

# Race and the Enlightenment

*A Reader*

Edited by

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 **BLACKWELL**  
*P u b l i s h e r s*

## 4

"This fellow was quite black . . . a clear proof that what he said was stupid"

*Immanuel Kant*

(b. Königsberg, East Prussia, 22 April 1724; d. Königsberg, 12 February 1804)

In the essay below, written in 1775, Kant argues that there are four distinct varieties of the human species, each with a specific "natural disposition." Each race, however, derives from an ideal, original, "stem genus." This stem genus, Kant says, was a race of "white brunette" people who must have existed "between the 31st and 52nd parallels in the Old World," and are currently best approximated by the "white" inhabitants of Europe ("very blond, soft white-skinned, red-haired, pale blue eyes"), particularly in "the northern regions of Germany."

### On the Different Races of Man

In the animal kingdom the natural division into genera and species is founded upon the law of reproduction-in-common, and the unitary nature of the generating force which holds good throughout a certain manifold variety of animals. Hence the rule of Buffon, namely, that animals which generate between them fertile young (whatever the difference of bodily form they may

possess) belong to one and the same physical genus, must be looked upon as the general definition for a natural genus of animals, in contradistinction to all academic definitions of genera. Academic taxonomy deals with classes; it merely arranges according to similarities; while a natural taxonomy arranges according to kinships determined by generation. The former supplies a school-system for the sake of memorizing; the latter a natural system for the comprehension; the former has for its purpose only to bring creatures under a system of labelings; but the latter seeks to bring them under a system of laws.

According to the latter conception, all humans in the whole world belong to the same natural genus, because universally they generate fertile children between them, however great the differences of their bodily form may otherwise be. For this unitary character of the natural genus, which is just as thoroughgoing as is the unitary character of the generative force that has for them a validity in common, we can adduce only a single natural cause; namely, that they all belong to a single stem, whence they have sprung regardless of differences; or whence at least, they could have sprung. In the first case, all men would belong not only to one and the same genus, but also to one family; in the second they would resemble each other, but would not be kin, and many local creations would have to be assumed; which is an opinion that would needlessly multiply the number of causes. An animal genus which at the same time has a common stem, does not contain within itself different species (for these mean diversity of derivation; instead, their mutual differences are *variations* if they are hereditary). The hereditary traits, if they agree with their derivation, are called *resemblances*; but if the deviation is such that the original stem-formation cannot be restored, it may be called an *exspeciation*.

Among the deviations – i.e., the hereditary differences of animals belonging to a single stock – those which, when transplanted (displaced to other areas), maintain themselves over protracted generation, and which also generate hybrid young whenever they interbreed with other deviations of the same stock, are called *races*. Those which at every transplantation maintain the distinctiveness of their deviation and so preserve their resemblance, yet when interbreeding with others do not necessarily generate hybrids, are called *sports*; but those which

maintain resemblance often and persistently are called *varieties*. Conversely, the deviation which generates hybrids with others, yet which after being transplanted gradually disappears, is called a special *strain*.

In this way Negroes and Whites are not different species of humans (for they belong presumably to one stock), but they are different *races*, for each perpetuates itself in every area, and they generate between them children that are necessarily hybrid, or blendings (mulattoes). On the other hand, blonds or brunettes are not different races of whites, for a blond man can also get from a brunette woman altogether blond children, even though each of these deviations maintains itself throughout protracted generations under any and all transplantations. Hence sometimes whites generate sports. Gradually and at last the constitution of the soil (moisture or drought), and food, also, induce a hereditary difference or strain among animals of one and the same stock and race, especially in stature, proportion of limbs (plump or lanky), and also in the temperament; which latter hybridizes when mixed with another kind; but on another soil and in the presence of other food (even without alteration of climate) disappears in but a few generations. It is a pleasant thing to take note of the different strains of humans according to the differences in these causes, wherever it is ascertainable in one and the same land simply according to province (as the Boeotians on a moist soil differed from the Athenians on a dry one); although the difference often is ascertainable only to an attentive eye while the rest ridicule the notion. Whatever pertains only to varieties and, therefore, is in itself hereditary (although not by that token persistent), can nonetheless bring forth in time, by means of matings that remain within the same families, what I call the *family strain*, where something characteristic becomes so deeply rooted in the generative force that it comes near to being a sport and perpetuates itself as does the latter . . .

### Division of the human genus into its different races

I believe it necessary to assume only four races of man in order to derive from them all the differences which are ascertainable

on first sight and which perpetuate themselves. They are (1) the race of Whites, (2) the Negro race, (3) the Hunnic (Mongolian or Kalmuck) race, (4) the Hindu or Hindustanic race. In the first, which has its chief seat in Europe, I count the Moors (Mauritanians of Africa), the Arabians (following Niebuhr), the Turko-Tataric ethnic stock and the Persians, and all the other peoples of Asia who are not specifically excepted by inclusion in the other divisions. The Negro race of the northern hemisphere is native (*Autochthones*) only to Africa; the race in the southern hemisphere (except Africa) is perhaps native only to New Guinea and in a few of the neighboring islands is but a transplantation. The Kalmuck race seems to be purest among the Khoshots; among the Torguts it apparently is somewhat mixed with Tataric blood; among the Dzingari more so; it is the same which in antiquity went under the name of Huns, later that of Mongols (in the wider sense) and now of Oliuts.

