

# At the Roots of Racial Classification: Theory and Iconography in the Work and Legacy of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach

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**"The awful thing is that beauty  
is mysterious as well as terrible.  
God and the devil are fighting there  
and the battlefield is the heart of man"**  
Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky,  
*The Brothers Karamazov*

## 1. Some Introductory Remarks on Blumenbach's Life, Legacy and Iconography

Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840) has been undoubtedly the most influential German anthropologist of his epoch. [1] Born in 1752 in Gotha into a good bourgeois family (the father was a teacher, the mother was the daughter of Karl Franz Buddeus (1695–1753), the important jurist and vice-chancellor of the city government), Blumenbach studied first in Jena and then in Göttingen, where he obtained the academic title of doctor of medicine in 1775 with a dissertation containing the first, still quadripartite version of racial classification. Shortly

after, he was nominated curator of the academic museum and professor at the local university, thus starting a long-term research activity strongly characterized by a radical connection between scientific collections and university teaching. Blumenbach could intensify this connection thanks to the following intertwined factors: 1) the international prestige and authority he gained very soon with his spectacular efforts; 2) the fact that Göttingen was at that time under the British Crown, which meant enjoying more thinking freedom, easier contact with a leading political and scientific community such as that of the British Empire, and above all direct and privileged access to the naturalist and ethnological materials coming from the British colonies and from Cook's travels. Blumenbach never left his adoptive city for long periods. The one significant exception was his trip to Great Britain in the early 1790s, which quickly became legendary. For the rest of his life in Göttingen, he led an increasingly comfortable and revered existence as a teacher and scholar at the centre of a great network of international exchanges. He died there in 1840.

Blumenbach's name is still universally linked to physical and racial anthropology for four main reasons: 1) his famous private collection of more than 200 skulls (which by the end of his life was probably the widest and most complete worldwide and is now conserved at the University of Göttingen); 2) the so-called *norma verticalis*, which was a decisive innovation in the method of skull measurement, consisting of the view of the skull from above; [2] 3) the division of mankind into five principal racial groups, which was – and still is – regarded as the first modern racial classification; and 4) the establishment in the anthropological vocabulary of the term 'Caucasian' for the type including Europeans. [3] Therefore, it is no coincidence that 25 years ago such an authority as the biologist-historian Stephen J. Gould (1941-2002) summed up Blumenbach's work under the heading of "The Geometer of Race". [4]

Blumenbach's personal iconography widely confirms how predominant and – one may say – unescapable the reference to his craniological studies and racial classification is. The most popular portrait of his [Fig. 1] – drawn by Ludwig Emil Grimm (1790-1863), the youngest and less known of the Grimm Brothers – shows Blumenbach sitting at home near the skull of "Richard Bruce King of Scotland". According to a true story told by Blumenbach himself in 1823 during a tea afternoon at his own home at the presence of the etcher and some ladies (including his own wife), popular superstition had assigned extraordinary powers to Richard's skull, able to make the person who owned it a strong and brave conqueror. Under the impression of this legend, George IV (1762-1830), king of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, ordered Blumenbach to bring him the skull, but after some time he did not really know what to do with such a fateful piece, so he decided to make a present of it to Blumenbach, who surely could have profited more from it. This anecdote reveals Blumenbach's irony in distancing himself from the Romantic trends of his time, in approaching his work and to his objects of inquiry, as well as, in some way, in his awareness of the autonomy and authoritativeness of the physical anthropology he practised, which he had by then achieved.



Fig. 1

Johann Friedrich Blumenbach. Portrait by L. E. Grimm  
1823.

Public Domain.

