ONE

Human Variety Before Race

Aesthetics, in both the broad sense of being about the non-rational aspects of the mind and in the narrower sense of being about beauty, had a vigorous and contentious life in Europe, especially in Britain, long before it was given definition by Baumgarten in 1751. In the first half of the century, and often later, matters of beauty and human variety were discussed primarily by philosophically minded generalists: 'Virtuosi' or Natural Philosophers in Britain, 'Philosophes' in France and 'Gelehrten' in the German lands. They were concerned with the deepest matters of human existence, unconfined by boundaries between academic disciplines. Hence pronouncements on both human variety and aesthetics were often made by the same people, not infrequently within the same discourse. The later part of the century, however, saw the triumph of academics in all fields to do with the history and interpretation of man; increasingly a distinction was made between amateur and professional.

Aesthetics and human variety as subjects of study followed ultimately from John Locke's enquiries into the human mind. They are both aspects of 'natural philosophy', the belief that the human mind was as knowable as the human body through 'unprejudiced Experience, and Observation' and the exercise of logic.' If aesthetics, even before the word was coined, became a way of enquiring into mankind's non-rational perceptions or feelings, then anthropology, again avant la lettre, became the study of the way that human beings came to differ from each other according to their environment or their means of subsistence, on the almost universal understanding that mankind was originally a single people. Of course there was resistance to Locke in England, and especially in Germany, on theological grounds, and in
France on grounds of Cartesian rationality. But empirical method, and the idea of man as an historical being, broadly prevailed in France and England. Aesthetics came to the fore as human behaviour came under philosophical scrutiny, and anthropology when theological objections to studying the history of man in secular terms could be overcome. If aesthetic response could be assumed to vary from person to person, and from one human group to another, then it made sense to enquire into the ways in which the aesthetic as well as other responses might be contingent on environment or other factors.

The primary division of the world inherited by early eighteenth-century Europe, the Four Continents of Europe, Africa, America and Asia, accounted for the whole of mankind within a single spatial frame. Everyone alive or who had ever lived could be given a physical and cultural locus in relation to the rest of humanity. The idea of ‘nation’ or people, on the other hand, had no set limits. Travellers could and did identify ever more peoples, and were able to observe differences from and similarities to others, sometimes across the already fluid boundaries of the traditional continents.

The Four Continents go back to the classical tripartite division of the world into Europe, Asia and Africa, to which America was added in the sixteenth century. The identification of Europe with Christendom was made at least as early as the fifteenth century, and by 1700 the word ‘Europe’ was virtually synonymous with, and the preferred term to, ‘Christendom’. ³ Europe was identified in Montesquieu’s Lettres Persanes of 1721 as a place of frenetic activity and desire for enrichment, a puzzle to the visiting ‘Persians’, who were used to a static society and leisurely way of life. ⁴ The idea of Europe as synonymous with Christendom was effectively, if incompletely, replaced in the eighteenth century by the claim of European moral and intellectual superiority over non-Europeans. In Le siècle de Louis XIV (1751) Voltaire argued that the strength of Europe in its political diversity was based ultimately on common principles, and added the idea of cultural superiority, the ‘republique litteraire’, the scientific and artistic community created by the internationalism within Europe of academies and universities. ⁵ In 1756, in Essai sur les moeurs et l’esprit des nations, Voltaire argued that
Europe was now richer and more civilized than any other continent, even though civilization had originated in East, only being taken up in Europe at the end of the Middle Ages. Voltaire heralded a period from the 1750s to the 1770s when the identification of Europe with civilization became associated with progress, and the traditional line between civilization and barbarism was drawn between Europe and the rest of the world. For the *philosophes*, Europe could represent not only civilization but harmony in diversity through the balance of power; freedom as opposed to the despotism of Asia or the slavery of Africa; and energetic activity versus passivity.

The association of Europe with liberty had an ancient precedent in the distinction made between the Greeks and the despotic Persians, but, despite the growing assumption towards the end of the century and beyond that ancient Greece at its height represented Europe’s Golden Age, the Greeks had not necessarily thought of themselves as European at all. Aristotle saw the Greeks as a kind of buffer between Europe, represented by warlike Macedonia, and Asia and having the virtues of each; they were courageous like Europeans who lived in a cold climate, and skilled and intelligent as Asians, who lacked courage. The Greeks then were free themselves but capable of ruling others. From as early as *circa* 400 B.C., Hippocrates, who was frequently invoked in the eighteenth century, had claimed that climate had been a factor in determining the character of inhabitants of each continent; the volatile climate of Europe made its inhabitants active and warlike while the hot climate of Asia created lassitude and despotism.

If Europe became increasingly stable as a concept in the eighteenth century, it remained far from stable as a geographical entity. The only agreed border was the Mediterranean; beyond that the limits were vague. There was a sense also that the peoples beyond the eastern border of the Holy Roman Empire – the Circassians and others – were of exceptional contentment and beauty, as were those in parts of India; the presumption of their aesthetic superiority played a part in their incorporation into what was in the nineteenth century to become the ‘Aryan’ race. Furthermore ‘Europe’ had to co-exist with an increasing awareness, derived from exploration and trade, that peoples of differ-
ent nations within each continent also had a specific character. Even so, there is a tendency in much of the anthropological writing of the period to think of Europe as made up of an infinite number of peoples, and Africa of only one or two.

What constituted a ‘nation’ could be maddeningly imprecise throughout the eighteenth century. Hume noted that ‘The vulgar are apt to carry all national characters to extremes’, but ‘Men of sense . . . allow, that each nation has a peculiar set of manners, and that some particular qualities are more frequently to be met with among one people than among their neighbours.’ While it was well understood that England (usually encompassing the whole of Britain), France and Germany (in the last case in defiance of political reality) were nations, it is not unusual even in the second half of the eighteenth century for the whole of Africa to be referred to as a nation in the same terms.

The Continents had a vigorous presence in public art from the seventeenth century onwards; decorative schemes enthroned Europe as the source of wisdom and truth, or at least as the premier continent of the four. They could be represented as under the dominion of the Holy Ghost in Jesuit or missionary churches, or Apollo in more secular contexts; in Alpers and Baxandall’s words, ‘the Four Continents below a Heaven ruled by the Sun-God Apollo [was] . . . the ultimate cliché of Baroque iconography’. The respective iconography of the continents had been set down for painters by Cesare Ripa in his Iconologia, and his method of providing personified female figures with appropriate attributes remains almost universal not only in wall paintings, frescoes and frontispieces to books (illus. 2), but in popular representations well into the early nineteenth century. Europe’s mythical origins might be symbolized by Europa’s bull, and her other attributes might be a horse, a temple of religion, emblems of war and of the arts – architecture, painting, sculpture and music.

The developing iconography of Europe and of the other three Continents tended to follow conventional formulae, but Giambattista Tiepolo’s Africa in the Würzburg Residenz (illus. 3) reveals a rich sense of the geography and economy of Africa in relation to the other continents. Tiepolo used the whole side of the ceiling to create a dense
image of trade and the carriage of goods from the interior of Africa to the Egyptian coast, and thence across the Mediterranean to Europe. The figure of Africa is set among a resting caravan train of Arab traders, and the ultimate destination of their goods is represented by two Europeans buying pearls from an oriental pearl-dealer. The interior and exterior of the geographical Africa are linked by the figure of the River Nile, which, from its mysterious origins, joins the dark heart of Africa and its Mediterranean periphery, where it faces Europe across the water.

**Constructing the Savage**

If, according to Locke, the mind contained no innate ideas, this could be taken to mean that all human beings were born in a state of mental
equality, hence inequality must have been imposed by circumstances after birth. Locke did allow the mind an innate reasoning capacity that could vary from one person to another, but the idea of the mind as a tabula rasa taken literally would have meant that Europeans and non-Europeans were differentiated only by their differing experiences and education, not by inherent differences of ability. The denial of innate ideas could be used to argue against biological differences between peoples, and allow for the possibility that all human beings, whatever their heredity or circumstances, were capable of being educated. On the other hand, it could place just as absolute a gulf between those who were educated and those who were not. As Locke claimed at the beginning of Thoughts on Education, 'of all the Men we meet with, Nine Parts of Ten are what they are, Good or Evil, useful or not, by their Education'. By education Locke meant, of course, the European kind, based on logic, observation and mental discipline.

Locke opened up the possibility of a historical and progressive view of man's development based on natural law. Man can be seen to move from a natural free state, in which he lives in a nomadic society, or 'America', to one in which he owns property and lives in a community, graduating to a political society based on financial exchange and obligation. If this was initially conceived as a temporal distinction, placing natural society in the primeval past and the dawn of mankind, it could readily become a spatial one, applying a similar hierarchy to the different peoples of the far-flung contemporary world. Locke's famous remark, in Two Treatises of Government, 'Thus in the beginning all the World was America', conlates primeval pre-society with existing forms of life in the wild. Primitive or 'natural' society could still exist, as it did in the America of the native peoples, where natural men and women had neither progressed towards civility nor fallen into 'luxury' like Europeans. Those in the state of nature were free and equal 'within the bounds of the Law of Nature', and this applied to, among others, the 'Indians' of America and the hunter-gatherers of Africa. Those on the other hand who belonged to 'the Civiliz'd part of Mankind', lived in a world where laws govern property but also ensure justice and security.
If the implications of Locke's political theory were 'liberal' in the sense that it relieved the 'natural' man from the taint of paganism, it did not do anything for slaves, to whom, when he mentioned them at all, he denied all rights. They were placed by him in the state of 'Captives taken in a just War, ... by the Right of Nature subjected to the Absolute Dominion and Arbitrary Power of their Masters'.¹⁴ This is hard to reconcile with Locke's broader philosophy of human rights, but it can be understood as representing the 'political' Locke, who had drawn up the constitution of South Carolina, vesting absolute authority in slave owners. Locke was, after all, a realist who was fully aware of the importance of slavery to the English economy, and had himself invested in the Royal African Company.¹⁵

Locke's views were symptomatic of the widespread acceptance in the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century of slavery among the governing classes of Britain, and in those countries involved in the slave trade. Locke's distinction between those in a state of nature and in slavery was in non-philosophical discourse generally merged into the loose category of 'savage', applied to Africans and the native peoples of the Americas, North and South, but also within Europe to the peoples of the far north, and by the English to Scottish Highlanders and the Irish peasantry. Though the word 'savage' always implies difference and condescension, it does not preclude admiration. In satiric or sentimental discourses, American 'Indians' can appear as paragons of liberty, to be contrasted favourably with the London haut monde who are slaves to fashion. If for 'polite' Europeans vulgar aspi- rants to gentility were a permanent social irritant, 'savages', apart from the few 'tamed' as chattels in wealthy households, could easily become objects of fantasy, myth and legend, distanced to remote places, seen in situ only by the most adventurous. The state of savagery as a refreshing alternative to bogus and affected politeness is embodied in the oxymoron 'Noble Savage' that first appeared in the satire-laden climate of Restoration England.