The Hindustanic race is very pure and ancient in the land of this name; but it is distinct from the people on the farther peninsula of India. I believe it possible to derive from these four races all other hereditary ethnic characters; either as mixed or as incipient races, of which the former is the offspring of different mixings, while the latter has not yet lived in the climate long enough to have assumed fully the character of the race belonging in it. Thus, the mixture of the Tataric with the Hunnic blood has produced the Kara-Kalpaks, the Nagai and the other half-races. The Hindustanic blood mixed with that of the ancient Scyths (in and around Tibet), plus more or less of the Hunnic, has perhaps generated the inhabitants of the farther peninsula of India as mixed races – the Tonkinese and the Chinese. The inhabitants of the northern arctic coast of Asia are an example of an incipient Hunnic race, showing already the universal black hair, the beardless chin, the flat face and eyes that are long slits and but slightly open – the influence of the arctic zone upon a people which in recent times has been driven out from under a mild latitude into these abodes; as for instance the maritime Lapps, an offshoot of the Hungarian people, have become adapted to the peculiarities of the latitude in but a few centuries, although they have budded off from a well-grown people of the temperate zone. Finally, the Americans seem to be a Hunnic race not yet completely adapted. For in the extreme north-west of America (where, according to all supposition, the peopling of this conti-

ment must have taken place out of north-eastern Asia, on account of the agreement in the animal species in both), on the northern shores of Hudson's Bay, the inhabitants are very similar to the Kalmucks. Farther southward the face to be sure becomes more open, has more relief; but the beardless chin, the universal black hair, the red-brown face color coincident with the coldness and the unimpressionableness of the temperament are all left-overs of the influences of a long sojourn in cold regions as we soon shall see; these stretch from the extreme north of this continent to Staten Island. The lengthier sojourn of the ancestors of the Americans in north-eastern Asia and the adjacent north-west of America has brought the Kalmuck formation to perfection; while the more rapid spread of their descendants southward in this continent has done the same for the American formation. From America there have emanated no colonizations. For on the islands of the Pacific Ocean all the inhabitants, except for some Negroes, are bearded; much rather, they indicate somewhat a derivation from the Malays, and likewise on the Sunda islands; and the kind of feudalism which was encountered on the island of Tahiti, and which is the customary Malayan form of state, confirms this supposition.

The reason for assuming the Negroes and Whites to be fundamental races is self-evident. As for the Hindustanic and Kalmuck races, the olive-yellow which underlies the more or less brown of the hot countries in the former race is just as impossible to derive from any other known national make-up as it is to derive the unique face of the latter; and both types are expressed unfailingly in the hybrids.

### **On the immediate causes of origin of these different races**

The elemental determinants for a certain development which are inherent in the nature of an organic body (plant or animal) may be called (if this development concerns particular parts) *germs* [*Keime*]; but if this development concerns only the size or the relationships between parts, I call these determinants *natural dispositions* [*Anlagen*]. In birds of the same species that nonetheless live in different climates, there are contained germs for

developing a new layer of feathers if they are to live in a cold climate; but these are restrained if they are to sojourn in a temperate climate. Because in a cold land the wheat grain must be more protected against damp cold than in a dry or warm land, it contains a predetermined ability or a natural disposition to produce gradually a thicker skin. This foresight of Nature to equip her creation with hidden inner furnishings against all sorts of future circumstances in order that it be preserved and suited to the variety of climate or soil, is worthy of all wonder; and in the course of wanderings and transplantations of animals and plants it seems to produce new sorts which, however, are nothing more than deviations and races of one and the same genus, whose germs and natural dispositions have merely developed appropriately at long periods in various ways.

Chance or common mechanical laws could not have brought out such harmonious relationships. Hence we must look upon such appropriate developments as preformed. But even there, where nothing answering the purpose is manifest, the mere capacity to reproduce its particular assumed trait is proof enough that a particular germ or natural disposition was to be found in the organic creation. For external things can be causes of an occasion, but not evocative causes, of that which is necessarily inherited and makes for resemblance. Just as chance or physical-mechanical causes cannot produce an organic body, no more can they add something to its generative force, i.e., effect something that can reproduce of itself, if it be a special configuration or relationship between parts. Air, sun, and food can modify an animal body in its growth, but cannot at the same time supply this alteration with a generative force that would be capable of again producing itself without this cause; on the contrary, what is to be reproduced must previously have lain in the generative force, as predisposed towards a development on occasion, according to circumstances which the creature may get into and in which it must maintain itself. For nothing alien to the animal must enter the generative force which would be capable of gradually removing the creature from its original disposition and of producing real exspeciations that perpetuate themselves.

Man was disposed for all climates and every constitution of ground; it follows that there must have lain in him many sorts of germs and natural dispositions, ready on occasion either to be

developed or hold back, in order that he might be fitted to his place in the world, and that he might appear in the course of generations to have been born to that place and made for it. In accordance with these conceptions we shall review the entire human genus throughout the world and, wherever the natural causes are not perhaps discernible, we shall adduce suitable ones for its deviations; but wherever we cannot ascertain the purposes we shall adduce natural causes. Here I shall simply note that air and sun seem to be the causes which can penetrate most deeply into the generative force and can produce a lasting development of the germs and dispositions; i.e. that can found a race; while on the other hand special food is sure to produce a human strain but its distinctiveness soon disappears on transplantation. That which is to depend upon the generative force must affect not the maintenance of life but that of its source, i.e. it must affect the fundamental principles of its animal organization and movement.

Displaced into the arctic zone, man gradually had to exspiciate to smaller stature; because with such, the strength of the heart remaining constant, the blood makes a complete circuit in a shorter time; the pulse therefore is more rapid and the warmth from the blood is greater. As a matter of fact, Cranz found the Greenlanders to be not only far shorter than the Europeans but also possessors of a noticeably greater natural body-heat. Even the disproportion between the total body-stature and the short legs of the northernmost peoples is well suited to their climate, since the latter parts of the body run a greater risk from cold because of their remoteness from the heart. At the same time, most of the now-known inhabitants of the arctic zone seemingly are but late arrivals there; as for instance the Lapps, who with the Huns have sprung from one and the same stock, namely the Hungarian, and have taken up their present seat only since the emigration of the latter from the eastern part of Asia; and yet they have already become adapted to this climate to a considerable degree.

But whenever a northern people is compelled over a long period of time to withstand the influence of the arctic cold it has to undergo yet greater alterations. All development which is extravagant with the body's juices must gradually be curtailed in this desiccating atmosphere. Hence the germs of the hair-growth

must be suppressed in time, so that only those remain which are necessary for covering the head. By means of a natural disposition the prominent parts of the face, which is least suitable for covering, so that those parts suffer continually from the cold, gradually become flattened by virtue of a foresight of Nature in order to preserve them better. The fleshy prominence below the eyes, the half-closed and squinting eyes seem a protective device partly against the desiccating cold of the air, partly against the light from the snow (against which the Eskimo wear snowgoggles), even though they may also be looked upon as natural effects of the climate, which are also to be observed in milder atmospheres though in far less pronounced measure. Thus there gradually originate the beardless chin, the flattened nose, thin lips, squinting eyes, flat face, reddish brown complexion with black hair; in a word, the Kalmuck facial formation, which through a long succession of generations in the same climate has entrenched itself into producing an enduring race, which maintains itself even if immediately afterwards such a people acquires new abodes in milder latitudes.