Two years later, a solemn ceremony for the 50th anniversary of Blumenbach's dissertation took place in Göttingen. The commemorative medal [Fig. 2] was financed by an incredible number of subscribers – around 1500, mostly scholars and Blumenbach's correspondents, colleagues, former students from Europe and the rest of the world; the first professor of anatomy and physiology at the University of Berlin, Karl Asmund Rudolphi (1771-1832), coordinated the project. The Latin writing on both sides of the medal states, on the front, *I. Fr. Blumenbach nato Gothae d. 11. Maii 1752 doct. creato Gottingae*, and on the reverse, *d. 19. Sept. 1775 naturae interpreti ossa loqui iubenti physiosophili germanici*. On the face of the medal, one can see an official profile portrait of Blumenbach wearing elegant clothes and decorations of the Hanoverian Order of Chivalry; on the reverse is a triangle, whose vertices are skulls representing three of the five racial types (the Caucasian, the Mongolian and the Ethiopic).



Fig. 2

Commemorative Medal 1825.

It is worth remarking that the facial image is somewhat problematic, as it does not express Blumenbach's style, nor the attitudes and values of his life. [5] However, the foremost issue concerns the image on the reverse, which represents an equivocal, simplifying and distorting interpretation of ambivalent passages of Blumenbach's work. In his different expositions of racial classification, Blumenbach never spoke of only *three* principal race groups

(*Hauptrassen*); he constantly spoke of four and – since the beginning of the 1780s – of five, but he equally defined the American and Malaysian types as ‘transitions (*Übergänge*)’ between the Caucasian race – the primordial one – on the one side and the Ethiopian and Mongolian, respectively. [6] When Blumenbach himself arranged the last three skulls in a unique figure, [Fig. 3] his aim was *not* to exhibit any racial classification – thus being consistent with the general assumption of five main races – but to exemplify the validity of the *norma verticalis* [7] – hence showing the three skulls as viewed from above. In both illustrations – that of the classification and that of the vertical norm – the skulls are placed at the same level side by side. Oddly, the reverse image on the medal consists exclusively of frontal or lateral views, hierarchically combined in a way that suggests the superiority of the Caucasian race: thus it is difficult to claim that such an image faithfully represents Blumenbach’s methodology or doctrine. If Blumenbach interpreted nature “by letting the bones speak”, Rudolphi and his colleagues visualized such ‘speech’ by representing its message in a distorted and simplified way. One of the aims of the present essay is to explain how and to what extent Blumenbach’s writings made this reading possible: I have already mentioned the passage concerning *Hauptrassen* and *Übergänge*; later I return to Blumenbach’s understanding of the Caucasian Race.

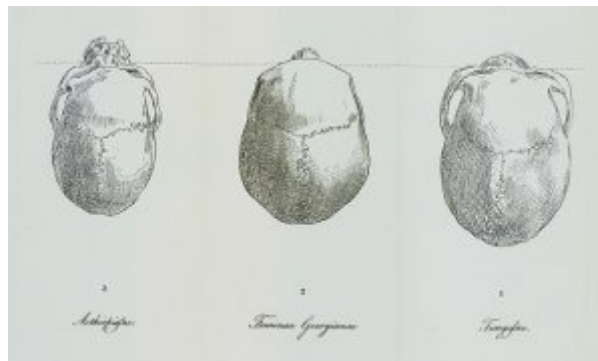


Fig. 3

J. F. Blumenbach: *De generis humani varietate nativa* (1795): Tab. I.

The last images I would like to mention are the banners designed for the homepage of the great German digitalization project of all Blumenbach’s writings and collections. In the older one [Fig. 4] (2010), Blumenbach’s signature joins his face in Grimm’s portrait to the lateral sections of a skull; but now the skull serves as bookend for a row of books. However, the contemporary approach to Blumenbach’s work and personality regards his cranium research more as an object of historical interest than of current scientific validity: the project does not aim to put forward his physical anthropology once again. The new one [Fig. 5] (2018) no longer has an ironical or dialectical approach to cranial anthropology: a pre-ordered sequence of images is linked to the corresponding digitalized objects; nevertheless, the starting image of the banner is always the synoptic view of both faces of the medal of 1825. The message seems to be in this case that the modern technical innovation of digitalization makes an academic re-appropriation possible, a sort of re-institutionalization, of Blumenbach’s legacy in ‘his’ Göttingen and – thanks to the Web – from ‘his’ Göttingen into