The 'Noble Savage', though such an idea goes back to Montaigne and perhaps even further in time, was first named in Dryden's *Conquest of Granada* (1670),¹⁶ and the type had currency in England and else-
where in Europe all through the eighteenth century, to be given a new meaning in the age of abolition. The most notable and enduring example is to be found in Aphra Behn’s *Oroonoko* (1688), which became a popular and long-lasting play in Thomas Southerne’s version. The Noble Savage could be almost any ‘race’ or colour, but Behn’s account of ‘the Royal Slave’ distinguishes the ‘Indians’ of Surinam from ‘Those . . . whom we make use of to work in our plantations of sugar, [who] are negroes, black-slaves altogether, who are transported thither.’ The ‘Indians’ are handsome and beautiful, and though almost naked are ‘extreme modest and bashful, very shy, and nice of being touched . . . These people represented to me an absolute idea of the first state of innocence, before man knew how to sin; and it is most evident and plain, that simple nature is the most harmless, inoffensive, and virtuous mistress.’

Despite the difference made between ‘innocent’ Indians and servile blacks, Behn’s eponymous hero Oroonoko was a prince of Coramantien, ‘a country of blacks’. Furthermore, his family were themselves slave-traders, and he continued the family business. Oroonoko was nonetheless a paragon of gentlemanliness:

‘twas amazing to imagine where it was he learned so much humanity; or to give his accomplishments a juster name, where it was he got that real greatness of soul, those refined notions of true honour, that absolute generosity, and that softness, that was capable of the highest passions of love and gallantry, whose objects were almost continually fighting men, or those mangled or dead, who heard no sounds but those of war and groans.

Oroonoko’s greatness of soul is matched by his physical presence: he was given by Behn all the physical attributes of a handsome European, differing only in skin colour, as well as all the nobility of character one might hope for, if not actually expect, in men of rank:

He was pretty tall, but of shape the most exact that can be fancied: the most famous statuary could not form the figure
of man more admirably turned from head to foot. His face was not of that brown rusty black which most of that nation are, but a perfect ebony, or polished jet. His eyes were the most awful that could be seen, and very piercing; the white of them being like snow, as were his teeth. His nose was rising and Roman, instead of African and flat; his mouth the finest shaped that could be seen; far from those great turned lips, which are so natural to the rest of the negroes. The whole proportion and air of his face was so nobly and exactly formed, that bating his colour, there could be nothing in nature more beautiful, agreeable and handsome.\textsuperscript{21}

Implicit within this noble image is Oroonoko's "Other"; the 'Negro' stereotype of flat nose, large lips and short, crinkly hair. A good representation of this typology can be found in an impressive bust in black marble by an English sculptor resident in Italy, Francis Harwood (illus. 4). The bust is of a type known from Roman times and the Italian Renaissance, and though it has been claimed without any justification to be a portrait of an actual person, the conspicuous scar on the forehead makes it clear that it represents a 'savage' warrior. Oroonoko, by contrast, is able to have his hair down to his shoulders 'by the aids of art, which was by pulling it out with a quill, and keeping it combed'. He is the one (male) exception among his people, a kind of aristocratic landowner commanding the rude peasantry. Oroonoko is unusual not in his aristocratic typology, which is generic to the Noble Savage, but in being localized as a Surinamian black, rather than as variously an Inca, a 'Red Indian', 'Carib' or a generic 'African'. While the 'prince' or ruler may possess all the virtues and even the physical beauty of their European equivalents, their peoples are physically different, and may be bloodthirsty, superstitious and untrustworthy, and capable of committing all kinds of atrocities, including cannibalism.

The attitudes that pervade \textit{Oroonoko} are, of course, those of the Restoration theatre, with its cynical view of the high life of London and its taste for the exotic. Theological and philosophical debates in England in the period that followed, which saw increased employment
of chattel slaves in opulent households, were more likely to be concerned with the question of whether those brought up as ‘savages’ could be educated and/or converted to Christianity. This question clearly lay behind the second Duke of Montagu’s experiment with the Jamaican Francis Williams (illus. 5).\textsuperscript{22} Locke’s theory could place those presumed to be outside civil society\textsuperscript{23} in the category of ‘pre-civilized’ beings like the world’s earliest inhabitants, their minds empty of mental experience. Montagu (1688–1749), who had been Governor of the Windward Islands, was ‘struck with the conspicuous talents of this Negroe [Francis Williams] when he was quite young and proposed to try whether, by proper cultivation, and a regular course of tuition at school and the university, a Negroe might not be found as capable of literature as a white person’.\textsuperscript{24} Montagu sent Williams to school in England and possibly then to Cambridge. On his return to Jamaica Williams founded a school, becoming a noted pedagogue. With his mind imprinted by the experience of a British education, Williams was fully able to exhibit the accomplishments appropriate to his now privileged standing. He acquired enough learning to turn out occasional Latin verse,\textsuperscript{25} but he had the posthumous misfortune to become the exemplum of David Hume’s notorious denial that Africans could ever have the capacity for original thought. He was also brutally maligned by the apologist for slavery Edward Long,\textsuperscript{26} who went to the trouble of translating one of Williams’s Latin odes for the sole purpose of mocking its shortcomings, though as abolitionist James Ramsay later pointed out, ‘there have been bred at the same university an hundred white masters of arts, and many doctors, who could not improve [on] them’.\textsuperscript{27}

Perhaps the best way to grasp the complexity of attitudes towards ‘savage’ peoples in the early part of the eighteenth century, in Britain at least, is to study Daniel Defoe’s \textit{The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe}, first published in 1719.\textsuperscript{28} The eponymous hero, as is well known, after a series of acts of disobedience to his father and, implicitly, to God, eventually fetched up alone on a remote island off the coast of South America, where he remained for 28 years before he was rescued. It is clear that Crusoe’s previous career as a mariner was bound up with trading in slaves from Africa. On his first successful
5 Francis Williams, c. 1735, oil on canvas. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
adventure, which led eventually to his own capture and enslavement by pirates, he set up as a ‘Guiney trader’ with an honest sea captain. Guinea on the West Coast of Africa was a major source of slaves in the period, and indeed later Crusoe notes that a Portuguese ship was ‘bound to the coast of Guinea for Negroes’.

In his second phase of prosperity Crusoe settled in Brazil where he set himself up in the ‘planting and making of sugar’ and, after achieving a certain level of wealth, ‘I bought me a Negro slave and an European servant also’. Becoming restless, he embarked on an expedition to Guinea with the express purpose of acquiring by barter ‘Negroes for the service of the Brazils, in great numbers’. As Crusoe points out, the profit lay in avoiding the assentos or permissions controlled by the Spanish and Portuguese kings. His part of the expedition was to manage the trade on the Guinea shore and have ‘my equal share of the Negroes’. He was then shipwrecked on his way to Guinea and ended up on the famous island in the mouth of the Orinooko river. It has been suggested that Crusoe’s shipwreck was divine retribution for his active engagement with the slave trade, but this is surely anachronistic. Shipwrecks have a role in Crusoe’s journey of life, but they are better understood as divine punishment for his disobedience to his father in refusing to accept a life of pious contentment and patient accumulation, continuing instead to seek out riches through speculative ventures. In other words he should, according to the author’s intensely Protestant bourgeois ethic, have acquired slaves with sober purposefulness, slowly building up his wealth, not by going on risky expeditions. As Crusoe muses later: ‘what business had I to leave a settled fortune, a well-stocked plantation, improving and increasing, to turn supercargo to Guinea, to fetch Negroes, when patience and time would have so increased our stock at home that we could have bought them at our door from those whose business it was to fetch them’.

For Defoe slavery was indeed controversial, not because of its inhumanity, but because of the issue of whether the trade in African slaves was best carried out through the state-controlled Royal African Company or through privately financed expeditions. In that controversy, which attracted many pamphlets throughout the first decades of
the eighteenth century, Defoe argued for the long-term benefits of state intervention. There is, then, in Defoe’s fiction and political writings an acceptance representative of the earlier part of the century of the institution of slavery, for its national economic benefits and of the employment of personal and domestic slaves as a natural part of the ‘polite’ life. But Defoe’s account of Crusoe’s most famous servant, Friday, shows a subtle awareness of some at least of the complexities of the relationship between master and slave.

In fact Friday only served his master for the last four years of his time on the island, and he was preceded before Crusoe reached the island by Xury, a ‘Moorish’ youth. Xury serves Crusoe faithfully after the latter, escaping from being enslaved himself by a pirate, agrees not to drown him. The ever-present fear to the two escapees is to land on the Barbarian coast, ‘where whole nations of Negroes were sure to surround us with their canoes and destroy us; where we could never once go on shore but we should be devoured by savage beasts, or more merciless savages of human kind’.

When they land, Xury is terrified of being eaten by ‘the wild mans’ but nonetheless agrees to offer himself as a sacrifice to allow his master to escape. The area the pair has landed in is the Maghreb ‘lying between the Emperor of Morocco’s dominions and the Negroes’. Crusoe’s objective was to walk to the Gambia or Senegal where he might find a passage home with a slave trader. On the way they meet Africans who were ‘quite black and stark naked’ but not hostile, though this may have been because of their first experience of the effect of firearms.

