humanity. His warped ethnographic archive thus serves as an anthropological justification for colonialism.

Similarly, but in a more complex way given the denser layers of his archive, Kant's appeal to the Tahitian ethnography in his second example was used to justify the domination of another Other (women *per se*; his sources vary as to whether the women involved are Tahitian or Russian, German or non-German, elite or working-class—but Kant's reduction does not) as a necessary but temporary stage in society's development in the opposite direction, from domination to freedom. Whereas, in his archive, men's violent sexual jealousy against their wives (from Cook's Tahiti to the local paper) was viewed as evidence for a cultural curiosity limited to Tahitians or Russians (or, perhaps, to vary with the mores of a social class), again, by way of anthropological reduction to a rule of the

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<sup>101</sup> See ARTHUR WARD, 'Kants 'Erklärung wegen der v. Hippelschen Autorschaft'', *Altpreussische Monatschrift* 41 (1904): 61–93 (64). For Kant's influence on Hippel, see, e.g., THEODORE GOTTLIEB VON HIPPEL, *On Marriage*, transl. and ed. TIMOTHY F. SELLNER (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994), 303 note 39; 307 note 7.

<sup>102</sup> SELLNER, 'Introduction', in *On Marriage*, 11–61 (26). For a story about their relationship from Kant's perspective, see UWE SCHULTZ, *Immanuel Kant in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* (Reinbeck: Rowohlt, 1990), 65–66.

'character of the sexes', Kant argued that domination proved a counter-intuitive teleology at the level of the human species. Women, he held, are destined by nature to be as sexually free as men, because their need to both secure husbands and to maintain multiple sexual partners maximises their odds of reproduction. At a higher stage of society—again, much closer to his own *bourgeois* Prussia than to his 'Tahiti'—this will no longer be necessary. One would therefore expect Kant to critique the abuse of women. Again, however, as in his other 'Tahitian' example, that is not the case. Rather, again, for Kant, domination points to an *intermediate* stage in the teleology of the human species. Abuse (for Kant, the anthropological category is 'jealousy') proves that, on one hand, society is moving in the right direction: away from merely monogamous marriages or sexual freedom for men only. True, it is not yet there; eventually, 'jealousy' will cease. But, like 'mastery' over Tahitians in his other example, here again, Kant cites domination of women as evidence for progress for all humans in the image of his own society; a world where, ultimately, both sexes and all citizens will be free. Kant brings Tahiti to Königsberg to reimagine the world as a better Königsberg.

The writings of Hippel show a more self-critical reflection on these themes in their culture and lead one to doubt that Kant's warping of his ethnographic archive escaped all of his auditors. Two contrary tendencies are apparent. First and foremost, Hippel writes from the standpoint of a conventional Christian universalism, which undermines Kant's teleological argumentation. This applies most clearly to his popular works on power relations between the sexes and marriage, where he consistently argued for the emancipation of women and a conventional view of marriage that seem, at points, calculated to counter Kant's proto-evolutionary view of the 'character of the sexes'. So, for instance, in his *On Improving the Status of Women* (1792), Hippel discusses the problem of the oath of marriage in terms of the larger theme of the domination of women in German society. Breaking from Kant's framework, with its appeal to 'nature' and gradual, apparently contradictory stages of development, he insists that inequality of the sexes is a social ill with a social remedy.

Above all else in the world, we would like to convince the other half of the human race that it was not *we* but *nature* who pushed them into the background and subjected their will to ours. And yet it is also we who [...] play the master over the fairer sex. The clubs and secret societies which surreptitiously procure power, authority, and dominion without ever drawing the sword are but copies of the course taken by men in their rise to power.<sup>103</sup>

These 'clubs and secret societies' such as the Masons (of which Hippel and many men in Kant's audience were members) serve as just one example, from his own German context, of an artificial rather than natural means of women's subordination. Another is the

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<sup>103</sup> THEODOR GOTTLIEB VON HIPPEL, *On Improving the Status of Women*, ed. and transl. TIMOTHY F. SELLNER (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), 93–94.

wedding oath compelling the wife to ‘obey’ her husband, which—Hippel reminds his readers—neither ensures her fidelity, nor prevents husbands from unwittingly ceding all real power in the home and family to their wives:

You Germans, whose ancestors respected their women because their advice was important and their judgments holy, especially if the latter inserted in them prophecies of the future—perhaps in such a manner that they were able to guide the men according to the dictates of their own will (a prophetic art not unworthy of respect) .... You Germans, who [...] have never sold your women (as if they were household goods) as the Romans did. ... Germans! are your ancestors so unworthy? What is more respectable, to keep step with the other sex or to let ourselves be led by this sex without knowing it? Only the *outward signs* of rule are of value to us—*rule itself* we sell for a despicable mess of pottage; and many a clever wife lets herself be elected to the position of governmental representative by her husband, who would never suspect high treason, and who (for pride goeth before a fall) places his wife on the throne himself, fully convinced that everything is being dispatched under his name, under the formula: ‘We, by the grace of God... etc.’<sup>104</sup>