the wide world. But there is no warning on the website that the now ‘reloaded’ old, official, academic image of Blumenbach transmitted a partial, equivocal and ideologically questionable interpretation of Blumenbach’s anthropology. By contextualizing these images I have strikingly shown how ambivalent the reception and interpretation of Blumenbach’s legacy can be. Indeed, one and the same digitalization project in 2010 and 2018 has elaborated two images – which are divergent and at the same time deeply immersed in the history of science and in Blumenbach’s personal iconography – apparently endorsing a problematic interpretation of his racial classification, presented as representative for all his anthropology. [8]



Fig. 4

Blumenbach-online.de: Banner 2010.



Fig. 5

Blumenbach-online.de: Banner 2018.

## 2. Anthropology as a Part of Natural History: Mutability of Nature and the Study of Human Nature and Varieties

If a synthetic definition of Blumenbach’s concept of natural history is needed, then likely it is this: a science of natural mutability. According to Blumenbach, all nature is subject to change: earth, rocks, plants, animals. The sheer diversity of human beings is first and foremost an expression of such mutability, and therefore of its being a natural phenomenon, even if not all causes of human diversity are directly natural (some are effects of the technical-cultural transformations by which nature is subjected to human activity). To define this vast phenomenon of production of races and intra-specific varieties, Blumenbach adopts a term, typical of the coeval natural history, though at that time it was not necessarily connected with theories of degradation, literally indicating varieties (e.g. created by grafting in agriculture or breeding in zootechny) di-verging from or developing out of a standard original kind: he speaks of ‘degeneration’ (*Degeneration* or *Ausartung*). [9] The complexity of this phenomenon and the interaction of all the many factors concurring within it afford no general systematic account of the action of these many factors, neither in mechanical terms nor as a two-way causality. Nevertheless, Blumenbach believes that is plausible 1) to consider

a plurality of principal causes, and 2) to prove their impact on specific objects of inquiry. [10] Regarding the first point Blumenbach – like Georges Buffon (1707-1788) – identifies these causes in climate, nutrition and forms of life. Regarding the second, he focuses on domesticated animals, especially on pigs. He does so for epistemological reasons and as an argumentative and theoretical strategy. Thanks to its genealogical traits (unanimously accepted by scientists), its omnivorous character, and its widespread presence on planet Earth, not to mention its being the closest to man among the domesticated animals, the pig appears as the most meaningful and pertinent object to investigate “degeneration” and its causes. [11]

Such an association between human being and pig induced the author of the most quoted history of anthropology in German academia, i.e. Wilhelm Emil Mühlmann (1904-1988), to praise Blumenbach as a “precursor” of Eugen Fischer’s (1874-1967) theory of domestication. For Mühlmann, who had been a student of Fischer, “the domestication thesis was [...] in and for itself older [...], Posidon, Blumenbach and Lawrence had cultivated similar thoughts [...]. But Fischer founded it according to genetic theory”. [12] Wondering to what extent Blumenbach could be interpreted in such a way, in his comprehensive and unparalleled history of science and culture at the University of Göttingen from Enlightenment to Romanticism, Luigi Marino gave two sceptical answers. [13] On a philological level, he stated how difficult it was to solve the problem with the very few available data offered by Blumenbach. On a theoretical level, he added that Blumenbach seemed much more interested in the classification of races. In my view, neither Mühlmann nor Marino got the point right.