Doubtless it will be asked, by what right I derive the Kalmuck formation, which now is encountered in its most complete form in the temperate atmospheres, out of the north or the north-east. My reason is this. As far back as Herodotus we learn that the Argippae, dwellers in a land at the foot of mountains in a region which we may take for the Ural mountains, were glabrous and flat-nosed and covered their trees with white coverings (probably he is speaking of felt tents). These physiognomies are now found more or less in north-eastern Asia, but predominantly in the north-western part of America; which part has been explored starting from Hudson's Bay, and in which according to some recent reports the inhabitants look like genuine Kalmucks. If now we reflect that anciently animals and humans must have crossed back and forth between Asia and America, so that we meet with the same kinds of animals in the cold atmosphere of both continents; that this human race, according to Desguines, was known first of all to the Chinese about 1,000 years before our era as being located beyond the Amur, and gradually drove other peoples of Tataric, Hungarian, and other stocks out of their abodes; then this derivation from out of the cold region of the world will not appear to be forced.

However, the most intelligible case of all, namely the derivation of the Americans, as the not completely adapted race of people which has long inhabited the northernmost region of the world, will be well confirmed by the suppressed growth of hair on all parts of the body except the head, by the reddish, rusty color characteristic of the colder territories and the darker copper color of the hotter ones of this continent. For the red-brown appears to be suited (an effect of the atmospheric acids) as well to the cold climate as olive-brown (as an effect of the alkaline-bilious condition of the juices) to the hot; to say nothing of the temperament of the Americans; which temperament betrays a half-extinguished body-force, which can most naturally be looked upon as the effect of a cold world-region.

On the other hand, the extreme damp heat of the warm climate must show, upon a people that has aged in it sufficiently to have become fully adapted to its soil, effects that are quite the opposite of the former. It is precisely the opposite appearance from the Kalmuck formation that is engendered. The growth of the spongy parts of the body must increase in a hot, moist climate; hence a thick snub-nose and tumid lips. The skin must be oily, not only to moderate the influence of evaporation but also to prevent the injurious absorption of the noxious vapors of the air. The superabundance of the iron particles, which are present in all human blood, and which are precipitated in the reticular substance through evaporation of the acids of phosphorus (which make all Negroes stink) cause the blackness that shines through the superficial skin; and the high iron content of the blood seems also necessary in order to forestall a slackening of all parts. The oil of the skin which weakens the nutrient mucus that is requisite for hair growth, has permitted hardly even the production of a woolly covering for the head. Besides all this, damp heat promotes strong growth in animals in general; in short, the Negro is produced, well suited to his climate; that is, strong, fleshy, supple, but in the midst of the bountiful provision of his motherland lazy, soft and dawdling.

The native of Hindustan may be looked upon as having sprung from one of the oldest human races. His country, braced to the north against a high mountain range and from north to south to the tip of the peninsula traversed by a long mountain chain (to which I count also Tibet in the north which perhaps was the

common place of refuge for mankind and his stock of vegetation after the last great revolution of our earth), has in an equable atmosphere the most perfect drainage-divide, such as is possessed by no other part of the Asiatic mainland situated in an equable climate. It therefore has been dry and habitable even in the most ancient times, since both the eastern peninsula of India and China must have been still uninhabited in those times of floods (for in them the rivers, instead of being divided, run parallel). Here then it was possible for a firm human race to take its foundation over a long period of time. The olive-yellow of the Indian skin, the true gypsy color, which is at the base of the more or less dark brown of other eastern peoples, is just as characteristic and maintains itself as constantly as the black color of the Negroes; and it seems, along with the rest of the formation and the different temperament, to be as much the effect of a dry heat as the other of a moist one. According to Ives, the common diseases of the Indians are congested gall-bladders and swollen livers; but their innate color is inclined to yellow anyway and seems to indicate a continuous excretion of the gall that has entered the blood and that in saponified form dissolves perhaps the thickened juices and dissipates them and thereby cools blood at least in the external parts.

So now we have surmises which at least are substantial enough to be counterpoise for those other surmises which find the differences in the human genus so impossible to reconcile that they prefer to assume discrete local creations. To say with Voltaire, God who created the reindeer in Lapland to devour the moss of these cold regions, created also the Laplander to eat the reindeer, is no poor flash for a poet; but it is a bad expedient for the philosopher who may not depart from the chain of natural causes except where the direction it is immediately bound to take is obvious to him.

We have counted four human races under which all the manifold variations of this genus are supposed to be conceived. But all deviations need nevertheless a stem genus; and either we must declare it now extinct, or else we must seek among those extant the one which we can best compare to the stem-genus. To be sure we cannot hope any more to come upon the unaltered original human form anywhere in the world. Precisely because of Nature's propensity to adapt to the soil everywhere over long

generations, the human form must now everywhere be supplied with local modifications. But that portion of the earth between the 31st and 52nd parallels in the Old World (which seems to earn the name of Old World even from the standpoint of peopling) is rightly held to be that in which the most happy mixture of influences of the colder and hotter regions and also the greatest wealth of earthly creatures is encountered; where man too must have departed the least from his original formation because from here he is equally well prepared for all transplantations. Here, to be sure, we find white inhabitants, but they are brunette; so we shall assume their form to be closest to the stem-genus. The very blond, soft-white-skinned, red-haired, pale-blue-eyes variation seems to be its nearest in the north; in the time of the Romans it inhabited the northern regions of Germany and, according to other evidence, farther eastward to the Altai mountains, but everywhere in unmeasurable forests of a rather cold region. So the influence of a cold and damp air, which gives the juices a tendency towards scurvy, finally produced a certain strain of humans which would have attained the self-sufficiency of a race; if only in this region of the earth frequent alien mixture had not interrupted the progress of the variation. We can therefore reckon this as at least an approach to the genuine races; and thereupon they may be brought into the following sketch in connection with the natural causes of their origin:

*Stem genus: white brunette*

First race, very blond (northern Europe), of damp cold.