Thus Africans, or ‘savages’ or ‘Negroes’, were pictured by Defoe potentially as either docile or as ferocious cannibals, a duality of attitude, as Peter Hulme has argued, that can be traced back as early as Christopher Columbus’s first encounter with native Caribbeans. The arrival of Friday, twenty-four years after Crusoe has settled on his island, is the occasion for an extended meditation on the transformation of a cannibalistic savage into a devoted, incorruptible and Christian servant. The savages who bring Friday to Crusoe’s island are evidently his own people, but they are also cannibals who feast on their victims. Friday makes his appearance as their intended victim and after his
oppressors are killed by Crusoe’s guns, Friday’s first thought is to eat them himself. He ‘was still a cannibal in his nature’, but he is weaned off human flesh by Crusoe, who converts him to Christianity. Friday, in gratitude for his deliverance from death and from his former benighted heathen state, now becomes totally servile, making ‘all the signs to me of submission, servitude, and submission imaginable’, placing Crusoe’s foot upon his own neck.35

Friday’s enslavement is thus presented as voluntary, a natural act of gratitude towards one who has spared his life and offered him the inestimable benefit of education. The relationship is obviously paternal: ‘his very affections were tied to me, like those of a child to a father’. But to which people – we cannot use the word ‘race’ without anachronism at this point – did Friday belong? Was he African, American or something else? Friday is described as being almost European in physiognomy, and specifically not a ‘Negro’ in type: ‘He had all the sweetness and softness of an European in his countenance, especially when he smiled’ – and further on – ‘His face was round and plump; his nose small, not flat like the Negroes; a very good mouth, thin lips, and his fine teeth well set, and white as ivory.’36 Friday might have been intended to be a Carib, one of the aboriginal inhabitants of the Caribbean before the arrival of African slaves, but he is best understood as a generic Noble Savage whose colour and features are defined as much by social position as by the type of humanity he represents. Friday in having a nose that is not flat and lips that are not fat is, like Oronoko, explicitly distinguished from the characteristic physiognomy attributed to the generic ‘African’, of flat nose and thick lips, surmounted by frizzy or woolly hair. Nonetheless, his conversion from cannibalism to servility evokes an ‘African’ typology distinct from that of the ‘American’ nomadic hunter.

It is insufficient to attribute such crude typology merely to ignorance of the non-European world. Africans at least were a significant presence in Europe not only as real people but as fictive representations, in portrait and subject paintings, but also in popular allegory, inn signs and coats-of-arms. Black servants in great families contributed to the aesthetic presentation of power. They played a role in courtly ceremony

38
in most of the princely and royal courts of Europe from the sixteenth century onwards. In the eighteenth century they continued to give an air of courtliness to a portrait even if the subject was now a merchant or seafarer, and in England their presence could invoke Van Dyck's portraits of the court of Charles I. In paintings their fine and colourful clothes were often more elaborate than those of their owners. Invariably they look up with deep awe towards their masters and mistresses, in recognition of their superiority. A good example is an early portrait by Joshua Reynolds of First Lieutenant Paul Henry Ourry (illus. 6), which includes an exotically dressed African adolescent whose name is known to have been Jersey.\(^{37}\) Ourry is presented as a gentleman and sturdy naval officer, his hand firmly grasping the pommel of his sword as he gazes commandingly into the distance, oblivious to Jersey's admiring gaze. Jersey provides a vivid, exotic and polychromatic foil to the relative austerity of the First Lieutenant's figure. The contrast extends to Jersey's skin colour; a rich olive brown set off strikingly against the near white of his hat and shirt-ruffle, and against the First Lieutenant's ruddy features. The presence of the black servant suggests a consciousness of new horizons opening up through trade in distant and recently discovered lands, hinting at riches and new knowledge to be acquired by Britain under the aegis of gallant sailors.

In female portraits a servant's blackness can contrast with the whiteness of the mistress's skin, his or her features highlighting the latter's ideal perfection.\(^{38}\) In Pierre Mignard's portrait of the Duchess of Portsmouth (illus. 34), the Duchess receives from a black child a 'tribute' to her beauty in the form of a piece of coral. This child is a body servant, of the kind who accompanied their wealthy mistresses even in their most private moments, and who became for satirists a sign of female extravagance, vanity and lax sexual morality. In *The Countess's Morning Levée*, in Hogarth's *Marriage A-la-Mode* series, represented here by the engraved version (illus. 7), a black child in a decorative turban points with a salacious grin to the horns on an ornamental figure, an Actaeon being transformed into a stag, a sign of cuckoldry. The little black boy's roguish aspect expresses his intimate knowledge of his mistress's sexual transgressions, and draws the spectator into complicity.
There is also an older black boy employed to serve refreshments to the guests, in this case a louche company of musicians and entertainers assembled in the new Countess’s boudoir. If the little boy pointing to the horns is denatured and made precocious by his experience of luxurious life, his elder companion serving tea is still in awe of the sophistication of fashionable people, yet baffled by them. He is an ironical exemplar of the innocent ‘savage’ confronted with those who merely enact the superficial signs of civilization; he retains, despite his finery, a primordial simplicity that puts to shame the decadent behaviour of his
social superiors. Black servants in grand portraits and in satirical paintings invoke nature's tribute to culture and savagery's tribute to gentility, as well as referring to courtly ceremonial and magnificence. If, as Defoe claims, Africans, even biddable ones like Friday, are in their natural state potentially murderous or cannibalistic, then such paintings subsume the implication that their masters or mistresses have tamed their natural savagery into voluntary servitude either by force of personality or by great beauty. The chattel slave in grand portraits is both savage and ceremonial object, who might notionally return to nature if the trappings of civility were removed. Such paintings show the African, presumed in his native land to be an untamed fetish-worshipper and hunter, now fashioned into an icon of courtly style.

As the association of Africans with slavery in paintings became a familiar trope, so they were increasingly contrasted with native Americans, who were characterized by their love of freedom but also represented the hunter-gatherer stage of humanity. It was later to become commonplace that the ancient Germans were free spirits like the American Indians, and that the latter could claim a certain kinship with Europeans denied to Africans. This is clear in representational typology based on the image of the warrior-hunter, from John White's watercolours of 1585 to Verelst's representation of the four 'Indian Kings' or Iroquois sachems who visited England in 1710, and beyond. The 'Indian Kings' were the subject of four paintings now in the Public Archives of Canada in Ottawa, painted from the sitters in London and widely available as mezzotint engravings, yet they are shown as if in their native habitat, in the forests of North America, albeit in a manner familiar from European hunting portraits. Three out of the four are shown carrying weapons prominently. Etow Oh Koam holds a club in his hand, with a large scimitar on his belt and tomahawk by his feet, while in the background a figure is applying a club to another at his feet. Sa Ga Yeath Qua Pieth Tow holds a musket almost as long as himself, and in the background two Indians are shown using such muskets in the pursuit of a deer (illus. 8). Their pursuits as 'kings' are not differentiated from those of their fellow 'savages', yet their strong individual presence within the landscape suggests their 'nobility'
8 J. Verelst, *Sa Ga Yeath Qua Pieth Tou, King of the Maquas*, after 1710, mezzotint engraved by John Simon.
derivates from being braver and better hunters than the rest of their people.

Despite the visual evidence presented here, it would be wrong to suggest that the differences between the African and the ‘Red Indian’ were perceived in Europe as absolute. There are images, particularly in decorated maps, of African peoples as hunter-gatherers, and distinctions were made by travellers between peaceable and warlike tribes. Furthermore, there was an irresistible tendency to impose European political hierarchies onto non-European structures of government. The four Iroquois sachems who arrived in London in 1710 were assumed to be kings, just as Behn’s Oroonoko was described as a prince. London and Paris were visited frequently in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries by ‘princes’, who stimulated exotic fantasies and sentimental tales.

A well-documented example is that of the wealthy African visitor William Ansah Sessarakoo, who, according to the London Magazine of February 1749, had been inadvertently sold into slavery by the captain of the ship taking him to England. On his recognition and release he was actually taken to a performance of Oroonoko with a black companion, and it was reported that ‘they were so affected, that the tears flow’d plentifully from their eyes; the case of Oroonoko’s being made a slave by the treachery of a captain being so very similar to their own’.10 Sessarakoo was celebrated in a London journal as ‘A Young African Prince, Sold for a Slave’, and the treachery of the ship’s captain who sold him in Barbados was recognized as that of a trader, on the model of the tale of Inkle and Yarico, selling his honour for commercial gain.41 The inscription on the mezzotint print by John Faber after Mathias’s painting of 1749 (illus. 9), makes much of the sitter’s royal ancestry and his redemption from slavery.42 He is presented as a gentleman in an elaborately brocaded jacket with a hat under his left arm, a stance often adopted by sea captains. It is not clear whether he is wearing a wig or his hair is combed into a wig-like shape; nonetheless it is very black and straight. The pose and the brocade suggest a person of distinction, but hardly the figure of romance created by the poetic dialogues written by Thomas Dodd and published in the Gentleman’s Magazine in 1749.
There Sessarakoo is given a lover called Zara, for whom he sighs in captivity. Sessarakoo's romantic aura thus differentiated him from his less fortunate compatriots in service and on the plantations, and his success in being recognized as of high birth subtly reinforced the principle of aristocratic distinction. His enslavement allowed him to show his true mettle and overcome circumstances that might have condemned his less well-born fellows to resign themselves to a life of servitude.\(^\text{43}\)

**THE BEAUTY OF MORALITY AND THE MORALITY OF BEAUTY**

In early-eighteenth-century accounts of non-Europeans, an implicit connection was often made between physical beauty and virtue, and between ugliness and vice. Oronoko's virtue is made visible and transparent by his physical beauty and conformity to European ideal types. Similarly Friday's potential for redemption is bound up with his specifically defined non-Negroid physiognomy. The connection between outward appearance, especially of the face, and the proclivity of the 'soul' towards virtue or vice, lay at the heart of one of the most insistent debates in eighteenth-century aesthetics.\(^\text{44}\) It was, however, one thing to ascribe a 'beautiful soul' to an individual, but another to ascribe it to the generic features associated with a particular nationality or human type.