Mühlmann’s interpretation is grounded on a reconstruction of Blumenbach’s path of thought: Blumenbach would have first (1779) interpreted racial differences along the lines of the traditional doctrine of ‘environment’ (climate, nutrition, etc.), while only later (from 1789 on) would he have associated the diversity of human races with the “degeneration” of domestic animals. However, in fact none of Blumenbach’s writings present human racial marks in perfect parallelism with marks of domestic animals. This is only a negative and indirect argument against Mühlmann’s reconstruction, but a direct source, the *Beyträge zur Naturgeschichte*, attests that Blumenbach’s research concerning domestic animals was not meant to replace that of degeneration. On the contrary, the first became a confirmation of the latter precisely because the “degeneration” of domestic animals helped prove the force of the principal causes of degeneration.

Most decisive, the *Beyträge zur Naturgeschichte* proves that Blumenbach limits the assimilation of man to domestic animals the very moment he affirms it. When Blumenbach defines the human being as the most perfect among the domestic animals, he also points out that only the human animal can be called truly domestic, essentially and primarily. [14] In contrast to all non-human animals that humans can domesticate (and in contrast to what is presumed by any theory of domestication), human beings do not originate from an isolated and savage state of nature. Against a contemporaneous background, since Blumenbach

claims that the original condition of human beings is nothing but a social and cultural one, he thus stands in a continuity with both the structural anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009) (who accordingly quotes the corresponding text passage from the *Beyträge* in his pioneering study about the elementary structure of kinship) [15] and the philosophical anthropology of Arnold Gehlen (1904-1976) (who maintained that the human being is for natural reasons a cultural being) [16]. In fact, Blumenbach's definition of the human animal underlines the peculiar place, or better the unique specificity of man within the animal kingdom. Ultimately, the true meaning of the definition lies in the fact that man, physiologically speaking, [17] is the most plastic and open to the world of all animals, the least dependent on or determined by nature's surroundings, the most open to the greatest differentiations.

To identify and classify these differentiations objectively, Blumenbach designed a method based on three rules. [18] The first rule requires always considering the general physiology of organized bodies: man is one living organism among others, and the understanding of man has to be based on its comparison with the structures of other species' organisms. The second rule elaborates on the first one: it rejects direct comparisons between extreme cases, because differences blend into each other between one case and the next one, and so if intermediate states are overlooked, the extremes become too great to be accounted for within the same interval. [19] Many elements constituting the theoretical basis of this rule are very obviously reminiscent of Buffon's nominalistic and anti-metaphysical paradigm, revisited and expanded by Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) and Georg Forster (1754-1794) against Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) – the difference being that Herder and Foster expanded and generalized Buffon's paradigm to include all of nature. These elements are: 1) the use of the term *Nüance* (*shade*); 2) the very idea that the human species, as any other species, comparatively consists of a gradual series of internal differentiations; and 3) the idea that the separations among such intraspecific differentiations are in reality “nothing more than very arbitrary boundaries among the varieties” (*keine andere als sehr willkürliche Grenzen zwischen diesen Spielarten*). [20] Incidentally, these elements are of extreme importance for defining the status of classification as something inherently different from the mirror of nature. The third rule recommends building an anthropological collection, an empirical data base, that should be as strong, comprehensive and focused as possible, because our knowledge of natural history rests on “intuitions”, which means here a *sensible*, sensory notion. In this context, Blumenbach recalls in his own original way Galileo Galilei's (1564-1642) image of the book of nature: this point is of such a tremendous historical and methodological relevance that it deserves closer consideration.

### 3. The Book of Nature and the End of Natural History: On Direct and Indirect Knowledge of Nature

Blumenbach's variation on the image of the book of nature, taken from the first part of the *Beyträge zur Naturgeschichte*, where it appears in contexts and wordings which were modified between the first and the second edition, abundantly illustrates the epistemological and

cultural turning point that Wolf Lepenies would, two hundred years later, call the end of natural history. [21] This is to say a transition which occurred swiftly in the last decades of the eighteenth century, from natural history as description of nature to natural history as the historicity, temporality, and mutability of nature through time. Lepenies, however, neglects not only the *Beyträge*, but all Blumenbach's work: he cites Blumenbach very rarely, and mostly in relation to Kant. This is all the more incomprehensible since Blumenbach was *the* most famous and widely read historian of nature at that time. What is more, in the *Beyträge*, Lepenies would have found not only countless examples of Blumenbach's great contribution to establishing the method representative of the new natural history, but also a splendid corroboration of the value of his own thesis, according to which the end of natural history coincides with the transition from nature, understood and read as a body of texts, to nature as the book of nature – a field of observations and experimentation.

