

# Introduction

## *What Is Enlightenment Anthropology?*

*Anthropology* is a popular concept in cultural studies. Understood in its broadest possible sense, anthropology refers to the scientific study of humanity and seeks to answer the question of what it means to be human, taking into consideration both present and past. Answers to this question were long informed by views on human biology and, in closely related fashion, by the ways humans saw themselves as part of their natural environment at a specific time and place. Simultaneously, anthropology during the Age of Enlightenment also raised questions about the status of human activity and how it related to human biology and the natural environment. The answers it provided were far from objective and were clearly culturally determined, even (or especially) when it was claimed that such answers were scientific. Over the second half of the eighteenth century, anthropology gradually developed its own vocabulary. *Race* became a term meant to refer to human biology, while *culture* expressed how humans interacted with their environment, made the world meaningful, and assigned values to it. Both terms have roots in the eighteenth century, and to understand them more fully we have to study the history of Enlightenment anthropology.

In spite of the popularity and ubiquity of the term “anthropology” today and the loss of semantic contours that inevitably accompany popularization, interest in the history of the discipline called anthropology has been limited. Many anthropologists, even those primarily focusing on

cultural issues, prefer to think of themselves as doing contemporary and empirical research and are therefore less interested in the discipline's past. Nevertheless, there is growing awareness among anthropologists that the history of anthropology is intertwined not only with the history of exploration but also with colonialism and racism, and this disciplinary history is therefore more problematic than we would like. To reconstruct anthropology's modern history is also difficult because the discipline's development varied from one national context to another, particularly during the nineteenth century. The establishment of anthropology as an academic discipline in the United States, for instance, was very different from its development in Germany. And yet it would be wrong to say that these diverging currents never overlapped. In fact, it was the German-trained anthropologist Franz Boas (1858–1942) who played a major role in the establishment of American anthropology.<sup>1</sup>

During the second half of the eighteenth century, anthropology was a highly interdisciplinary and international enterprise. The semantic development of its name was not fundamentally different in France, Germany, England, or the Dutch Republic. An eager transnational and transcultural exchange of travel reports existed both in their original languages and in translation. The same was true for texts by natural historians and anthropologists who sought to interpret the new “empirical” information produced in these reports. In *Enlightenment Anthropology*, I will reconstruct the early history of this discipline that, by the late eighteenth century, would be definitively named anthropology. I will pay particular attention to developments in France, the Dutch Republic, and German-speaking countries. Some key figures lived in these countries' metropolitan centers: Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (1707–1788), and the abbé Guillaume-Thomas Raynal (1713–1796) mainly worked in Paris. But others, such as Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752–1840) and Christoph Meiners (1747–1810), lived in far-off places like Göttingen, where both were on the faculty of the local university, which developed into an important center of anthropological thinking. Petrus Camper (1722–1789) spent much of his time in the small Dutch university town of Franeker but also taught in Amsterdam and Groningen. And Cornelis de Pauw (1739–1799) lived most of his life in Xanten, while occasionally visiting Berlin. Both Camper and de Pauw were born in the Dutch Republic, and their contributions to the discipline are by necessity deeply rooted in that country's colonial past.

## DEFINING ANTHROPOLOGY

How can we make sense of the multitudinous ways in which the term “anthropology” is used today in eighteenth-century studies? To navigate the debate about the meaning of this term, it is important to distinguish between anthropology as part of an object language *to be studied* and anthropology as part of the metalanguage *that helps us study* the eighteenth century. In particular, this second approach has led to a semantic proliferation of anthropology as a concept. In the following, I will pursue the first approach and propose a hermeneutic reconstruction of the use of the concept anthropology during the eighteenth century. At the time, what the Enlightenment term anthropology meant was still in flux and hotly debated. To understand it, we will also need to look at related concepts such as race and culture. *Enlightenment Anthropology* seeks to reconstruct the debates and conflicts about these concepts during the second half of the eighteenth century.