Against these forced social mechanisms for control and the fantasy of male domination (which, he adds, in fact causes domination of men, who must tolerate their wives’ public affairs), Hippel stages an *a fortiori* argument. If, under such conditions, women have proven themselves to be ‘worthy of the glory which nature would make manifest in them’,<sup>105</sup> and if most husbands already profess to be ‘happy’ in such an inferior arrangement, how much more so would men and women alike profit from true equality between the sexes and removal of the artificial (cultural) barriers to it, masquerading as ‘nature’, such as this clause of the marriage oath. Here, not only is the teleology of Kant’s ‘character of the sexes’, which justified domination as a temporary developmental stage, refuted, but the fact of wives’ infidelity is interpreted as a fall from the *original* equality of the sexes, rather than a sign of progress. By reverting to a rather conventional Christian theology of marriage, Hippel also subtly undermines the ‘enlightened’ arguments of his friend and regular interlocutor.

The second and most striking tendency in Hippel, as in Kant, is an intersection between the ethnographic/racial archive, on one hand, and the discourse on gender (in)equality, on the other. Hippel, like Kant, frequently juxtaposes these two forms of difference, integrating his arguments about the relation of the sexes with reflections on the German Enlightenment’s ethnographic Other. Pointedly unlike Kant, however, he does so in a manner which exposes the fallacy of reducing evidence for cultural diversity to fixed hierarchies or using racism/sexism to short-circuit variation. This is not to say that

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<sup>104</sup> HIPPEL, *On Improving*, 95.

<sup>105</sup> HIPPEL, *On Improving*, 95.

Hippel lacks similar culturally shared prejudices (his are well attested),<sup>106</sup> but his way of combining cultural or 'racial' with gender difference is critical and less warped, suggesting—indeed, in himself, attesting to—a relatively lukewarm reception of Kant's anthropology.

A transparent example, which seems lodged directly at Kant, is Hippel's critique of the domination of women as having any physical basis. Here too, he argues against nature and in favour of society as the proper frame of reference for sex character and the politics of sexual difference. Yet he refers to an ethnographic example that is anything but innocent or unmarked in the archive:

Nevertheless, to deny the fair sex all such intellectual capabilities on the basis of physical appearance and to wrest its rank from it through foul play is to behave in precisely the same way as people have toward the American Indians, when, upon the testimony of a few observers who have seen no beards among these tribes, they not only refused to acknowledge the existence of this utterly masculine, and moreover very cumbersome, badge of honour, but in addition they drew the very obvious conclusion from the lack of the latter appendage that nature had refused to grant them the germ cells necessary for it, and thus that they belonged to a much lower class of human beings—and what is not less significant, that it was not possible that both we and they could have descended from the same patriarch. What kind of role can the beard play anyway, for according to the well-known proverb, 'the beard does not make the philosopher'.<sup>107</sup>

While not all of these ideas were shared by Kant (the polygenetic argument, in particular), here we recognise his old argument from the inability of indigenous Americans to grow beards. This, for Kant, designated them as a distinct 'race', whose inferiority ('weakness') he maintained and whose 'natural' extinction alongside all other non-white races he predicted in one of his *Reflexionen*, ignoring the role of European brutality and diseases<sup>108</sup>. By juxtaposing this argument with his case against the domination of women, Hippel displays not only his resistance to Kant's teleology as a justification for colonialism founded on a warped archive, but also an inverted use of the intersection between race and sex-difference, in favour of equality. Here, he shows that not all of Kant's audience found his ethnographic archive persuasive, even as they recognised that it was made in service of a hierarchy which set themselves at the pinnacle.

## Conclusion

We began by locating Kant's warped ethnographic archive in the context of other uses of ethnography in the German Enlightenment. We compared how new evidence for human

<sup>106</sup> See, e.g., THEODOR GOTTLIEB VON HIPPEL, *The Status of Women: Collected Writings*, ed. and transl. TIMOTHY F. SELLNER (Bloomington: Xlibris, 2009), 191, on Africa's perpetually 'backward' culture 'since the time of the Greeks and Romans'.

<sup>107</sup> HIPPEL, *On Improving*, 75.

<sup>108</sup> See VAN GORKOM, 'Reddish, Iron-Rust Color', especially 166–67 and 169–71, and see my note 9.

variation was conceptualised and integrated into the emerging human sciences by Kant's contemporaries: Schläzer, Herder, and Blumenbach. The goal of this first section was to illustrate, by way of contrast, how visions of anthropology dovetailed with ways of using ethnography. What we call ethnography went by new names (*Ethnographie*; *bodopaideia*; *Charakteristik*) and supported new programs of inquiry, as the human being was newly apprehended in world-historical; poetic-spiritual; and physical terms. In this light, the distinctiveness of Kant's 'pragmatic' anthropology lay in his orientation to norms and regularities, rather than particulars or universals, and his hostility to other ethnographic methods such as Herder's travel and poetry as irrational and idiosyncratic. He justified his own radically selective appeals to ethnographic material, in his own 'very pleasant doctrine of observation', as the 'popular' levity in an education in social belonging: a discourse about how to 'make of oneself' a man in his own *bourgeois* Königsberg cosmopolis.