In the first edition of the first part of the *Beyträge*, the book of nature is recalled in part of Chapter 11, which responds word by word to Meiners' critique of the comparative study of skulls of different populations. [22] Although this chapter was removed from the second edition, the section that interests us, together with a couple of other meaningful passages, is incorporated into Chapter 10, now titled "On anthropological collections". [23] The elimination of the previous Chapter 11 should not be interpreted as symptomatic of a reconsideration or as an admission of defeat by Blumenbach. Instead, because the key issue in his controversy with Meiners is defining the correct method of anthropology, it appears much more likely that Blumenbach, reassured by the consensus now achieved by his anthropology, believed his exposition could simply omit polemics addressing his old opponent.

Meiners had questioned Blumenbach's assessment of entire populations based on the shape of a single bodily part, and of this same bodily part on the basis of single bones. Lastly, as one reads a little later in his critique, Meiners succinctly questioned Blumenbach's pretension to classify the human species on the basis of single physical traits. Against such an alleged generalization of a single anthropological-physical criterion, Meiners indicated other criteria, for instance historic-geographical ones. Blumenbach shares Meiners' doubts, but he argues that Meiners' critiques do not pertain to his own methods, because he does not stretch the natural method beyond reliability, control and experience. [24] Regarding the limits of intuitive knowledge and its necessary integration with reliable information and others' experiences, Blumenbach fully agrees with Meiners: this praxis is adopted by all scholars of natural history. Blumenbach's point is that the scholar of natural history must not renounce direct experience and intuitive knowledge – that is, in this case, the comparative and direct study of skulls – merely because such experience will never be complete. It is the scholar's "mandatory obligation" (*unabbitliche Verpflichtung*) – Blumenbach dictates – "to do anything in their power to acquire first of all as much personal experience as possible". [25]

This idea of expanding the field of possible direct experience while remaining within the limits of experience itself shows some analogies with Kant's tenets in the *First Critique*, in



particular with reference to the crucial emphasis on direct experience, whereas the idea of critically recurring to indirect experience when direct experience no longer helps – i.e., a critical stance towards indirect sources – seems closer to Herder’s and Forster’s approaches. Precisely regarding the relations among direct experience of nature, indirect experience of nature, and knowledge of nature, in the first edition of the first part of the *Beyträge*, Blumenbach introduces the image of the great book of nature. [26]

In the second edition, the scenario changes; Blumenbach limits himself to an exposition of the three rules of his method, using the image of the book of nature to explain the third rule, which calls for preparing an anthropological collection as broad and as diverse as possible. Here, he distinguishes between the direct, intuitive knowledge that the observer draws from nature, and indirect knowledge – i.e. information gathered from other people: he speaks of the former as the “revealed book of nature” (in the first edition, he had written instead of “the word revealed in the book of nature”) [27] and of the latter as “a sort of symbolic books”.