Second race, copper-red (America), of dry cold.

Third race, black (Senegambia), of dry heat.

Fourth race, olive-yellow (Indians), of dry heat.

In the following excerpt from his philosophico-anthropological work, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1764), Kant argues that different nations have different aesthetic and moral sensibilities. The "beautiful" and the "sublime" are, for Kant, various qualities of aesthetic and moral "feeling." At the top of Kant's classification, "the German . . . has a fortunate combination of feeling, both in that of the sublime and in that of the

beautiful" (thereby surpassing the Englishman and the Frenchman who each seem to have predominately only one half of the feeling); the African, on the other hand, is at the bottom. Quoting from Hume's footnote (see Chapter 3), Kant arrived at the conclusion that the African "has no feeling beyond the trifling." (We need to bear in mind that for Kant, the "feeling of the beautiful and the sublime" refers to the higher realms of aesthetic experience. While almost every human being is capable of experiencing the "coarse" pleasures which do not require intellectual and moral cultivation, according to Kant, only the refined intellect or character is capable of ascending to the experience of the qualitatively higher moral delights of the beautiful (which arouses joy) and the sublime (which arouses awe).)

## On National Characteristics, so far as They Depend upon the Distinct Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime

The first sort of beautiful feeling seems to be excellently suited to the Italians, and the second, to the French. In the national character that bears the expression of the sublime, this is either that of the terrifying sort, which is a little inclined to the adventurous, or it is a feeling for the noble, or for the splendid. I believe I have reason to be able to ascribe the feeling of the first sort to the Spaniard, the second to the Englishman, and the third to the

[Note on the title] My intention is not at all to portray the characters of peoples in detail, but I sketch only a few features that express the feeling of the sublime and the beautiful which they show. One can readily imagine that in such a picture only a passing justice could be demanded, that its prototypes stand out only in the great multitude of those who lay claim to a finer feeling, and that no nation lacks dispositions that combine the most excellent qualities of this sort. On that account the blame that might occasionally fall upon a people can offend no one, for it is of such a nature that each one can hit it like a ball to his neighbor. Whether these national differences are contingent and depend upon the times and the type of government, or are bound by a certain necessity to the climate, I do not here inquire. [Editor's note: All following footnotes are also Kant's.]

German. The feeling for the splendid is not original by nature, like the remaining kinds of taste; and although a spirit of imitation can be united with every other feeling, it really is more peculiar to the glittering sublime; for this is properly a mixed feeling combining the beautiful and the sublime, in which each taken by itself is colder, so that the mind is free enough by means of their combination to attend to examples, and in fact it stands in need of the impulsion of such examples. Accordingly, the German will have less feeling in respect to the beautiful than the Frenchman, and less of what pertains to the sublime than the Englishman; but instances in which both appear in combination will be more suitable to his feeling, as he will fortunately escape the faults into which an excessive strength of either of these sorts of feeling could fall.

I shall mention only fleetingly the arts and the sciences, the choice of which can confirm the taste of the nations which we have imputed to them. The Italian genius has distinguished itself especially in music, painting, sculpture, and architecture. All these beautiful arts encounter a similarly fine taste in France, although their beauty there is less moving. Taste in respect to poetic or oratorical perfection in France falls more into the beautiful, in England more into the sublime. Fine jests, comedy, laughing satire, enamored flirting, and light and naturally flowing writing are native to France. In England, on the other hand, are thoughts of profound content, tragedy, the epic poem, and in general the solid gold of wit, which under French hammers can be stretched to thin leaves of great surface. In Germany wit still shines very much through a foil. Earlier, it was flagrant, but through examples and by the understanding of the nation it has become more charming and noble – but the first with less naïveté, the second with a less bold energy, than in the aforementioned peoples. The taste of the Dutch nation for a painful order and a grace that stirs one to solicitude and embarrassment causes one to expect little feeling also in regard to the inartificial and free movements of the genius, whose beauty would only be deformed by the anxious prevention of faults. Nothing can be more set against all art and science than an adventurous taste because this distorts nature, which is the archetype of all the beautiful and noble. Hence the Spanish nation has displayed little feeling for the beautiful arts and sciences.

The mental characters of peoples are most discernible by whatever in them is moral, on which account we will yet take under consideration their different feelings in respect to the sublime and beautiful from this point of view.<sup>1</sup>

The Spaniard is earnest, taciturn, and truthful. There are few more honest merchants in the world than the Spanish. He has a proud soul and more feeling for great than for beautiful actions. In his composition little of the kind and gentle benevolence is to be encountered; thus he is often harsh and indeed quite cruel. The *auto-da-fé* is maintained not so much by superstition as by the adventurous inclination of the nation, aroused by the pomp and terror of a rite in which one sees the *San Benito*, daubed with diabolic figures, committed to the flames kindled in an access of devotion. One cannot say that the Spaniard is haughtier or more amorous than anyone of another people; but he is both in an adventurous way, which is odd and exceptional. Letting the plow stand and walking with long sword and mantle up and down the tilled fields until the traveling stranger has passed; or in a bullfight, where for once the beautiful of the land are seen unveiled, to proclaim his ladylove by a special salute and then to risk his life in her honor in a dangerous battle with a wild beast – these are exceptional and odd actions, which deviate far from the natural.

The Italian appears to have a feeling mixed from that of a Spaniard and that of a Frenchman, more feeling for the beautiful than the former and more for the sublime than the latter. In this way, as I think, the remaining traits of his moral character can be explained.