That the concept of anthropology was not semantically stable but rather developed its own contours throughout early modern Europe has been shown by scholars working on different national traditions. The term’s use in France has been the object of an etymological study, for example: Michèle Duchet shows that “anthropology” is rooted in theology and originally meant the attribution of human traits to God (in the current sense of “anthropomorphism”) but by the middle of the eighteenth century had come to be understood anatomically as the “study of the human body.”<sup>2</sup> In the second half of the eighteenth century the meaning of the term broadened, and in 1788 Alexandre-César Chavannes from Lausanne lists “physical anthropology” (*anthropologie physique*) as the term’s primary meaning but adds as a secondary meaning “ethnology or the ‘science of man considered as belonging to a species spread out across the globe and divided in multiple bodies of societies.’”<sup>3</sup> The clearest example of this type of new anthropology is, according to Duchet, Buffon’s “Histoire naturelle de l’homme” (Natural history of man),<sup>4</sup> first published in 1749 in volumes 2 and 3 of the *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière, avec la description du Cabinet du Roy* (Natural history, general and particular, with the description of the royal cabinet), printed in thirty-six volumes between 1749 and 1789.<sup>5</sup> The roots of anthropology as a discipline are found in natural history, even though the term itself is not used in the *Histoire naturelle*. The discipline’s emergence was accompanied, Duchet notes, by a new type of information becoming more

available and accessible to a broader audience in the form of increasingly empirically reliable travel reports. Many older reports had been untrustworthy; moreover, collecting scientifically accurate information over a long time period had simply not been a priority for those traveling the world.<sup>6</sup>

In German-speaking parts of Europe, the word *anthropologium*, according to Han Vermeulen, was first mentioned in the title of Magnus Hundt's popular introduction to medicine, *Antropologium de hominis dignitate, natura et proprietatibus* (Anthropology of the dignity, nature, and peculiarities of man), published in Leipzig in 1501, a book that primarily offers a discussion of anatomy and physiology while also including philosophical and theological aspects.<sup>7</sup> In 1594 and 1596, Otto Casmann published a *Psychologia anthropologica* (Anthropological psychology) offering a doctrine of human nature that covered both physical and spiritual aspects.<sup>8</sup> In the first half of the eighteenth century, *anthropologia* is mentioned in the second volume of Johann Heinrich Zedler's *Universal Lexicon* from 1732, which defines it as speech concerning "the natural constitution and the healthy condition of humans," including, the lexicon adds, "the moral constitution of humans."<sup>9</sup> According to Vermeulen, anthropology did not obtain its modern meaning in the German-speaking world until the 1790s, when it was "used to label a study defined either as the 'natural history of man' . . . or as the 'pragmatic philosophy of humankind,'" thus indicating an emphasis on the empirical study of humans in a broad scientific context and clearly leaving the term's older disciplinary contexts (in theology and medicine) behind.<sup>10</sup> While "anthropology" had been used with some frequency during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it did not achieve true popularity until the last three decades of the eighteenth century. According to Vermeulen, between 1770 and 1800 in Europe no fewer than forty-three books were printed with some version of the word "anthropology" in their respective titles.<sup>11</sup> What these books have in common is their interest in human diversity and their search for causal explanations for the variety of humankind.

This sudden proliferation points to the emergence of anthropology as a discipline in the late Enlightenment. Viewed as part of the history of the Enlightenment, anthropology is the logical culmination of a broader trend that was interested in rationalizing the Western view of other peoples and cultures. In line with Enlightenment philosophy, its incipient historiography, and its universalist aspirations, human beings were seen as both similar and different across the world. Eighteenth-century anthropology sought to understand alterity as the product of a spatial organization of nature:

instead of assuming that the non-European world was populated by bizarre creatures (freaks and monsters) with only a remote resemblance to (Western European) humans, the anthropological paradigm worked from the assumption that, in other parts of the world, people were different because of the specific geographical and climatological circumstances in which they lived. Eighteenth-century anatomical and natural history collections documenting other parts of the world were less about monstrosity and nature's abnormalities than they were about helping those interested to gain insight into nature's developmental patterns.<sup>12</sup> In addition to spatial differences, alterity was also seen as the product of how the order of nature was organized over time. Enlightenment anthropology was interested in studying developmental patterns based in part on an innate drive found in all living beings and influenced by environmental factors.