To my knowledge, the only scholar to quote and highlight this passage is Bruce Baum, who claims that it indicates that at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Blumenbach “reflected on the ‘symbolic’ character of any reading of nature”. [28] In my view, Baum misinterpreted the passage, likely misled by Thomas Bendyshe’s (1827-1886) nineteenth-century English translation of the *Beyträge zur Naturgeschichte*, Part one, second edition. Bendyshe did not understand what Blumenbach meant with the expression ‘*symbolische Bücher*’, but, since he had to translate it, he opted for ‘*a kind of symbolical writing*’, [29] thus completely obscuring its meaning. The original expression has, in fact, a precise theological meaning with which Blumenbach plays. Already extant in the Patristic tradition, in the Protestant theology of the end of the seventeenth century ‘symbolic books’ designates those texts that various Christian denominations considered exclusively their own (e.g. the various catechisms of the Protestant Churches). During the eighteenth century, the authority attributed to these texts by orthodox Protestant theology was problematized first by the Pietists and then questioned even more by the Neologists. [30] If one takes into consideration the enormous importance given to experience and sensation within the neological milieu, it cannot be by chance that Blumenbach adopted that very image to question the pretence of indirect knowledge to subordinate direct knowledge to itself. Therefore, the meaning of the analogy between the relation of the believer to the Bible and to those symbolic books, and of the natural scientists to the knowledge of nature, is that, as the believer seeking God must stick to the Bible upon which the truth value of the various catechisms depends, so the reader of the book of nature seeking truth must gather as much direct, sensible knowledge as possible to be able to read and understand such a book – nature – and to grasp the truth; only knowledge found in *this* book can be endorsed, received, and accepted. The reference text has now become, permanently, the nature to which statements of the other books – those of men – must harmonize.

## 4. The Evolution of Blumenbach's Classification: Main Tendencies and Problems

On these premises, Blumenbach founded and developed that process of definition and revision of the classification of human intra-specific varieties which had interested him from the beginning and which covers almost half a century. We can uncover the guidelines, the turning points or the contradictions of such process by comparing the numerous editions of *De Generis Humani Varietate Nativa*, *Handbuch der Naturgeschichte*, *Beyträge zur Naturgeschichte* and *Abbildungen naturhistorischer Gegenstände*.

The first tendency to be noted here is terminological: The word 'race' had been the object of great controversy in the mid '80s. [31] Herder had rejected it as ignoble, while Kant had tried to elaborate a conceptually rigorous definition of the term. Blumenbach, who initially preferred the expression 'variety' (*Varietät* or *Spielart*), was persuaded by Kant's definition and adopted the word explicitly and systematically from the 1795 on. [32] Most likely, he had theoretical reasons to do so, though he may also have been motivated by strategic considerations. On the one hand, Kant, whose philosophy was the most successful in Germany in the '90s, had favourably accepted Blumenbach's doctrine of the organized living organisms, and by doing so he had given Blumenbach's research the philosophical legitimacy it needed. On the other hand, Kant's writings on the concept of race between 1777 and 1788 rigorously restricted the definition of the term to the hereditary transmission of physical, and only physical, properties, thus nurturing the illusion of protecting human reason and liberty from the threat of naturalism and biological reductionism. Blumenbach was certainly a humanist and mobilized his entire anthropology against the enslavement and marginalization of people and social groups, as his stand in favour of the equal human, intellectual, and moral dignity of the so-called Negro incontrovertibly demonstrates. [33]

We may, however, hypothesize the existence of a further theoretical reason, even more general, at the heart of Blumenbach's decision to substitute '*Varietät*' and '*Spielart*' with '*Rasse*'. Expressions such as '*Varietät*' and '*Spielart*' have the dual feature of not being specific enough and of underscoring especially the superficial, accidental, casual, uncertain, and arbitrary aspect of the observed phenomenon, almost as if nature played with its manifestations. These expressions somehow suggested that the object of study was inessential, secondary, and either completely or in part irreducible to a rational explanation. However, Kant's definition of the concept of race, based on the assumption of a constant and cohesive set of physical features, presumes an identifiable, objective content which can be subjected to verifiable knowledge. In this way, Kant's definition contributes to shifting the conversation on nature and its diversity into the camp of natural sciences, and to developing an adequate and corresponding categorical repertoire. Because of that definition, the terminology and conceptuality of anthropology reached a crossroads, and Blumenbach, who had been active in that research field for years, would eventually have to take one path or the other. Since his work was clearly headed towards founding anthropology as an empirical science of nature, at some point the choice of adopting the Kantian expression had to appear

to him as entirely natural and understandable.