Yet, given Kant's hostility to ethnography even as he indulged his audience in its riches, its status and role in his anthropology were far from straightforward or without internal conflicts. For the first part of his lecture course and textbook, the 'Didactic' section on humanity as defined from the inside out, he adapted Baumgarten's empirical psychology as the closest established framework. But for his second and most original part of the anthropology (on the 'characterisation' of humans from outside in; from persons to sexes, nations, and races), he integrated his own earlier pamphlet on aesthetic sentiments with a vast archive of textual and anecdotal evidence—much of it from contemporary accounts of the non-European world. Thus the provincial professor who—contra Herder—rejected travel as a valid mode of knowing humanity, and hardly left town, was not shy to glean 'popular' asides from travellers like Captain Cook (or second- and third-hand anthologies and gossip columns that he saw in the paper at breakfast). From those materials, he cobbled together *ad hoc* anthropological categories (e.g., violent 'jealousy' as a universal diacritic for power dynamics between the sexes) and he applied those categories to extract their evidence for human nature and social progress—distortingly, and often violently, reinscribing his 'collection of trivialities' into a manual for would-be 'citizens of the world'.<sup>109</sup> At times, he lost the descriptive forest for the normative trees. As his radically decontextualised observations could only tie human nature to a system of *Charakteristik* still in flux (or more precisely, as Zammito has stressed, arrested at an early stage),<sup>110</sup> his lessons in prudence remained obscure. What could Polynesia's familiar/strange polyamory teach his bright-eyed bachelors? What subjectivity was a Kantian anthropology meant to cultivate?

In conclusion, by turning to his interlocutor Hippel, and exploring an alternative

<sup>109</sup> The phrase 'collection of trivialities' dates from the early reception of Kant's *Anthropology* (Schleiermacher's 1799 review, the year after it was published). See CHAD WELLMON, *Becoming Human: Romantic Anthropology and the Embodiment of Freedom* (University Park: Penn State Press, 2010), 193–212.

<sup>110</sup> ZAMMITO, 'What a Young Man Needs', 243.

approach to the same questions in their culture, we saw a critical reception of Kant's popular anthropology. As opposed to Kant's teleological arguments—which justified male domination as a transient stage in progress toward the equality of the sexes, and European domination as a necessary stage in non-Europeans' progress beyond merely subsisting in 'happy' indolence—Hippel and his fans were more sympathetic to arguments for equality of the sexes *now* as well as, relatedly, sceptical about racism—because they could tell how fluid, social, and recently constructed such notions of 'progress' were. Whereas Kant intended his ethnographic archive to support his normative anthropology, ultimately, it proved subversive of his attempt to warp and reduce it to a teleological rational order. His audience looked to Tahiti hoping to become what he promised: citizens of a better world. But some were more disappointed than the professor to hear that this world was right at home.

And what of our own students, who rediscover Kant's racism and ask why, or whether, to read him today? As I have argued, prioritising context forecloses any one answer to these questions. In Kant's context, we have seen how his racist rhetoric and racist theory of human nature struggled to control new methods and new archives for the study of human difference growing up around him by imposing hierarchy and teleology and using skin tone as a monothetic classificatory principle. We have also seen how, in trying to market his anthropology course to a particular audience, Kant warped his archive's race/gender categories to model power dynamics and norms of progress that he hoped would be 'popular' with them—sometimes digressing into a collection of vulgar prejudices. And we have seen that this was not normal, nor always successful. Neither Kant's anthropological peers with other methods and archives, nor all of his own students, followed him. Rather than excuse or harmonise, context can be a means of critiquing choices and paths not taken. To read Kant in his context is the beginning of a conversation with him about those alternatives.

By the same token, in our own context, Kant's anthropology can be read in new directions. It can challenge us to rethink our context; to ask, for instance, 'Is antiracist anthropology possible? If so, how would it develop a commitment to universals—justice, human dignity, progress—without the racism that accompanied, and did not even contradict, Kant's own formulation of those ideas?' This critique should also challenge us to prioritise our own context as a limit to our demagogical tendencies. Like Kant's, our world is full of unconscious tensions that are symptomatic of historical change; a process which, by definition, outpaces the capacity of any individual to grasp one's place in it. Kant's anthropology offered reassurance, for some, that they still remained the centre of the world. Merely criticising it in order to shore up one's own position risks the same self-justifying distortion. But in what sense are we what we 'make of ourselves'? What is our 'world', and how do we live with others in it? Regardless of his answers, Kant's anthropology still has questions worth asking.