#### THE ORIGINS OF THE DISCIPLINE OF ANTHROPOLOGY

Buffon's 1749 publication of the "Histoire naturelle de l'homme" is one possible starting point for a history on Enlightenment anthropology. But Buffon's texts were not the only example of a material and historical approach to humankind: one year earlier, Charles Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu (1689–1755), had published *De l'esprit des lois* (On the spirit of the laws, 1748), which was also highly influential, although more focused on political and legal matters. Not long thereafter, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) published his *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* (Discourse on the sciences and the arts, 1751), the winning essay of the competition organized by the Academy of Dijon. Rousseau's *Discours* is primarily a philosophical treatise on the advantages and disadvantages for humankind of progress in the arts and sciences, but in elaborating on this topic he also formulated a series of assumptions about what life in early human societies looked like. Rousseau was not really a scientist, but his ideas would prove to be highly influential. All of these texts point to a rethinking around 1750 of what it means to be human,<sup>13</sup> and Buffon's texts were part of a broader public discourse at that time. A comprehensive reception of Buffon's anthropology and what it meant for the Enlightenment's view of humankind did not get under way in earnest, however, until the 1770s, a decade characterized by what the historian Jonathan Israel has called a "radical breakthrough."<sup>14</sup> Materialist views of humankind, which had long lingered on the margins of public discourse, now moved

to its center. This general breakthrough of radical thought interested in a strictly empiricist approach to science regardless of its outcomes coincided, more specifically, with a proliferation of publications in Enlightenment anthropology, predominantly in French and German, around 1770.

In 1768 and 1769 Cornelis de Pauw, for instance, published his *Recherches philosophiques sur les Américains* (Philosophical investigations on the Americans), the first major anthropological treatise after Buffon's texts from 1749 and a book that greatly contributed to the popularization of Buffon's thinking.<sup>15</sup> Shortly thereafter, in 1770, the abbé Raynal, representing a collective of authors in which Denis Diderot (1713–1784) was playing an increasingly important role, published his *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* (Philosophical and political history of the settlements and trade of the Europeans in the two Indies), initially in six volumes that did not list an author. New and substantially revised editions followed in 1774 and 1780, and the text was soon translated into English, German, and Dutch. In 1774 Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) published his essayistic *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit* (Another philosophy of the history of the development of humankind), to be followed between 1784 and 1791 by his four-volume *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (Ideas on the philosophy of the history of humankind), which continued and to some extent provided a summary of the debate about anthropology in the 1770s and 1780s. Another important contribution to Enlightenment anthropology is Blumenbach's dissertation *De generis humani varietate nativa* (On the natural varieties of humankind, 1776), with expanded editions published in 1781 and 1795, and the final version translated into German in 1798. In this text Blumenbach attempted to translate Buffon's methodological principles into an independent anthropology, published separately from his *Handbuch der Naturgeschichte* (Handbook of natural history), first printed in two volumes in 1779 and 1780. In 1785 Christoph Meiners, Blumenbach's colleague in Göttingen, published his *Grundriß der Geschichte der Menschheit* (Outline of the history of humankind), a second edition of which appeared in 1793. All of these texts document the impact of Buffon on the development of the new discipline: Enlightenment anthropology.

I am not the first scholar to make a connection between the origins of anthropology and debates in eighteenth-century natural history. This link is in line with the historiography proposed by Han Vermeulen and Frank Dougherty, and before them by Wolf Lepenies, Michèle Duchet, and Claude

Blanckaert.<sup>16</sup> What my brief bibliographical excursus documents is a form of French-German knowledge transfer during the 1770s and 1780s (with some Dutch input as well) in which the German contribution gradually became more prominent. Starting as relative outsiders in debates on natural history and the emerging discipline of anthropology, within a decade scholars working at German institutions of higher education had grown into prominent participants in these fields.<sup>17</sup> While all of the texts mentioned may, at first glance, appear to participate in a trend toward a temporalization of natural history and are therefore discursively similar, there are substantial differences among them when seen from the perspective of an empirically based model of anthropology. Buffon and Blumenbach attempted to back up their ideas through their own empirical research and had the institutional help and financial means to do so. De Pauw, Raynal, and Herder did not have the institutional and financial infrastructure at their disposal to do their own empirical research but put in an honest effort to distinguish between fact and invention in the written anthropological and ethnographic sources accessible to them.