The Frenchman has a predominant feeling for the morally beautiful. He is gracious, courteous, and complaisant. He becomes familiar very quickly, is jesting and free in society, and the expression "a *man* or a *lady of good tone*" has an understandable meaning only for him who has acquired the polite feeling of a Frenchman. Even his sublime sensations, of which he has not a few, are subordinated to the feeling of the beautiful and obtain

<sup>1</sup> It is hardly necessary that I repeat here my foregoing apology. In each folk the finest part contains praiseworthy characters of all kinds, and whoever is affected by one or another reproach will, if he is fine enough, understand the advantage that follows when he relinquishes all the others to their fate but makes an exception of himself.



their strength only through harmony with the latter. He likes very much to be witty and will without hesitation sacrifice something of the truth for a conceit. On the other hand, where he cannot be witty,<sup>2</sup> he displays just as profound an insight as someone from any other country, for example in mathematics and in the other dry or profound arts and sciences. To him a *bon mot* has not a fleeting worth, as elsewhere; it is eagerly spread about and preserved in books like the most momentous event. He is a quiet citizen and revenges himself against the oppressions of the farmers-general by satires, or by remonstrances in parliament, which, when they have given the fathers of the people a beautiful patriotic aspect as intended, do nothing further than to become crowned by a glorious rebuke, and are celebrated in ingenious elegies. The object to which the merits and national talents of this people refer most often is woman.<sup>3</sup> It is not as if she

2 In metaphysics, ethics, and theology, one cannot be cautious enough of the publications of this nation. Commonly there prevails in them much beautiful delusion, which in a cold inquiry does not hold up under the test. The Frenchman loves the bold in his declarations; but in order to attain the truth, one must be not bold but cautious. In history he loves anecdotes, to which nothing more is lacking than only to wish that they were true.

3 In France, woman gives the tone to all companies and all society. Now of course it cannot be denied that gatherings without the fair sex are rather tasteless and boring; but if the lady gives the beautiful tone, so should the man on his side give the noble. Failing that, the society becomes just as boring, but from an opposite reason, for nothing disgusts so much as excessive sweetness. The French taste is not to say, "Is the gentleman at home?" but "Is Madame at home?" "Madame is in her toilette," "Madame has vapors" (a sort of beautiful caprice); in short, with Madame and by Madame are all conversations and all pleasures kept occupied. However, the woman is not at all more honored by this. A man who flirts is always without feeling, as well of true respect as of tender love. I would certainly not have wanted to say what Rousseau so boldly asserts, that a woman never becomes more than a grown-up child [See translator's note below]. But the sharp-sighted Swiss wrote this in France and presumably, as such a great defender of the fair sex, he felt indignation that it is not treated there with more respect. [Kant's translator notes: "Rousseau in *Émile* says 'Les mâles, en qui l'on empêche le développement ultérieur du sexe, gardent cette conformité toute leur vie; ils ont toujours de grands enfants: et les femmes, ne perdant point cette même conformité, semblent, à bien des égards, ne jamais être autre chose.' Kant has apparently taken the phrase modifying 'femmes' as nonrestrictive. Rousseau's English translator makes it restrictive: 'women who never lose this resemblance seem in many respects never to be more than children.' The latter better fits the context. (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile ou de l'Éducation*, ed. Ernest Flammarion, Paris, n.d., p. 272; and *Émile*, trans. Barbara Foxley, London, 1911, p. 171)."]

were loved or treasured here more than elsewhere, but she gives the best occasion to display in her light the most favorite talents of wit, politeness, and good manners. Besides, a vain person of either sex always loves only himself; to him, the opposite sex is merely a plaything. The Frenchman does not actually lack noble qualities, but these can be brought to life only by the feeling of the beautiful; thus the fair sex here would be able to have a mightier influence to arouse the noblest deeds of the male and to set them astir than perhaps anywhere else in the world, if one were minded to favor this bent of the national spirit a little. It is a pity that the lilies do not spin.

The fault to which this fictional character comes nearest is the trifling, or with a more polite expression, the frivolous. Weighty matters are treated as sport, and trivialities serve for the most earnest business. In old age the Frenchman still sings sportive songs, and is, as much as he can be, still gallant toward the ladies. In these remarks I have great authorities from this nation itself on my side, and I retreat behind a Montesquieu or a D'Alembert, in order to be safe against any anxious indignation.

The Englishman is cool in the beginning of every acquaintance, and indifferent toward a stranger. He has little inclination to small complaisances; on the other hand, as soon as he is a friend, he is laid under great performances of service. He takes little trouble to be witty in society, or to display a polite demeanor; but rather, he is reasonable and steady. He is a bad imitator, cares very little about what others judge, and follows solely his own taste. In relation to woman he is not of French politeness, but displays toward her far more respect, and perhaps carries this too far, as in marriage he generally grants to his wife an unlimited esteem. He is steadfast, sometimes to the point of obstinacy, bold and determined, often to audacity, and acts according to principles generally to the point of being headstrong. He easily becomes an eccentric, not out of vanity but because he concerns himself little about others, and does not easily do violence to his taste out of complaisance or imitation; on that account he is seldom as much loved as the Frenchman, but when he is well known, generally more highly esteemed.

The German has a feeling mixed from that of an Englishman and that of a Frenchman, but appears to come nearer to the first, and any greater similarity to the latter is only affected and imitated. He has a fortunate combination of feeling, both in that

of the sublime and in that of the beautiful; and if in the first he does not equal an Englishman, nor in the second a Frenchman, he yet surpasses both so far as he unites them. He displays more complaisance in society than the first, and if indeed he does not bring as much pleasant liveliness and wit into the company as the Frenchman, still he expresses more moderation and understanding. In love, just as in all forms of taste, he is reasonably methodical, and because he combines the beautiful with the noble he is cool enough in each feeling to occupy his mind with reflections upon demeanor, splendor, and appearances. Therefore family, title, and rank, in civil relations as well as in love, are of great significance to him. Far more than the aforementioned nationalities, he asks how people might *judge him*; and if there is something in his character which could arouse the wish for a general improvement, it is this weakness whereby he does not venture to be original although he has all the talents needed for that, and occupies himself too much with the opinion of others. This takes away all support from his moral qualities, as it makes them fickle and falsely contrived.

The Dutchman is of an orderly and diligent disposition and, as he looks solely to the useful, he has little feeling for what in the finer understanding is beautiful or sublime. A great man signifies exactly the same to him as a rich man, by a friend he means his correspondent, and a visit that makes him no profit is very boring to him. He contrasts as much with a Frenchman as with an Englishman, and in a way he is a German become very phlegmatic . . .