The relationship between morality and aesthetics first emerges in the eighteenth century in the writings of the Earl of Shaftesbury, a pupil of Locke, though a critical one, and of Joseph Addison in the enormously influential journal *The Spectator*. They were bound together by the desire to promote the adoption of 'politeness'\(^\text{45}\) by their fellow countrymen, by bringing, in *The Spectator's* words, 'Philosophy out of Closets and Libraries, Schools and Colleges, to dwell in Clubs and Assemblies, at Tea-Tables, and Coffee-Houses'.\(^\text{46}\) In Shaftesbury's case it was more associated with the desire, as Lawrence Klein put it, to 'remake the world in a gentlemanly image' of refined sociability.\(^\text{47}\) In keeping with this ambition, Shaftesbury argued, a little paradoxically, that though the sense of beauty was common to all humanity, even the
uneducated, it needed to be cultivated to become ‘natural’, and therefore benefited from stringent criticism.48

Shaftesbury in effect proposed to conflate ethics and aesthetics; his concept of ‘breeding’ advocates not only the pursuit by the notional elite of high moral standards, but the simultaneous exercise of aesthetic discrimination: ‘To philosophise, in a just signification, is but to carry good-breeding a step higher. For the Accomplishment of Breeding is, To learn whatever is decent in Company, or beautiful in Arts: and the Sum of philosophy is, to learn what is just in Society, and beautiful in Nature, and the Order of the World.’49 The man of breeding could, therefore, perceive ‘beauty in outward Manners and Deportment’ and ‘a Beauty in inward Sentiments and Principles’. Such an ambition should be seen in the context of the ambitions of the Whig aristocracy in the period of the Restoration to create a public culture independent of Church and King, but Shaftesbury’s aesthetics represent a position that lived on well beyond its original circumstances, and was to be particularly influential in Germany.

Shaftesbury distinguishes a taste for art from the perception of human beauty. The beauty of another person exists in the perceiving mind, and in the recognition of mind in others. True female beauty as it might be recognized by a man of taste was not a matter of physical desire but a recognition of the way in which the mind of the woman creates the desire itself. ‘The admirers of beauty in the fair sex would laugh, perhaps, to hear of a moral part in their amours’, but Shaftesbury argued that it was vital to male appreciation of female beauty. ‘They must allow still, there is a beauty of the mind, and such is essential in the case’, quite different from the ‘other passions of a lower species . . . employed another way’.50 Such a recognition divided ‘men of elegance’, who know that female beauty is a matter of mind, from ‘men of pleasure’, who can only see in it an incitement to lustful desire. There is always in Shaftesbury’s aesthetics a gentlemanly response that can be clearly differentiated from lower responses, and which was to be cultivated and promoted in the public world.

Shaftesbury’s underlying Platonism makes nature for him a reflection of a more perfect world beyond the senses:
For if we may trust to what our reasoning has taught us, whatever in Nature is beautiful or charming is only the faint shadow of that first beauty, so that every real love depending on the mind, and being only the contemplation of beauty either as it really is in itself or as it appears imperfectly in the objects which strike the sense, how can the rational mind rest here, or be satisfied with the absurd enjoyment which reaches the sense alone?\textsuperscript{51}

The perceiving mind's role is critical: 'the beautiful, the fair, the comely, were never in the matter, but in the art and design; never in the body itself, but in the form or forming power ... Tis mind alone which forms. All which is void of mind is horrid, and matter formless is deformity itself.' But 'the forming mind' of the human body is God himself, hence the superiority of human form over 'The palaces, equipages and estates [which] shall never in my account be brought in competition with the original living forms of flesh and blood.'\textsuperscript{52} There are then three forms of beauty: dead forms, which are formed but have no forming power; 'forms which form', therefore have intelligence, action and operation, 'giving a dead form lustre and force of beauty'; and finally the 'supreme and sovereign beauty', that which 'forms the forms which form', the principal source or fount of beauty in God.

There were, of course, Classical precedents for the idea that personal beauty was closely allied to goodness, and that beauty was not generated by physical causes. As George Berkeley put it in \textit{Alciphron} (1732), Aristotle's idea was of a man 'who practiseth virtue from no other motive than the sole love of her own innate beauty'.\textsuperscript{53} This is the Greek idea known as \textit{kalokagathia}, which can be translated as something like beauty and goodness combined. Berkeley's \textit{Alciphron}, however, regarded Shaftesbury as a dangerous freethinker and dissented from his argument that there was an indissoluble union between morality and beauty, on the grounds that it led to a downgrading of reason and to a self-regarding hierarchy of taste. Berkeley argued that beauty was a characteristic of morality, but not an imperative. Berkeley accepted that there is 'a beauty of the mind, a charm in virtue,
a symmetry and proportion in the moral world’, but rejected the claim that beauty can be the foundation of morality if it were not based on order or harmony.\textsuperscript{54}

The Scottish philosopher Francis Hutcheson, in \textit{An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue} (1724), followed Shaftesbury in making the claim that ‘He [God] has made Virtue a lovely Form, to excite our pursuit of it; and has given us strong Affections to be the Springs of each virtuous Action.’\textsuperscript{55} Virtue’s beauty accordingly guarantees that it will remain an object before us, for though ‘our Desire of Virtue may be counterballanc’d by Interest, our Sentiment or Perception of its Beauty cannot’. Beauty is thus a way of ensuring the disinterested perception of virtue without the need for God’s direct intervention. Hutcheson claimed also that moral and aesthetic qualities are perceived by an internal sense with the aid of the affections; the ‘sense of beauty’ is separate from, but intimately bound up with, the ‘moral sense’, and may claim to be higher, because implicitly nearer to the divine, than the external senses identified by Locke.\textsuperscript{56} The power of ‘Custom, Education and Example’ can affect our internal senses, but the sense of beauty is antecedent to them all. In human terms, as for Shaftesbury, beauty is in the character of the person not the form. Similarly, beauty that incites desire hardly figures in Hutcheson’s treatise, for the recognition of beauty in a person is a recognition of moral qualities, which might be ‘Sweetness, Mildness, Majesty, Dignity’. The sense of beauty in \textit{things}, on the other hand, might respond to configurations, for example those that exhibit ‘uniformity amidst variety’, and can therefore ‘excite in us ‘ideas of beauty’. This sense might also be stimulated through the universal tendency to respond to regularity and uniformity; even Gothic, Indian and Eastern buildings all have some uniformity, though beauty can be distorted by association of ideas.\textsuperscript{57}

Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, in their refusal to reduce aesthetic pleasure to the sensual, may be contrasted with Joseph Addison in his series of articles in \textit{The Spectator} in 1712, later gathered together under the title \textit{Taste and the Pleasures of the Imagination}.\textsuperscript{58} Addison claimed that beauty or deformity did not exist ‘more in one piece of matter than another’, but in our various dispositions and ideas of beauty and in our
empathy with the object that stimulated an aesthetic response: ‘every different species of sensible creatures has its different notions of beauty, and that each of them is most affected with the beauties of its own kind’. 59 We are likely to be most affected not only by the beauty of other human beings, but by those most like ourselves. Human beauty, however, is not for Addison a glimpse of the divine or synonymous with virtue; it is instrumental in the procreation of humanity, and designed by God to be so. God ‘has made everything that is beautiful in our own species pleasant, that all creatures might be tempted to multiply their kind, and fill the world, with inhabitants’. Indeed if it were not so, ‘unless all animals were allured by the beauty of their own species, generation would be at an end, and the earth unpeopled’. 60

Addison makes a primary distinction between the beauty that is synonymous with sexual attraction, and the beauty we might find created by God elsewhere in the world. There are other forms of beauty given to man to incite wonder at God’s goodness: ‘the works of Nature and Art’ which also ‘entertain the imagination’. If, for philosophers like Shaftesbury, sexual desire belonged with the ‘animal’ being of mankind, unworthy of the attention of polite enquiry, for Addison, beauty’s role in procreation is itself a sign of the infinitely wise and subtle work of the Creator. Addison does not, however, distinguish between male and female desire or the perception of beauty in the opposite sex, leaving unaddressed the tension between beauty as instinct and beauty as a sign of divine grace. If a sunset can be perceived as an adornment to life, a revelation of God’s power and wisdom, human beauty might, according to Addison’s logic, be nothing more than the object of primal desire and the need for survival.

Addison’s resistance to the identification of beauty with virtue was undoubtedly influenced by Milton’s image of Satan in Paradise Lost. Milton’s Satan was the essence of immorality, but he was nonetheless of angelic beauty, his manhood exemplified in his active life and questioning mind. Satan’s essential maleness may be compared to Milton’s description of Adam as possessing beauty equal to Eve, but ‘excell[ing it] . . . by manly grace’. 51 Male beauty is defined as of a different order from female beauty, and it was increasingly defined in the
eighteenth century as belonging to the ‘sublime’, which could invoke terror, awe and boundlessness, all by definition incompatible with accepted ideas of beauty.

**UNIVERSAL OR DISCRIMINATING SUBJECT?: THE AESTHETICS OF THE PERCEIVER**

In a pair of images from the Berlin printmaker Daniel Chodowiecki’s series *Natural and Affected Attitudes*, 1778 (illus. 10), two young male ‘connoisseurs’ contemplating in a ‘natural’, and therefore reflective and humble, way, an antique female statue, are contrasted with a vulgar pair who exclaim and gesticulate ‘affectedly’ before it. Chodowiecki thus discriminates between the ways of those who possess taste by nature and those who would claim it falsely. There can be no doubt as to which of the two we as spectators are expected to approve and indeed emulate, but the images themselves still contain teasing ambiguities.

Both pairs of observers are perceiving subjects, defined not by their appearance but by the way they choose to make an aesthetic judgement. They are in the act of judging, and it is part of the joke that the statue itself, by smiling or frowning discreetly, should also offer a judgement on them. But if we ask who they are, uncertainties arise. We could read the couples as the same persons in both images; in which case in one they perform as an exemplification of tasteful behaviour, in the other as an exemplification of vulgarity. In such a case they would become universal subjects, having no other existence but in their acts of judgement. We can also see them as interchangeable in other ways. The ‘affected’ ones could represent the state of humanity before it has acquired taste; they could become natural, and that would raise the question of what kind of education was required to achieve naturalness. It is equally plausible that the ‘natural’ ones might represent true, or even ‘original’ taste – note the other scene in the series where the naked Adam and Eve are contrasted with an overdressed couple (illus. 11) – while the ‘affected’ represent the overripeness of contemporary taste. Finally, we can see the pairs as completely different from each other; the ‘natural’ ones as people of
refinement, perhaps young men of ‘breeding’, compared to their ghastly and inept bourgeois emulators.