This is different in the case of Christoph Meiners, who shared with Buffon and Blumenbach a temporal conception of natural history, but who had little concern for the factual accuracy of the material he discussed and tended to aestheticize natural history—for example, by uncritically distinguishing between beautiful and ugly populations, equating beauty with white skin while associating dark skin with ugliness. In 1790 Blumenbach dedicated an entire chapter in the first edition of his *Beyträge zur Naturgeschichte* (Contributions to natural history) to a rebuke of Meiners, emphasizing that his own observations were based on either empirical research or on a careful weighing of existing scientific observations by others.<sup>18</sup> But he may also have disliked Meiners's pro-slavery views: a few years earlier, Meiners had published an essay with the title “Ueber die Rechtmäßigkeit des Negern=Handels” (On the lawfulness of the trade in Blacks).<sup>19</sup> Many contemporaries responded critically to these ideas. In response, from 1795 until his death in 1810, Meiners more or less stopped publishing on the history of humankind and other anthropological topics, but interest in his work was revived in nineteenth-century France (for instance, in the racist writings of Arthur de Gobineau).<sup>20</sup>

The increasing popularity of the new discipline of anthropology in the late eighteenth century is exemplified by the writings of the Königsberg philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). There is a 1768 painting by J. G. Becker in which Kant is holding a book entitled *Anthropologie oder*

*Naturkenntnis des Menschen* (Anthropology or natural knowledge of man).<sup>21</sup> Many prominent intellectuals turned toward anthropology as an innovative epistemological paradigm in the 1770s, and Kant is no exception. In 1775 he published a brief essay titled *Von den verschiedenen Racen der Menschen* (On the different races of humans), which, as we will see in chapter 4, further develops but also critiques Buffon's theories. Kant lectured on anthropology throughout his professional life, and at the end of his career he published *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* (Anthropology from a pragmatic point of view, 1798). Anthropology was not his main area of interest. By focusing on transcendental philosophy, as John Zammito has shown, Kant wanted to rescue philosophy from psychological and empiricist reductionism.<sup>22</sup> In the late eighteenth century physical anthropology was mainly a scientific and therefore empirical enterprise. Was Kant in fact moved by epistemological discussions to abandon his anthropological ambitions, or did other factors play a role as well? Major anthropologists such as Buffon, Camper, and Blumenbach had access to resources not available to Kant. Buffon had started out as a landowner and then oversaw the king's botanical garden and its substantial natural history collections. Camper had his former students, now working in the colonies, ship monkeys to him for dissection. Blumenbach managed to build up a substantial anatomical collection. All of this was not economically viable for Kant, who therefore did not possess the necessary empirical materials for serious anthropological research and risked missing out on the rapid developments around 1770 that led to the academic establishment of the discipline of anthropology. It must have been hard for someone as ambitious as Kant to accept that, but in establishing his transcendental philosophy, he found a different route to intellectual fame. In part because of this, at the end of the century his anthropological writings gained in prominence as well and contributed to the proliferation of the term "race."

Michel Foucault's scholarship has been influential for the study of the eighteenth century's newly established sciences of man. His theories have helped to show the emergence in the late eighteenth century of a new type of biological knowledge that used a temporal model of organization and broke with an older, static paradigm of natural knowledge (called the "classical paradigm" by Foucault) that was primarily spatially organized and exemplified by the tableau as a visual form of organization.<sup>23</sup> He was not the first to propose this idea. Before Foucault, Ernst Cassirer had located a similar but earlier epistemological break. For Cassirer, it is the eighteenth century as a whole that emphasized temporality and developmental patterns



and broke with the systematic spirit of the seventeenth century in favor of a more complex sense of reality.<sup>24</sup> Foucault's interpretation helps us explain the sudden popularity of the concept of anthropology and the proliferation of Buffon-inspired studies in natural history during the second half of the eighteenth century, but in line with Cassirer we can also see this change as the culmination of an ongoing earlier effort to rethink the natural sciences from the perspective of a temporal paradigm, advocated, for instance, by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) whose works many late eighteenth-century scientists avidly studied.