In love the Germans and the English have rather healthy inclinations, a bit delicate in feeling but rather more of a hale and hearty taste. In this point the Italian is sophisticated, the Spaniard visionary, the Frenchman dainty . . .

If we cast a fleeting glance over the other parts of the world, we find the Arab the noblest man in the Orient, yet of a feeling that degenerates very much into the adventurous. He is hospitable, generous, and truthful; yet his narrative and history and on the whole his feeling are always interwoven with some wonderful thing. His inflamed imagination presents things to him in unnatural and distorted images, and even the propagation of his religion was a great adventure. If the Arabs are, so to speak, the Spaniards of the Orient, similarly the Persians are the French of

Asia. They are good poets, courteous and of fairly fine taste. They are not such strict followers of Islam, and they permit to their pleasure-prone disposition a tolerably mild interpretation of the Koran. The Japanese could in a way be regarded as the Englishmen of this part of the world, but hardly in any other quality than their resoluteness – which degenerates into the utmost stubbornness – their valor, and disdain of death. For the rest, they display few signs of a finer feeling. The Indians have a dominating taste of the grotesque, of the sort that falls into the adventurous. Their religion consists of grotesqueries. Idols of monstrous form, the priceless tooth of the mighty monkey Hanuman, the unnatural atonements of the fakirs (heathen mendicant friars) and so forth are in this taste. The despotic sacrifice of wives in the very same funeral pyre that consumes the corpse of the husband is a hideous excess. What trifling grotesqueries do the verbose and studied compliments of the Chinese contain! Even their paintings are grotesque and portray strange and unnatural figures such as are encountered nowhere in the world. They also have venerable grotesqueries because they are of very ancient custom,<sup>4</sup> and no nation in the world has more of these than this one.

The Negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the trifling. Mr Hume challenges anyone to cite a single example in which a Negro has shown talents, and asserts that among the hundreds of thousands of blacks who are transported elsewhere from their countries, although many of them have even been set free, still not a single one was ever found who presented anything great in art or science or any other praiseworthy quality, even though among the whites some continually rise aloft from the lowest rabble, and through superior gifts earn respect in the world. So fundamental is the difference between these two races of man, and it appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as in color. The religion of fetishes so widespread among them is perhaps a sort of idolatry that sinks as deeply into the trifling as appears to be possible to human na-

4 In Peking they still carry on the ceremony, in an eclipse of the sun or moon, of driving away with a great noise the dragon that wants to devour these heavenly bodies and thus they preserve a miserable custom from the ignorance of most ancient times, although they are now much better informed.

ture. A bird feather, a cow's horn, a conch shell, or any other common object, as soon as it becomes consecrated by a few words, is an object of veneration and of invocation in swearing oaths. The blacks are very vain but in the Negro's way, and so talkative that they must be driven apart from each other with thrashings.

Among all savages there is no nation that displays so sublime a mental character as those of North America. They have a strong feeling for honor, and as in quest of it they seek wild adventures hundreds of miles abroad, they are still extremely careful to avert the least injury to it when their equally harsh enemy, upon capturing them, seeks by cruel pain to extort cowardly groans from them. The Canadian savage, moreover, is truthful and honest. The friendship he establishes is just as adventurous and enthusiastic as anything of that kind reported from the most ancient and fabled times. He is extremely proud, feels the whole worth of freedom, and even in his education suffers no encounter that would let him feel a low subservience. Lycurgus probably gave statutes to just such savages; and if a lawgiver arose among the Six Nations, one would see a Spartan republic rise in the New World; for the undertaking of the Argonauts is little different from the war parties of these Indians, and Jason excels Attakakullakulla in nothing but the honor of a Greek name. All these savages have little feeling for the beautiful in moral understanding, and the generous forgiveness of an injury, which is at once noble and beautiful, is completely unknown as a virtue among the savages, but rather is disdained as a miserable cowardice. Valor is the greatest merit of the savage and revenge his sweetest bliss. The remaining natives of this part of the world show few traces of a mental character disposed to the finer feelings, and an extraordinary apathy constitutes the mark of this type of race.

If we examine the relation of the sexes in these parts of the world, we find that the European alone has found the secret of decorating with so many flowers the sensual charm of a mighty inclination and of interlacing it with so much morality that he has not only extremely elevated its agreeableness but has also made it very decorous. The inhabitant of the Orient is of a very false taste in this respect. Since he has no concept of the morally beautiful which can be united with this impulse, he loses even the worth of the sensuous enjoyment, and his harem is a con-

stant source of unrest. He thrives on all sorts of amorous grotesqueries, among which the imaginary jewel is only the foremost, which he seeks to safeguard above all else, whose whole worth consists only in smashing it, and of which one in our part of the world generally entertains much malicious doubt – and yet to whose preservation he makes use of very unjust and often loathsome means. Hence there a woman is always in a prison, whether she may be a maid, or have a barbaric, good-for-nothing and always suspicious husband. In the lands of the black, what better can one expect than what is found prevailing, namely the feminine sex in the deepest slavery? A despairing man is always a strict master over anyone weaker, just as with us that man is always a tyrant in the kitchen who outside his own house hardly dares to look anyone in the face. Of course, Father Labat reports that a Negro carpenter, whom he reproached for haughty treatment toward his wives, answered: "You whites are indeed fools, for first you make great concessions to your wives, and afterward you complain when they drive you mad." And it might be that there were something in this which perhaps deserved to be considered; but in short, this fellow was quite black from head to foot, a clear proof that what he said was stupid. Among all savages there are none by whom the feminine sex is held in greater actual regard than by those of Canada. In this they surpass perhaps even our civilized part of the world. It is not as if they paid the women humble respects; those would be mere compliments. No, they actually exercise authority. They assemble and deliberate upon the most important regulations of the nation, even upon the question of war or peace. They thereupon send their deputies to the men's council and generally it is their voice that determines the decision. But they purchase this privilege dearly enough. They are burdened with all the domestic concerns, and furthermore share all the hardships of the men.