Chodowiecki’s prints introduce here the issue of how the act of aesthetic judgement could be a way of categorizing types of humanity. Those who argue that the inner nature of a person could be discerned from outward appearance have to take a view on whether the ability to discern is universal or confined to particular types of people, and if so what types. Or to put the issue another way, can this inner nature be recognized from outer appearance by any sentient person, or does it require special abilities, or what Pierre Bourdieu calls cultural competence derived from social position and/or education? Furthermore, do

10 Daniel Chodowiecki, ‘Appreciation of Art’ from Natural and Affected Attitudes, 1778, etching.
those with the right level of cultural competence still require special training or experience in order to read the signs correctly? The act of discriminating inner character from appearance is a matter for what we have called ‘human aesthetics’, but if the ability to make aesthetic judgements becomes the criterion, then the judgements no longer need to be confined to, or even involve, judgements of the human body. An aesthetic ‘sense’ or aesthetic perceptions could arguably be judged as well or better by the level of aesthetic response to art objects, as they are in the Chodowiecki print, or to natural effects; in the same series the artist contrasts the ‘natural’ and ‘affected’ responses of two couples to a sunset (illus. 12).
The aesthetic subject in eighteenth-century philosophical discourse was often assumed to be universal, on the grounds that aesthetic perception or ‘taste’ was an inherent part of the human mind, a sixth or seventh sense. It could in that regard be exercised by any human if they chose to do so, regardless of origin or background. On the other hand aesthetic taste was very often regarded as something to be cultivated, as the defining attribute of ‘politeness’ or gentility, which had been associated by Shaftesbury with moral virtue. The ability to be at home with works of art of the best types was a principal purpose behind sending young men on the Grand Tour, and it is commemorated as a gentlemanly attribute in countless portraits by Pompeo...
Batoni of aristocrats or would-be aristocrats from across Europe. Such portraits of young men striding among, or reflectively contemplating, antiquities imply strongly that taste is the property of those of elevated social position, even if it needs to be perfected by experience and study. In practice, though, as in Batoni’s painting of Peter Beckford (illus. 13), the subject might be a person of wealth—in this case derived from West Indian slave plantations—seeking to emulate what was supposed to come naturally to those of rank. Indeed much of the writing on aesthetic matters by Addison, Shaftesbury and others was part of a conscious enterprise to define and form the way that a truly cultivated elite should conduct their lives, and how those not born to it might reach up to its ideals. Their writings reinforce the line between ‘men of taste’ or ‘virtuosi’ and those who were outside their exalted company. Discernment was only open to those with particular abilities or who had achieved the learning that makes such discrimination possible.

The main targets of such improving theories, in England at least, were an aristocracy that had lost its bearings in the Civil War and its long aftermath, and the newly prosperous merchant class, who had made enough money from trade to aspire to a cultivated life but needed guidance as to how to achieve it. This eventually became formalized in the emulation of aristocratic manners, the obligatory collection of Classical marbles, the Palladian house, etc., on the understanding that cultivation of taste would lead to ‘the Man of Breeding and Politeness’. Such a paragon would be able to apply as subtle discrimination to moral issues as he did to works of art, and discern true merit or otherwise in people from their outer appearance.

If Addison sees the aesthetic subject as a mind whose cultural competence has to be inscribed upon it, Shaftesbury’s idea of ‘the Well-Bred Man’ equivocates between assigning taste to heredity or to education. Addison’s specifically appointed audience, the members of ‘Mr Spectator’s’ club: an elderly country squire, a City merchant, a lawyer, a soldier, an elderly bachelor and a clergyman, were all by definition beneath the political and social elite of the court and great country house. Yet in his theoretical letters in The Spectator Addison tends to refer to the human mind as if it must always react in the same way,
whether before a sunset or an ancient statue.

Shaftesbury admitted that common experience did not support the fond hope that good or evil character is registered in appearance in an unmediated way. A beautiful plant might be poisonous, a noble animal dangerous, a beautiful woman treacherous and a handsome face, or house facade, might conceal a squalid interior. But fortunately the ‘polite’ have ‘an inward eye [that] distinguishes, and sees the fair and shapely, the amiable and admirable, apart from the deformed, the foul, the odious, or the despicable.’67 The ‘Man of Breeding and Politeness’ can make fine moral and aesthetic discriminations, and above all penetrate the surface of those he encountered, to strip away the finery, the masks or ‘screens’ that men and women in public life use to conceal their inner nature. He is also aware of objects, sights and even people, which evoke strong and pleasurable emotion but are by no standards beautiful. Wild nature and extreme climatic conditions could be visually and emotionally stirring, the tragic fate of a flawed hero might be pleasurable to behold in the theatre, an ugly man like Socrates might be morally heroic, and there may even be heroism in the struggle of the forces of evil against their fate.68

It follows that those who are not ‘polite’, in which category he presumably places Deists and ‘reasoning’ philosophers as well as aspiring merchants, and indeed everyone but a chosen few, lack that ‘inward eye’: ‘All own the standard, rule and measure; but in applying it to things disorder arises, ignorance prevails, interest and passion breed disturbance.’69 The impolite by definition cannot conceive of a beauty that is not sensual. In answering the question ‘Why beauty may not be the object of the sense’, Shaftesbury argues that sensual pleasure is merely brutish, for the mind plays no part in it: ‘For never can the form be of real force where it is unconsidered, unjudged of, unexamined, and stands only as the accidental note or token of what appeases provoked sense, and satisfies the brutish part.’ Those that lack ‘mind’ lack all moral and aesthetic faculties, and are on the same level as animals: ‘neither can man by the same sense or brutish part conceive or enjoy beauty; but all the beauty and good he enjoys is in a nobler way, and by the help of what is noblest, his mind and reason’.70 Shaftesbury
is, however, not specific about the identity of those excluded from aesthetic discrimination, though he does note that in a body lacking ‘inward form ... the mind [would] be monstrous or imperfect, as in an idiot or savage’. Those without aesthetic response are defined only by their lack of politeness; not by membership of any particular group, but by their inability to join the only one that matters.

Shaftesbury was to be a constant presence in German philosophy throughout the eighteenth century – Herder even praised Kant in his early maturity as ‘a German Shaftesbury’72 – but the Earl was a more equivocal figure in Britain, often perceived as an aristocratic dilettante. If a more functional view of aesthetics tended to predominate in Britain, in the German-speaking countries the relationship between outer and inner beauty remained a crucial problem of aesthetics and philosophy until the end of the century and beyond. It emerges in Kant’s pre-Critical writings, in Herder’s attempts to define an idea of culture, and most publicly in the early 1770s with the appearance of Lavater’s sensationally successful Physiognomische Fragmente, a work that promised a way of identifying the true nature of the soul by ‘scientific’ study of the face, offering the virtuous, so Lavater claimed, a practical instrument of incalculable benefit in the struggle against vice.

CLIMATE, SUBSISTENCE AND NATION

In this section I want to look at the main theories of human variety that came to the fore in the middle of the century, and whose mutual and sometimes antagonistic relationship created the material of debates on aesthetics and human variety for the rest of the century. The first two are theories of human development: climatic theory, which made geographical conditions the primary determinant of the nature of a people, and subsistence theory, which divided the peoples of the earth according to four stages of social development based on their means of subsistence. The third main theory, the taxonomic, is of a quite different nature, for it began as an attempt by Linnaeus to classify humanity as he had classified plants and animals. All these theories could be reconciled with each other, but they also had the potential to expose...
serious rifts among those writing on human variety. They could also put under pressure traditional theological explanations of human development, and for many the central issue was to protect the Judeo-Christian account of the Creation from material explanations while incorporating modern discoveries.

Climatic and subsistence theories had by the middle of the century become the most widely accepted material explanations of human variety. Climatic theory was compatible with the Creation story, for it assumed that there was once an original unitary people that was forced by some kind of Fall into a diaspora, spreading to the four corners of the earth. Peoples were formed who developed over time a distinctive appearance and way of life, according to the conditions of the places in which they settled. Those at the antipodes of north and south, Lapps and Africans, took on the most extreme characteristics; the former became nomadic hunters stunted by deprivation in extreme cold, the latter, scorched by the sun, were made lazy by the heat and the fecundity of nature. Europe, wherever its boundaries were deemed to lie, was in all definitions temperate, enabling a balanced way of life that encouraged activity and allowed reflection, and therefore civilization. But climatic theory was hard to reconcile with the idea of separate continents, for no continent, and indeed very few countries, were uniform in climate.

Climatic theory was assumed to be of ancient origin and was associated with Hippocrates, but it made a modern appearance in J. B. Du Bos’s *Réflexions critiques sur la poësie et sur la peinture* (1719), in the context of the cultural difference between one country and another, which was attributed to ‘the different qualities of the air [in each country].’ In *De l’esprit des lois* of 1748, Montesquieu explicitly connected climate with political systems, defining Europe as a temperate zone stretching all the way from Spain to Scandinavia. Asia, he argued, was by contrast more variable and extreme in climate, with powerful countries in cold climates, made hardy by dealing with the cold, next to weak countries in hot climates, the latter debilitated by the heat. As a result, conquest within Asia was easy for the strong, for ‘In Asia the strong and weak nations face each other’, while ‘In Europe . . . strong
nations face the strong. This co-existence of equals in Europe necessitated a balance of power and healthy competition; it also made the enslavement of Europeans impossible. European government, furthermore, was distinguished by the separation of powers, even in autocratic societies, so Europe was, unlike Asia, supposedly free of the kind of despotism where all decisions were made directly by the ruler.

Subsistence, or the four-stage theory, in the form adumbrated by John Locke made the key determinant of a people’s stage of civilization not their location but their mode of acquiring food and necessities. The earliest peoples were hunters, who could progress successively through pastoralism and agriculture to commerce, the last being synonymous with civilized life. Climatic theory tended to locate the aboriginal peoples in Africa, and subsistence theory to find them in America, whose ‘rude nations’ were assumed to be still nomadic. Subsistence theory was taken up by the French philosophe Turgot and, in particular, Scottish thinkers like Adam Smith. It offered, together with climatic theory, with which it was broadly compatible, a widely acceptable framework for human history. The four stages could readily be applied to the Four Continents, and indeed the Four Temperaments, here satirized by Chodowiecki in his design of four men reacting, each according to their temperament, in front of a painting of a tragic scene (illus. 14).