Foucault's work has been eminently helpful for the history of science both in identifying discursive patterns associated with the production of knowledge and in laying bare the power structures at the roots of this knowledge. And yet in some respects his model is not entirely adequate for the developments that *Enlightenment Anthropology* seeks to describe. I will mention two problems. First, Foucault's interest in discourse leads him to "bracket" truth claims, to use a formulation employed by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow.<sup>25</sup> Foucault does not deny that something like a nondiscursive truth exists, but he does not think it essential for the development and advancement of knowledge. In his discursive analysis Foucault therefore deliberately ignores—or "brackets"—specific truth claims that inform a discourse. While much has been gained from Foucault's insistence on the cultural construction of knowledge and its embeddedness in power structures, for Enlightenment anthropologists the truth-value of their statements was important. This explains why some knowledge was accepted while other pieces of information were ignored or discarded, even if all of it was part of a discursive shift toward a temporal model of nature. Second, Foucault's approach does not make it possible to distinguish between the different political interpretations that Blumenbach and Meiners, for instance, gave to the new anthropological approach. Both relied on a temporal view of humankind, as Buffon had proposed it. But Blumenbach advocated for the rights of Blacks (see chapter 1), whereas Meiners used it to argue for the inferiority of certain groups and to legitimize slavery.

In the case of the natural sciences, medicine, and anthropology, we risk missing an important dimension of what constitutes scientific validity if we ignore what constituted truth in the minds of Enlightenment thinkers. In part, the emerging discourse of anthropology in the late eighteenth century was centered around the question of what is empirically true. It is important to be able to reconstruct the debate among the

Enlightenment anthropologists discussed here about which specific observations are empirically valid and which are not, even if such a question is embedded in discursive patterns and institutional structures, and even if the claim of truthfulness itself is part of a cultural construction. Enlightenment anthropology was the product of a Western perspective that informed an emerging global view of mankind. It was driven by a curiosity in particular about non-Western peoples and cultures, but also by the power dynamics underlying European colonialism during the eighteenth century. In the following, I will situate anthropology within the history of science more generally while remaining aware of both the discursive dimension inherent to all scientific thinking and the institutional and material frameworks in which this kind of thought takes place.

#### ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT

The new, temporally oriented modes of natural history and anthropology of the second half of the eighteenth century were intended to contribute to an empirical and scientific description of the world and its inhabitants. But how were they linked to Enlightenment thinking as a whole? This study argues that we can only understand these disciplines' epistemological foundations if we examine them in connection to Enlightenment thought more broadly. Precisely because late eighteenth-century anthropologists and natural historians understood themselves primarily as empirical scientists, it is a mistake to search for the roots of anthropology in the works of philosophers such as Leibniz and Kant, even though their thinking had, at times, an anthropological dimension and shared some epistemological foundations with the new anthropology. To claim that "anthropology was born out of philosophy"<sup>26</sup> ignores the fact that, in particular, new observations of the non-European world enabled and advanced anthropology as a discipline. For both Leibniz and Kant, anthropology was only a small part of their intellectual agenda. Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rousseau were major public intellectuals, and their texts sometimes dealt with anthropological issues, often in provocative ways. But their knowledge about anthropological matters was frequently not in sync with their time. The reason that they nevertheless figure prominently in scholarship on eighteenth-century anthropology is that their ideas have become canonical in other areas of inquiry (literature, philosophy, epistemology, and intellectual history). Although their importance in terms of the actual knowledge they produced

was marginal for the development of the disciplines of natural history and anthropology, they did contribute to the public debate on them.

In order to study the links between anthropology and the Enlightenment productively, we need to be willing, at least to some extent, to rethink the canon of Enlightenment thought. Within the eighteenth-century anthropological mindset, figures like Buffon, Camper, and Blumenbach, but also de Pauw and Raynal, were far more prominent than most histories of the Enlightenment currently acknowledge. They stood for fundamentally new ways of thinking. Eighteenth-century natural history and anthropology in many respects broke with earlier attempts to understand humanity's cultural and biological diversity. The premodern view that the non-European world was populated by strange creatures with only a remote resemblance to (Western) humans was based on various models of understanding human diversity informed by biblical accounts, mythological texts, unreliable (older) travel reports, and a whole body of literature characterized by philosophical and scientific speculation that had shaped what Europe thought of as the non-European world since antiquity. A crucial fact about this earlier body of knowledge is that it relied on texts that had been handed down through the generations, some for more than two thousand years. The Enlightenment intended to break with this tradition, and anthropology played a key role in this effort.