While Kant himself edited for publication his lectures in anthropology (*Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*), he wrote, concerning his lectures in geography, "it will not be possible, considering my age, to produce a compendium from my manuscript." The following excerpts are taken therefore from a posthumous edition of Kant's lectures,

*Physical Geography*, in volumes 2 and 8 of Kant's *Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: Reimer, 1900–66). In addition to insightful observations about Africa, Kant's opinions on the geographical distribution of peoples ("the tallest and most beautiful people . . . are on the parallel . . . which runs through Germany") and his hierarchically arranged "innate" characteristics of the races ("The inhabitant of the temperate parts of the world, above all the central part, has a more beautiful body, works harder, is more jocular, more controlled in his passions, more intelligent than any other race of people in the world" or "Humanity is at its greatest perfection in the race of the whites") remain the same as in the *Observations*.

## From *Physical Geography*

### On Countries that are Known and Unknown to Europeans

#### *Africa*

Another object which interests the archeologists would be a more precise knowledge of Egypt. Besides, Africa deserves the most careful investigation, and it seems to have been better known by the ancients in its interior than by us, because they traveled more by land. Even many of the coastlines of this continent are still unknown today to the Europeans, and the center of the continent completely eludes our gaze. It is only Egypt that we know somewhat more exactly, but even here what we know is extremely little.

We have reason to assume the existence of a significant lake in Africa into which the eastern, and not as otherwise believed the western, branch of the Niger river flows. Incidentally, we also come across the largest and most beautiful animals on this continent as well as the best plants. According to some accounts, timid Portuguese believed the most beautiful interior parts of Africa to be peopled with [African] cannibals who even fattened humans up for slaughter. However, we should not attach

credibility to such fables so easily because experience has taught us that these people only slaughter their prisoners of war whom they capture while still alive, and then with great ceremony . . . Whenever [Europeans] did not know much about the country, someone would say that it was inhabited by cannibals, despite the fact that there are very few of these kinds of people or even more correctly, none at all.

The number of names of countries and towns on the map of Africa is quite considerable; but one would be much mistaken if one were to believe that wherever there is a name there are inhabitants . . . The reason that the interior of Africa is so unknown to us, as if they were countries of the moon, lies far more with us Europeans than with the Africans, in that we have made ourselves suspects through slave trade. The coast of Africa is, in fact, visited by Europeans; but these journeys are very violent because Europeans carry away each year between 60,000 and 80,000 Negroes to America. Thus it has come to pass that even up until modern times hardly 30 miles from the coast into the interior of this continent is known to Europeans . . .

### Geographical distribution of humans

If we begin with the inhabitants of the icy zones, we find that their color approaches that of the inhabitants of the hot zones. The Samoyeds, the Danish and Swedish Laplanders, the Greenlanders, and those who live in the icy zone of America have a brown facial color and black hair. Here great cold appears to have the same effect as great heat. Like the people in the hot parts of the world they also have a very sparse beard. Their build is like that of a tree-trunk. It is small, their legs are short, they have a broad and flat face and a large mouth.

Those who live closest to them in the temperate zones (except the Kalmucks and the peoples related to their tribe) have a blond or brownish hair and skin color and are greater in stature. The tallest and most beautiful people on dry land are on the parallel and the degrees which run through Germany . . . In the northern parts of Mongolia, Kashmir, Georgia, Mingrelien, and Circassien as far as the British–American colonies, one finds people of blond color, well formed, with blue eyes. The further south one goes,

there increases the brunette color, the thinness, and the small stature which degenerates into the Indian-yellow or Moorish figure.

One can say that the only true Negroes are in Africa and New Guinea. Not just the evenly smoked-black color but also the black woolly hair, the broad face, the flat nose, and the thick lips constitute the characteristics of these people, in addition to clumsy large bones. In Asia these blacks have neither the deep black color nor the woolly hair, unless they are descended from people who have been brought over from Africa. There is no native black person in America, where the facial color is copper and the hair is straight. However there are large groups of descendants of the African slaves.

In Africa one calls Moors those brown people who are descendants of the *Mauren*. The actual black people are the Negroes. The above-mentioned Moors stretch along the coast of Barbary to Senegal. In comparison, from there to Gambia are the blackest Moors, but also the most beautiful in the world, above all the Wolofs. The Fuli are black-brown. On the Gold Coast they are not so black and have very thick lips. Those from Congo and Angola to Cape Negro are a little less so. The Hottentots are only black-brown but they have an otherwise quite Moorish appearance. On the other side (of the Cape), namely the eastern side, the Caffers like the Abyssinians, are not true Negroes.

#### *A few curiosities about the blacks*

- 1 The Negroes are born white apart from their genitals and a ring around the navel, which are black. During the first months of life the black color spreads out from these parts over the whole body.
- 2 When a Negro burns himself the spot turns white. Long illnesses also turn the Negroes quite white; but a body that has become white through illness turns blacker in death than it ever was before.
- 3 The Europeans who live in this hot belt of the world do not become Negroes after many generations but rather retain their European figure and color. The Portuguese on Cape Verde, who should become Negroes in 200 years, are Mulattos.

- 4 The Negroes, if they do not mix with white people, remain over many generations Negroes, even in Virginia.
- 5 White and black mixed produces *Mulattos*. The children that the latter have with whites are called in Spanish America *Terzerons*; their children out of a marriage with a white person a *Quarteron*, their children with whites *Quinteron*, and their children with whites are then once again called white. However, when a *Terzeron* marries a *Mulatto* woman, the children are generated backwards along this color-chain.
- 6 The inhabitants of the *Cordilleren* resemble the Europeans; in Ethiopia, they look brown.
- 7 Occasionally there are white Moors or Albinos who come from black parents. They are Moorish in figure, have curly, snow-white, woolly hair, are pale and can only see in moonlight.
- 8 The Moors, like all inhabitants of the hot zones have a thick skin; when one disciplines them, one cannot hit with sticks but rather whip with split canes, so that the blood finds a way out and does not suppurate under the skin.

#### *Opinions on the origin of blackness*

Some people imagine that Ham is the father of the Moors and that God made him black as a punishment which now all his descendants have inherited. However, one can provide no proof as to why the color black should be the mark of a curse in a more fitting fashion than the color white.