If climatic theory encouraged moral, historical and theological reflection, subsistence theory suited those who saw Europe as an alliance of trading nations, whose civility and taste rested on the foundation of successful commerce. Subsistence theory denied aesthetic taste to those who ‘depend for food on bodily labour’, for though they might possess innate sensibility, they can have no education or leisure by which to cultivate it. The ‘cultivated life’ based upon commerce rather than land ownership was one in which the arts become ‘those Arts by which Manufactures are embellished, and Science is refined’. This phrase comes from the dedication of the President of the Royal Academy of Arts, Joshua Reynolds, to his Seven Discourses delivered in the Royal Academy, 1778. He also notes that ‘The regular progress of cultivated life is from Necessaries to Accommodations to Ornaments.’
Subsistence and climatic theories both provide ways of categorizing peoples according to relative scales, but it was Linnaeus who provided the first rudimentary human taxonomy, in the revised edition of 1758 of his Systema Naturae. This he did by placing man among the primates, creating four varieties of humanity, in conformity with the Four Continents in the four corners of the earth, the Four Temperaments, and the four elements of air, earth, fire and water. The European Europaeus albus is in the dominant position as ‘ingenious, white, sanguine, [and] governed by law’ over the others, who are: Americanus
rubescus, ‘happy with his lot, liberty loving, tanned and irascible, governed by custom’ (choleric); Asiaticus luridus, ‘yellow, melancholy, governed by opinion’ (melancholy); Afri niger, ‘crafty, lazy, careless, black, governed by the arbitrary will of the master’ (phlegmatic). Though Linnaeus does not attribute relative beauty to the four peoples, by making whiteness a defining attribute of the European he created unavoidably an aesthetic hierarchy of skin colour.\(^8\)

Such a rigorously schematic attempt to organize humanity was not an outright rejection of climatic influence, but its taxonomic method was anathema to the Comte de Buffon, whose series of volumes under the title of l’Histoire naturelle, which began to appear in 1749, provided the fullest and most influential realization of climatic theory.\(^8\) Buffon insisted on an empirical method, the autonomy of matter, the generation of living forms, and physical truth in its complexity, without the need to construct a taxonomy or a unified theory of man. In reflecting on the nature of evidence and what we can derive from the study of nature, Buffon argued that we should consider ‘natural forms that interest us because of their relation to us’, seeking ‘an order relative to our nature’. We should formulate generalizations by analogy, testing them against further observation.\(^8\) Though Buffon himself notoriously did not do any fieldwork, he was fully aware that with travellers’ accounts he was dealing with probability not certainty, the partiality of observers and the permanent need for updating and change. By contrast Linnaeus’s systems of classification appeared to him to be a new form of nominalism, a desire merely to give names to things rather than to study nature in all its richness.\(^3\) It is ironical, therefore, that Chodowiecki, in his design for a title-page to a German edition of Buffon, should represent his enterprise by an image of Adam naming the Beasts that might have been more appropriate to Linnaeus (illus. 15).

Buffon insisted that class concepts had to rest on physical effects, though he did believe that a ‘primitive and general design’ for humanity could be observed, whatever ‘degeneration’ there might have been from the archetypal form of man. He accepted a clear separation between man and animal, but also that all forms of life are part of the
same natural history, placing humanity and all living things on a continuous scale, with infinite and potentially fluid variations in-between. Observable differences in physiognomy, colour and physical type, he argued in accordance with standard climatic theory, arose over many generations, following dispersal into different climates and environments. It follows that those who went north became lighter in colour and different in physique from those who went south, and that those who settled in fertile temperate valleys developed more regular features and more peaceful and cooperative ways of life than those forced into a hard existence.
Buffon offered a division of humanity into six types: the Lapp, Polar, Tartar, South Asian, European, Ethiopian and American, but these were not permanent categories as they were for Linnaeus or, later, Kant. His main division is between the 'two humanities', of which there was 'one progressive, the other static and animal-like'; the gulf between 'the little savage nations of America' and 'our great civilised peoples' is absolute. There is a comparable distance between human and animal faculties, with the former distinguished from the latter by thought, language, perfectibility and sociability. According to Buffon, in the state of barbarity 'Man ceases to be man...man becomes at last without education without morality, reduced to leading a solitary and savage life, offering instead of his noble nature, one that is degraded to beneath the animal.' Native Americans, characterized by Locke as living in the state of the world's original inhabitants, 'are as much morally and physically in the state of pure nature, without clothes, religion, or society but for a few family scattered across large distances'.

Buffon in general used the word 'race' with imprecision, to differentiate peoples living in similar climatic conditions, especially where one has migrated from elsewhere, but sometimes the word is used to denote a cluster of peoples, like 'les Noirs'. The unfortunate inhabitants of Lapland are a 'race of men of small stature', whose 'physiognomy is as savage as their customs', and they live 'in a climate uninhabitable to all other nations'. Buffon's indicators of difference between peoples are colour, form and size, all of which may be subject to aesthetic judgement, and moral nature and customs. The Lapps, for instance, in Buffon's account, all share the same physiognomy of large, flat faces, snub-noses, squashed eyelids pulled back, high cheekbones, large mouths and swarthy skin. Even though there are variations among them, their aesthetic deficiencies bordering on the unnatural are taken for granted: 'Among all these peoples the women are as ugly as the men, and indeed resemble them so strongly that one cannot tell them apart.' The Lapps' ugliness is a direct function of the climate, and it is united with other forms of degeneracy: they are equally coarse, superstitious, stupid...most are idolaters, and all are extremely superstitious; they are coarser than savages, without courage or self-respect or
modesty; this abject people has customs one can only despise'.

The degeneracy of the Lapps has an equivalent at the other end of the climatic scale in the inhabitants of Africa. Buffon appears to accept the notion of a unitary African ‘race’, but at the same time he distinguishes between different African peoples, pointing out justly that ‘there are as many varieties of the race of blacks as there are among whites’. He does, nonetheless, wish to divide Africans into two broad racial types: ‘It is necessary to divide blacks into different races, it seems to me that one can reduce them to two main ones; “Negres” and “Cafres.”’ In claiming that it is a long-standing error to confuse Ethiopians with Nubians, who are of a different ‘race’, he notes that the natural colour of Ethiopians is brown or olive like Arabs, arguing that they must be of partial Arab ancestry. Furthermore, the Ethiopians are ‘demi-police’, or partly civilized, suffering under a rapacious nobility. Just as there are as many varieties among the black races as there are among the white, so there are as many varieties of colour: ‘Finally, in examining carefully the different peoples who make up each of the black races we can see among them as many varieties as among the white races, and we can find all the nuances from brown to black, as we have found all the nuances from brown to white among the white races.’

According to Buffon, of the ‘races’ of ‘Negres’ and ‘Cafres’ that make up Africa, the latter include the nomadic Hottentots, but Arabs or ‘Maures’ are also in the mix. The ‘Negres’ are described in their variety, from ‘Les Jalòfés’, who are emphatically black in colour but share ‘our’ ideas of beauty, to the poor but cheerful ‘Negres de Gorée’, who take the same pride in blackness of skin as whites do in their whiteness. Even so Buffon cannot forbear to generalize on the character of ‘Negres’ in general, who are described as cheerful or melancholy, friendly or unfriendly, according to how they are treated. They are collectively relegated to their ‘natural’ status as servants, who will serve willingly a good master but hate mistreatment: ‘As long as you feed them well and do not mistreat them, they are contented, happy and willing to do anything, and their spirit is visible on their faces; but if one treats them badly they take their distress strongly to heart, and often die
of melancholy." Nonetheless Buffon did speak out strongly against slavery as an essentially lawless system that can neither restrain greed nor guarantee limits to the misery of its victims.

Between the antipodes of Lapps and Africans are those who live in relatively temperate climates. They are beautiful, virtuous, peaceful and well fed, except for those in the mountains or on bleak plains. Invasion and intermixture can, however, lead to very different peoples living in proximity to each other. The Tartars, for instance, vary between those living by the Caspian Sea, described by a traveller as 'the ugliest and most deformed under Heaven', with flat and large faces and an enormous gap between the eyes, and the 'petit Tartares' who live near the Black Sea. These latter, however, have 'lost some of their ugliness, because they have mixed with the Circassians, Moldavians, and other neighbouring peoples'.

Buffon's 'beautiful peoples' live between 20 to 30 or 35 degrees of latitude north, from 'Mogol to Barbarie', and from the Ganges to Morocco. Despite the mixture of conquerors and conquered peoples, the men are brown or swarthy, but beautiful and well proportioned. Those in the most temperate climes, Persians, Turks, Circassians, Greeks and all European peoples, constitute 'the most beautiful, the whitest, best-formed people on the whole of the earth'. This connection between Indians, Eastern Europeans, Greeks, Turks and Europeans was to provide Blumenbach with the basis of the 'Caucasian' type and nineteenth-century race scientists with the notion of an 'Indo-European' race of exemplary beauty, which was to be identified as the 'Aryan race'. For Buffon the attribution of beauty or ugliness to individual peoples was a matter of empirical observation. Beauty was often claimed as a general attribute of a people, but in the case of individuals and small groups it is almost always applied to females rather than the males, who are usually characterized as well or ill formed. In such judgements aesthetics, morality and the level of civility slide imperceptibly into each other; the relationship between human beauty, sexual attractiveness and propagation is always implicit.

Wolf Lepenies has pointed out that Buffon was the last 'Naturforscher' to be recognized primarily as an author, and the first to lose...
his reputation for that reason. Georg Forster’s remark in 1777 that he was to meet ‘den grossen, dichterischen Buffon’ (the great poetical Buffon) perhaps suggests an ironical attitude towards the latter’s scientific prowess. Even so, Buffon’s belief that it was the duty of a natural historian to dramatize the hardships of the Lapps, and to evoke the pastoralism of life in the temperate valleys, influenced the most scientifically minded of the next generation – Forster himself, and Forster’s great pupil, Alexander von Humboldt. For Buffon poetry and truth were not incompatible with each other. His critique of Linnaeus rested precisely on the latter’s attempt to subsume nature within the realm of reason—a reason that Buffon claimed could not comprehend the living and disallowed human feelings of closeness to and warmth towards nature, the aesthetic in the sense defined by Baumgarten. In differentiating peoples, Buffon’s claim was that mankind’s path from original unity to fragmentation, degeneration and dispersal was an historical process, reflecting the finite existence of the earth itself. The perception of history required not the cold application of reason or a taxonomic method, but an awareness of the perceiver as making discriminations guided by personal desires and interests. Buffon thus demands of the enquirer into the history of the earth and its inhabitants, an aesthetic discrimination that allows for, indeed depends upon, an empathetic and engaged response, quite different from the passionate desire for ‘apodictic’ certainty that, as Georg Forster remarked later, drove Kant’s taxonomies of humanity.