Identifying a close link between Enlightenment thinking and the emerging discipline of anthropology offers us a new perspective on some of the dilemmas and problems that underpin our view of the Enlightenment today. Some blame the Enlightenment for contributing to the totalitarian excesses of the twentieth century, while others believe that only some form of continued commitment to the Enlightenment's secular agenda and rational ideals can safeguard us from the irrational outbursts that characterized twentieth-century politics.<sup>27</sup> In the following I would rather not rearticulate the pros and cons of both of these positions in support of a strictly binary view of the Enlightenment. Instead, by historicizing the normative aims of the Enlightenment I am interested in reconstructing how specific ideas could be used to legitimize, for instance, colonialism, or to do precisely the opposite: to criticize abusive practices toward (some) humans. One ambiguity at the root of Enlightenment discourse is the perpetually present dynamic of moving back and forth between the domains of the "descriptive" and the "normative," as Foucault has shown us. For the Enlightenment thinker, knowledge was a goal in itself because—the assumption was—it would contribute to a better world. To describe the world

would lead to a better understanding of it, and that, in turn, would prompt people to act on that knowledge in order to improve the world. It is worth noting here that a discipline such as anthropology may function differently from, say, physics or chemistry. It is hard to disseminate new information about the variety of humankind without this information impacting how certain populations are viewed and treated. A few Enlightenment thinkers intentionally formulated arguments in favor of colonialism or slavery; others were critical, but their ideas were nevertheless used in support of both. There was a normative potential in anthropological thinking that few recognized. Anthropological knowledge could start to lead a life of its own, with a reception history very different from the original anthropologist's intentions.

How could the Enlightenment, with its ideals of equality and emancipation, at the same time contribute to discourses of race and culture that sought to establish hierarchies among humans? Without question, anthropological knowledge in the eighteenth century had a radical dimension. To suggest that the earth might have existed far longer than the six thousand years claimed by the biblical tradition, that humans were but one category among many in natural history, that humans and apes were possibly related but also different species, or that biological and cultural differences among humans could be traced back to differences in climate and geography—all of these ideas necessitated a fundamental rethinking of the role of humankind in history and society. Perhaps humanity was not central to the history of the universe but rather had developed in its margins due to entirely arbitrary circumstances. Such radical epistemological deliberations had potentially substantial political consequences: if biological and cultural differences are nothing but the consequences of climate and geography, then there was no reason to deal with those who happened to live in a different climate, had a different skin color, and belonged to a different culture in ways other than Europeans were treated.

The radicalism of these insights led to a backlash. Anthropological knowledge had the potential to be emancipatory but it could also be used to cling to notions of Western superiority or to create new hierarchies. And, to make things more complex, the authors responsible for this backlash did to some extent use the same epistemic models, ideas, and vocabulary—in short, the same discourse—that was used by Enlightenment anthropologists with radical and emancipatory ambitions. Climate theory was meant to be descriptive, explain human variety, and foster respect for difference, but it was also used to formulate theories of race and culture,

concepts that gained prominence toward the end of the eighteenth century in part because they could be used to support notions of Western superiority. The cultural anthropology of Franz Boas had its roots in Enlightenment anthropology, but so did nineteenth- and twentieth-century racial theory. It would be wrong to ignore the potential for abuse of these ideas, but neither should we ignore that some Enlightenment thinkers already recognized this potential.

Enlightenment thinkers, at least at times, could be experimental and dialogic and thus were interested in fostering debate and felt responsible for the impact of their ideas on real-world problems. This certainly does not mean that they could foresee or forestall the future course or reception of their thinking. But it does mean that some Enlightenment anthropologists were concerned about the normative implications of their theories and beliefs, along with their practical consequences. This was very much the case for the discipline of anthropology as it emerged in the eighteenth century. It is the goal of *Enlightenment Anthropology* to reconstruct the many voices that made up eighteenth-century anthropology, with the understanding that a better insight into the past, including its many ambiguities, may help our thinking and actions today.