Many physicians believe that the color black comes from the epidermis and the black substance of which it is stained. Still others trace it to the reticular membrane. Because the color of humans goes through all the shades of yellow, brown and dark brown until it becomes black in the hot parts of the earth, it is clear that the reason for it is the hot climate. However, it is certain that a great number of generations has been needed for it to become part of the species and hereditary.

It appears that the drying up [by the hot sun] of the vessels that carry the blood and serum under the skin brings about the lack of a beard and the short curly hair. Likewise, because the sunlight that falls through the surface skin into the dried up

vessels eats up the reticular membrane, there arises the appearance of a black color.

How such a coincidental thing as color could, however, become part of a species cannot be explained so easily. But one sees from other examples that this is the situation in other parts of nature. The reason why some hens become quite white in color can be explained by the difference in food, air and the way in which they are raised; and if one chooses only the white chicks from the many chicks that come from one set of parents and puts them together, one finally achieves a white race – a result which does not easily turn out differently. Is this not the way that English and Arabian or Spanish horses raised on dry land generate themselves, so that they finally create foals of a quite different build? All dogs that are brought from Europe to Africa become dumb and bald and produce only similar offspring thereafter. Similar changes occur with sheep, cows and other species of animal. The fact that Moors occasionally have a white child happens for the same reason that, now and again, there appears a white raven, a white crow or blackbird.

The fact that it is the heat of the area – rather than a particular set of parents – that causes blackness can be seen by the fact that in the same country [Africa] those that live in the flat parts are far blacker than those who live in the high altitudes. That is why the blacker people live in Senegal than in Congo, and blacker people live in Angola than in Upper Ethiopia or in Abyssinia.

### **Innate characteristics of the human being considered throughout the whole world**

All oriental nations that lie towards the East on the meridian of Bengal have something of the Kalmucks or Tartars about them. They are made in the following way: a face that is wide on top and narrow and flat below, almost no protruding nose, very small eyes, very thick eyebrows, black hair, thin and sparse tufts of hair instead of a beard and short legs with fat calves. Shaped in this manner are the eastern Tartars, the Chinese, the Arak, the Siamese, the Japanese, etc., although they all make themselves more beautiful on occasion.

Without taking any notice of the superstitious opinions about the origins of certain forms [*Bildungen*] one can make only the

following remark with certainty: namely, that in this area of Meliapur on the Coromandel coast, there are many people with very fat legs. A few sensible travelers trace the fat legs to the constitution of the water, in the same way as goiters in the Tyrol and Salzburg are similarly supposed to stem from the water, which contains sinter. The giants of Patagonia are, at least as a people of giants, fictitious. The same fictitious origin could be ascribed to the people with raw and huge lips that are supposed to live in Senegal, who hold a cloth in front of the mouth and communicate without speech. The people Plinius spoke of, the one-eyed, bumpy, one-footed people without a mouth, dwarves and the like, also belong to this category.

The inhabitants of the coast of New Holland have half-closed eyes and cannot see into the distance without tilting their heads right back. They accustom themselves to this because of the many mosquitoes that are always flying into their eyes. Some peoples, like the Moors of Sierra Leone and the Mongols who are within the area of China, spread an evil smell.

Among the Hottentots, as Kolbe reports, many women develop a piece of leather on their pubic bone which partially covers their reproductive organs, and which they are supposed to cut off from time to time. Ludolph reports the same of many Egyptian (Ethiopian) women. (See *Le Vaillant's Travels*.) The people on Formosa, in the interior of Borneo etc., who possess the beginnings of an ape's tail . . . seem to be not completely fictitious.

In the hot countries the human being matures in all aspects earlier, but does not, however, reach the perfection of those in the temperate zones. Humanity is at its greatest perfection in the race of the whites. The yellow Indians do have a meagre talent. The Negroes are far below them and at the lowest point are a part of the American peoples.

The Moors and the other peoples between the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn can run quite astonishingly. They as well as other savages have more strength than the other civilized peoples, which stems from the free movement allowed them in their childhood. The Hottentots can perceive a ship with the naked eye at the same distance as a European can with a telescope. The women in the hottest parts of the world already produce children at the age of 9 or 10 and finish before they are 25 years old.

Don Ulloa remarks that in Cartagena in America and in the surrounding areas people become clever very early but they do not continue to grow in intelligence at the same rate. All inhabitants of the hottest zones are exceptionally lethargic. With some this laziness is somewhat mitigated by rule and force.

When an Indian sees a European going somewhere, he thinks that he has something to accomplish. When he comes back, he thinks that he has already taken care of his business, but if he sees him going out a third time he thinks that he has lost his mind, as the European is going for a walk for pleasure, which no Indian does; he is only capable of imagining it. Indians are also indecisive, and both traits belong to the nations that live very far north. The weakening of their limbs is supposedly caused by brandy, tobacco, opium and other strong things. From their timidity comes superstition, particularly in regard to magic, and the same with jealousy. Their timidity makes them into slavish underlings when they have kings and evokes an idolatrous reverence in them, just as their laziness moves them rather to run around in the forest and suffer need than to be held to their labors by the orders of their masters.

Montesquieu is correct in his judgment that the weak-heartedness that makes death so terrifying to the Indian or the Negro also makes him fear many things other than death that the European can withstand. The Negro slave from Guinea drowns himself if he is to be forced into slavery. The Indian women burn themselves. The Carib commits suicide at the slightest provocation. The Peruvian trembles in the face of an enemy, and when he is led to death, he is ambivalent, as though it means nothing. His awakened imagination, however, also makes him dare to do something, but the heat of the moment is soon past and timidity resumes its old place again . . .

The inhabitant of the temperate parts of the world, above all the central part, has a more beautiful body, works harder, is more jocular, more controlled in his passions, more intelligent than any other race of people in the world. That is why at all points in time these peoples have educated the others and controlled them with weapons. The Romans, Greeks, the ancient Nordic peoples, Genghis Khan, the Turks, Tamurlaine, the Europeans after Columbus's discoveries, they have all amazed the southern lands with their arts and weapons.