Despite the enormous influence of Buffon’s Variétés Humaines, climatic theory did not go unchallenged. The most considered objection was offered by David Hume in his essay Of National Characters (1748), probably responding to the publication of Montesquieu’s Esprit des Lois which appeared in the same year, just before Buffon’s great work. Montesquieu gave a certain physiological coloration to the classical division between the vigorous, courageous yet undersexed men of the north and the more relaxed, ‘luxurious’ and timid men who lived in hot climates. Indians, by whom Montesquieu meant those who lived in the ‘Indies’, were his paradigm of cowardice, barbarity and indolence. At the opposite pole were the Germanic peoples of the Roman
age (Montesquieu claimed them as ancestors of the French), who maintained an active community without any of the elements of civilization. The east was static and unchanging, and created an ethic of inaction, while the wise Chinese promoted active virtue. The ‘esprit général’ of a nation was made up of climate as well as religion, laws, etc., but ‘nature and climate almost alone dominate savages’.

Hume’s essay, by contrast, distinguishes two general causes of the character of nations, the moral and the physical. By the former he meant ‘all circumstances which are fitted to work on the mind as motives or reasons, and which render a peculiar set of manners habitual to us’. By the latter, ‘those qualities of the air and climate which are supposed to work insensibly on the temper, by altering the tone and habit of the body’.105 But while the advocates of climatic theory had argued strongly for physical causes, Hume claims that moral causes predominate. All sorts of circumstances within a society could create differences that were more important than those created by climate: ‘poverty and hard labour debase the minds of the common people, and render them unfit for any science and ingenious profession”; oppressive governments might curtail civilized activities. Professions impose different characters on people, so that priests, for example, are more like each other than anybody else: ‘so these men, being elevated above humanity, acquire an uniform character, which is entirely their own, and which, in my opinion, is, generally speaking, not the most amiable that is to be met with in human society’.106 These differences within human society are also precisely what distinguish human beings from animals: ‘men [do not] owe any thing of their temper or genius to the air, food or climate’, but horses may be susceptible to their influence.

Nations, then, take on their character from sociability and the human desire to take on the character of the group. The character of a nation depends on ‘signs of a sympathy or contagion of manners, none of the influence of air or climate’.107 If variations can occur that owe nothing to climate, then so can consistent features of a society; in China a long-standing government has tended to promote uniformity of character despite climatic variation. Small countries next to each other can be very variable, like Athens and Thebes, as can different parts of cities;
Hume adds that ‘no one attributes the difference of manners in Wapping and St James’s to a difference of air or climate’. Furthermore, national character tends to follow the borders of a country precisely, and these have been created by ‘accidents of battle, negotiations, and marriages’. He notes also the changeability of manners over time, as in the case of modern and ancient Rome, and that close communication breeds similarity. If climate can affect animals more than human beings, then Hume argues that its influence is only at the ‘vulgar’ bodily level. If northerners like drink, and southerners go after ‘love and women’, this is because climate works on the ‘grosser and more bodily organs of our frame’, and not ‘upon those finer organs, on which the operations of the mind and understanding depend’.

If, Hume argues, the manners of a country are subject to the type of government, then the English have the most varied because of their mixed constitution. The real problem with the climatic theory, then, is a hidden political agenda, for it makes the implicit claim that only southern climes have produced men of genius; ‘but our island has produced as great men, either for action or learning, as Greece or Italy has to boast of’. He does, however, accept a north–south divide: ‘there is some reason to think that all the nations which live beyond the polar circles, or between the tropics, are inferior to the rest of the species, and are incapable of all the higher attainments of the human mind’. But this is not a matter of climate but of ‘moral’ conditions: the poverty of the north and the indolence of the south, neither of which are attributable to the sun’s influence or its lack. He does allow that a taste for beauty is more southern, but the linguistic arts depend on the ‘manners of the people’, which are fixed essentially by the great writers of the past.

It is in the context of arguing that ‘almost all the general observations, which have been formed of the more southern or more northern people in these climates, are found to be uncertain and fallacious’ that Hume inserted in the 1754 edition the notorious and influential footnote in which he claimed ‘to suspect the negroes to be naturally inferior to the whites’. This is on the grounds that ‘There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion, nor even an individual eminent
either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences.' The underlying reason for this prejudiced judgement, however, is, as David Brion Davis has pointed out,\textsuperscript{112} to challenge Christian insistence on monogenesis and the Creation story, for 'Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction between these breeds of men.' It was an attack as much upon the authority of scripture as upon Africans, as his clerical opponent James Beattie noted.\textsuperscript{113} It might also have been an expression of irritation at the 'testing' of those supposedly in a state of nature, like Francis Williams, by amateur intellectuals such as the second Duke of Montagu. Nonetheless, by arguing that 'There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion', Hume implicitly places 'negroes' in the position of animals, and therefore susceptible to the influence of climate. He appears also to condone slavery in noting 'Negro slaves dispersed all over Europe, of whom none ever discovered any symptoms of ingenuity'; they are therefore slaves because of their very lack of ingenuity.

Hume's essay Of National Characters was influential on Kant, as discussed in the next section, but it did not overturn climatic theory, which besides being compatible with belief in the Creation, satisfied a desire to bring some order to the diversity of humanity. It also kept alive the dream of an as yet undiscovered place that might allow a perfect harmony between physical and moral (in Hume's sense) conditions, lost to courtly societies and to modern cities. In that sense climatic theory had a strongly aesthetic resonance, conjuring up a vision of a world in which everyone might be contented, beautiful and in harmony with nature, a world that might really exist if we were to travel far enough.

\section*{Kant and National Character}

In 1763, Immanuel Kant, in a prize essay for a competition on the question of whether metaphysics could achieve the same certainty as the science of geometry, proclaimed momentously that 'The true method of metaphysics is basically the same as that introduced by Newton intro-
duced into natural science and has been of such benefit to it.'\textsuperscript{114} This turn to Newtonian method led away from the Cartesian metaphysics of Christian Wolff, and the deductive method of Leibniz that rested on mathematics as the model of certainty for metaphysical conclusions. The new 'science' of aesthetics came directly out of Wolff, for his pupil Baumgarten understood aesthetics to have a quite specific purpose within the framework of Wolffian metaphysics. As 'the science of sensate cognition', dealing with the world of the senses, it represented a lower faculty than that of reason, unable to attain metaphysical truth, but it could achieve a lesser perfection within the terms of sensate discourse. This privileging of a deductive method in relation to the senses was an important development, but it was not readily compatible with British reflections on the meaning of beauty. On the other hand, the very problems of assimilation and change raised by such reflections provided a stimulus for the vitality of German aesthetics in the second half of the eighteenth century, as did the study of human variety.

This chapter makes a claim for the importance of one of Kant's lesser-known treatises of the pre-Critical period, the \textit{Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen} (Observations on the feeling of the beautiful and sublime) of 1764, as a work that pioneers the absorption of current ideas of human variety into aesthetic discourse. It is Kant's only study devoted to aesthetics before \textit{The Critique of Judgement}, though as Schiller pointed out acidly to Goethe on 19 February 1795, 'The explanation is only anthropological, and one learns nothing of the ultimate reasons for beauty.'\textsuperscript{115} It is true that it is quite different in tone, and perhaps in seriousness, from the three great later Critiques; it has the air of a work for the general public, designed to be pleasantly instructive. The extensive notes that survive for it, however, suggest that it was boiled down from what was initially conceived as philosophically a much more ambitious work, a critique of Rousseau based on the latter's distinction between man in nature and man in society.\textsuperscript{116} The ideas of human variety in the book owe less to Buffon than to Hume's \textit{Of National Characters}, and the aesthetic viewpoint is, as the title makes clear, a response to Edmund Burke's \textit{A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful}, published in 1757.
In British aesthetics the sublime and the beautiful became defined as opposing rather than complementary principles, to the extent that it ceased to be possible to describe any single thing as both beautiful and sublime, a process effectively completed by Burke’s *Enquiry*. Judith Hodgson has argued that beauty as applied to the human figure essentially loses ground in the eighteenth century to the masculine sublime, becoming associated with the female. Sublimity had long been attributed not only to male beauty but to a range of objects, both natural and man-made, that might excite pleasurable sensations of awe, terror and wonder. Addison, for instance, mentioned ‘the Prospects of an open Champaign Country, a vast Desert, a huge Heap of Mountains, high Rocks and Precipices, or a wide Expanse of Waters’, the Colosseum, and Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, especially the figure of Satan. Burke effectively shifted the debate away from the nature of the objects that stimulated the sublime, to the feelings they provoked and why; in other words towards the psychological mechanisms of perception.

Kant in the *Beautiful and Sublime* raises the further question: who might experience the sublime and the beautiful, on the understanding that different people, and indeed different peoples, are likely to react more to one than the other? Addison, Shaftesbury and Burke all discuss the ways in which stormy scenes or dramatic cliffs can provoke differing feelings from a competent observer. They do not raise the possibility that people with equal competence might have differing responses and associate themselves more with the beautiful than the sublime, or vice versa.

In Addison and Shaftesbury the perceiving subject is to be instructed in moral and aesthetic discrimination, whereas Burke in the *Sublime and Beautiful* insists that responses to the sublime and beautiful are universal. Nor are they dependent on the deliberate cultivation of the faculties: ‘it is probable that the standard both of Reason and Taste is the same in all human creatures’. For Burke the sublime is associated with things that would be terrifying if experienced directly, but which are pleasing if mediated through art. The beautiful, on the other hand, is clearly placed in the female domain: ‘By beauty I mean, that quality, or those qualities in bodies, by which they cause love, or
some passion similar to it,' and it is 'confined to merely sensible qualities of things'.121

Burke argues that taste is itself a faculty of mind, made up of three aspects: the senses, which involve imagination and judgement; sense perception; and pleasure; all of which are common to all mankind. In doing so he explicitly rejects the self-improving subject of Addison and the learned gentleman of Shaftesbury: 'the pleasure of all the senses, of the sight, and even of Taste, that most ambiguous of the senses, is the same in all, high and low, learned and unlearned'.122 What is more, even 'barbarians' share a sense of the sublimity of obscurity: 'Almost all the heathen temples were dark. Even in the barbarous temples of the Americans at this day, they keep their idol in a dark part of the hut, which is consecrated to his worship.'123 The trope of the universal perceiving subject was probably not intended to be 'democratic' in the modern sense, but to bolster the book's claim in its title to be 'philosophical' in nature. Burke, we may assume, wished to have the work treated, not as a series of occasional essays directed towards an urban public, like The Spectator and its numerous imitators, but as a contribution to the debate on sense perception initiated by Locke, to whom he defers continually in asserting the primacy of the senses.

Yet Burke makes a Shaftesbury-like separation of lust, as a 'brutish' desire, from love: 'The passion which belongs to generation, merely as such, is lust only. Men may be carried away by lust, 'but they are attached to particulars by personal beauty'. Because 'beauty [is] a social quality', its object is associated with 'such things as induce in us a sense of affection and tenderness'.124 Burke also explicitly rejects the traditional connection between beauty and proportion, on the grounds that proportion is related to understanding, while beauty acts on the senses and imagination: 'beauty demands no assistance from our reasoning'. In the case of the human body good proportions are found equally in ugly bodies, and in any case there is no agreement over what might constitute correct proportion. Burke rejects explicitly, even brutally, the connection made by Shaftesbury between beauty and virtue, claiming that:
The general application of this quality [i.e. beauty] to virtue, has a strong tendency to confound our ideas of things; and it has given rise to an infinite deal of whimsical theory; as the affixing the name of beauty to proportion, congruity and perfection, as well as to qualities of things yet more remote from our natural ideas of it, and from one another, has tended to confound our ideas of beauty, and left us no standard or rule to judge by, that was not even more uncertain and fallacious than our own fancies. 125

Kant’s Beautiful and Sublime, as its full title makes clear (though intriguingly he has put ‘Beautiful’ before ‘Sublime’) offers, instead of a universal perceiving subject, or indeed an educated or cultivated subject, the idea of differing responses according to temperament, sex and nationality. He begins by invoking the individual, and his or her ‘disposition’: ‘The various feelings of enjoyment or of displeasure rest not so much upon the nature of the external things that arouse them, as upon each person’s own disposition to be moved by these to pleasure or pain.’ 126

Human beings are thus defined in terms of their difference from each other; certain things cause joy in some and aversion in others, and we are all prone to individual and irrational passions like love. Response to the sublime and beautiful can be defined in terms of the feelings evoked by particular kinds of objects; snowy peaks and Milton’s Hell are sublime in giving enjoyment mixed with horror, while meadows and valleys evoke the beautiful. But individual preference for one or the other is derived from the varied temperaments of the beholders. Kant notes, poetically,

Temperaments that possess a feeling for the sublime are drawn gradually, by the quiet stillness of a summer evening as the shimmering light of the stars breaks through the brown shadows of night and the lonely moon rises into view, into high feelings of friendship, of disdain for the world, of eternity. 127

If the sublime moves, the beautiful charms: ‘Sublime attributes stimulate esteem but beautiful ones, love.’ In human terms, ‘The figure of persons who please by their outward appearance falls sometimes into
one, sometimes into the other sort of feeling, and ‘dark colouring and black eyes are more closely related to the sublime, blue eyes and blond colouring to the beautiful’.

Kant first defines the individual subject morally and aesthetically, according to the four temperaments. Those with a feeling for the beauty and dignity of humanity are melancholic; the good-hearted and sensitive are sanguine; those with a sense of honour are choleric; while those deficient in finer sensation are phlegmatic (see illus. 14). But these temperaments can also dictate responses to the sublime and beautiful, so that the melancholy man has a particular feeling for the sublime, for he is aware of ‘the deceiving charms of the beautiful’.

The sanguine man, on the contrary, has a feeling for the beautiful, for he reacts to changeable impressions and is sentimental. The choleric likes the sublime in its splendid form, for he is susceptible to propriety and superficial appearance, but has ‘no feeling for the beauty or the worth of actions’, but those of a phlegmatic humour are able to respond neither to the sublime nor the beautiful at all.

Kant then moves to the second division of discrimination, between the male and female subject. The male is predictably characterized as noble and sublime, and the female as beautiful. Kant reveals a crabby hostility to women, attacking bluestockings, denying the value of educating women and their ability to reason: ‘her philosophy is not to reason but to sense’, for in her mind feelings dominate. In other words women are incapable of sublimity or of understanding duty, obligation or principles. Women in representing beauty have ‘beautiful’ faults like vanity. Behind these arguments is the traditional attribution of reasoning to the male and feeling to the female. Kant rationalizes this distinction by attributing the taste for beauty in a marriage to the wife, but by doing so he diminishes it: ‘In matrimonial life the united pair should, as it were, constitute a single moral person, which is animated and governed by the understanding of the man and the taste of the wife.

Though individual responses to the sublime and beautiful vary according to temperament, Kant argues that female beauty is universal to the European perceiver, on the grounds, probably derived from Buffon, that ‘the Circassian and Georgian maidens have always been considered
extremely pretty by all Europeans who travel through their lands." 31

The fourth section discusses the response of different peoples to the sublime and beautiful broadly in the manner of Hume's Of National Characters. Kant's intention is not to portray the characters of peoples in detail, but 'only a few features that express the feeling of the sublime and beautiful which they show'. 32 This limited ambition leads him into a discussion that is more redolent of a crowd-pleasing lecture to the burghers of Königsberg than a great philosopher's study: the Italians and French have a feeling for the beautiful, the Germans, English and Spanish for the sublime, while the Dutch have no feeling for either. Italians are attracted to thoughtful beauty, the French to smiling beauty. 33 Those nations attracted to the sublime all choose a different type: the Spaniards the terrifying, the English the noble, and Germans the splendid. The French and the Italian have a genius for visual arts; tragedy is associated with England and comedy with France.

In the end, however, morality is the best test of attitudes towards the sublime and beautiful. The Spanish taste for the sublime is a function of their moral character, which is honest, noble and harsh. Because the beautiful predominates for Frenchmen, they are gracious, courteous and pleasing, but they can be frivolous, as Montesquieu and D'Alembert had already noted. The English, on the other hand, with their taste for the sublime, are cool and uncaring about what people think, and are steadfast, headstrong and principled. 34 Some peoples are mixed in their character, like the Germans, who as a mixture of the English and the French, incline more to the former. The Dutch, in their benighted phlegmatic state of tastelessness, are only concerned with the useful and so respond neither to the sublime nor the beautiful.

Kant claims to be concerned mainly with European countries, but he does also 'cast a fleeting glance over the other parts of the world', applying to them similarly vacuous generalizations: 'the Arab is the noblest man in the Orient'; 'Arabs are... the Spaniards of the Orient, just as the Persians are the French of Asia'. Other non-European peoples are dismissed with intolerance; the 'religion [of the Indians] consists of grotesqueries', and 'what trifling grotesqueries do the verbose and studied compliments of the Chinese contain!'. 35 Africans
are characterized as irredeemably phlegmatic, the Dutch of the non-European world, just as the Dutch are, by the same token, the Africans of Europe. Africans are, like the Dutch, denied all aesthetic responses, and Kant cites in support Hume's notorious footnote in Of National Characters: '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.' Hume had argued that no 'Negro' has done anything great in arts or sciences, though Europeans sometimes rise to greatness from the common people. Kant, however, not only reinforces Hume's distinction, he makes it categorical:

So fundamental is the difference between these two families (or races) of man (i.e. black and white [Schwarze und Weisse]), and it appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as in colour. The religion of fetishes so widespread among them is perhaps a sort of idolatry that sinks as deep into the trifling as appears to be possible to human nature.

The word that Kant uses to stand for black and white peoples is not the one he uses later, namely 'Rasse' or 'Race', but 'Menschen-geschlechter', which can mean races, but could also be used to denote division into families. In this context it acts as an absolute distinction, opposing Europeans and Africans against each other on grounds of colour, mental capacity and the latter's fetishism, the worship of material things, traditionally attributed by travellers to those for whom the spiritual world was supposedly forever closed. Kant also tells, en passant, a notorious anecdote about an African carpenter that ends with a deplorable generalization: 'in short, this fellow was quite black from head to foot, a clear proof that what he said was stupid.' If one were to defend Kant's expressions of prejudice it would have to be on the weak grounds that his correlation of skin colour and mental capacity follows not from considered reflection on human variety, but from a desire for rhetorical symmetry.

If Africans were for Kant the antitype to civilized Europeans, his reading of Rousseau encouraged him to contrast favourably the qualities of Native Americans with the luxury of present-day Europeans: 'Among
all savages there is no nation that displays so sublime a mental character as those of North America. They have a strong feeling of honour, and ‘The Canadian savage, moreover, is truthful and honest.’ Native Americans have the sense of freedom and lack of subservience of the early peoples of Greece: ‘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.’ Kant even claimed that ‘Jason excels Attakakullakulla in nothing but the honour of a Greek name.’

The exercise of taste and a feeling for the beautiful is, then, for Kant, in the 1760s at least, a decisive criterion of civilization, inextricably connected to finer feelings for social order and morality. Perhaps a reading of Winckelmann, whose Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke (Reflections on the imitation of Greek art) had been published in 1755, lies behind his claim that ‘The ancient times of the Greeks and Romans showed clear indications of a real feeling for the beautiful as well as for the sublime, in poetry, sculpture, architecture, lawgiving, and even in morals;’¹⁴¹ the Romans changed splendour into false glitter, and the barbarians introduced the perverted taste called the Gothic or the Grotesque. Even so, Kant argues that Europeans alone had the capacity to reconcile morality with sexual desire: ‘The inhabitant of the Orient . . . has no concept of the morally beautiful which can be united with this impulse; hence the harem is always a place of unrest, a kind of women’s prison, and ‘In the lands of the black, what better can one expect than what is found prevailing, namely the feminine sex in the deepest slavery?’ ¹⁴²

For those at the bottom of their respective national categories, the Dutch and the Africans, no aesthetic responses are allowed, and therefore no moral ones. Though Kant allows some nations — even the German — to be made up of mixed characters, Englishness or Frenchness is made part of the very being of the inhabitants of England or France. But Kant does not use the concept of ‘race’ except in the loosest sense. There is no concern as yet to bring forward a universal theory of humanity, but the Beautiful and Sublime, slight though it is in many respects, is arguably the first book of aesthetics to incorporate modern ideas of human variety.