A second tendency is a gradual shift from a simple, unorganized list of anatomical traits to a more regular and systematic one (skin colour, hair colour, typology of hair, facial and cranial traits). Parallel to this, the third tendency is toward increasing concentration on physical data, anatomical as well as geographical, to the exclusion of cultural and theological characteristics – such as the language of some populations or the identification of Adam as progenitor of humans – which had initially been accepted and included. [34] Notwithstanding, one statement is explicitly grounded on cultural values and remains constantly present in the *Handbuch*: “according to the European concepts of beauty”, the Caucasian race has the most beautiful form of skull and face. [35]

Why did Blumenbach not exclude this datum as well? If the scientific legitimacy and validity of his classification depends on a methodology as objective and as physically oriented as possible, then this datum weakened the entire theoretical foundation of his system of classification. In my view, the reason is that for him the Caucasian cranium was indeed the best proportioned physically, which means that the cultural statement concerning Caucasian beauty has in Blumenbach’s eyes a physical, objective, that is, geometrical reference – a reference of decisive conceptual and systematic importance for Blumenbach’s anthropology. Against the backdrop of the theory of climate and temperaments, on the one hand, and on the basis of considerations pertaining to physiology, on the other hand, Blumenbach tends in fact to believe that the populations living in temperate climate areas are more proportionately formed, that the change in skin tone from white to black is easier than vice versa, and that temperate climate areas are more welcoming to the primordial human species. Craniological researches based on the criterion of *norma verticalis* confirm this picture through the discovery of three ideal shapes corresponding to three of the main racial groups: the extremely symmetrical and nearly round or spherical shape (Caucasian); one that developed in width, flattened and roughly square, narrow and squeezed on the sides (Mongolian); and the one that developed in length (Ethiopian).

To sum up, on the one hand, Blumenbach was aware that the equation of harmony of proportions with beauty is a cultural heritage of the European tradition, particularly of the Greek tradition. On the other, he was not totally aware of how culturally and theoretically conditioned were both his own assumptions that the Georgian cranium could be seen as a model of the Caucasian cranium in general, and that, due to the (presumed) objectivity and perfection of its proportions, the Georgian skull helped to classify the Caucasian race as the primordial and intermediate one among all races (*Stamm-Rasse, Mittel-Rasse*).

It is important to keep in mind that such a conceptual pair was not a point of departure, but a point of arrival for Blumenbach’s anthropology. When in the first edition of the *Handbuch* he introduces the race which he would call ‘Caucasian’ later on, and which included all Europeans, he speaks of this race as the “largest” and the “original” one, with no assumptions, however, about any genealogical implications between this one and all the other units of the classification. [36] When in the fourth edition of the *Handbuch*, the human

race's ancestor is no longer Adam, but much more prosaically, a common and primal race, such a progenitor-race is not identified with any of the five units of the classification, and the initial attributes of 'largest' and 'original' disappear for good from any descriptions of the first unit. [37] It is only after 1795, that is, after the third edition of the dissertation, that the *Handbuch* offers the first, though temporary, definition of the Caucasian race as the 'median' or 'progenitor-like' race. [38] From 1799 on, the definition is basically final, although significantly, the formulation is a little bit uncertain and equivocal ("the so-called", "or"): "the Caucasian race has to be assumed as the so-called progenitor or intermediate race". [39]

It is noteworthy that the concept of progenitor race defines the Caucasian race in terms of descent, namely in fundamentally genealogical terms, while the concept of *Mittel-Rasse* defines it in morphological and comparative terms. Blumenbach likely deemed these two approaches to be convergent and, therefore, equivalent; however, on the theoretical horizon laid out by his idea of nature (which was still rooted in eighteenth-century thought), this equivalence cannot subsist without generating contradictions or calling into question the general theoretical framework. If, indeed, nature is a continuum of shades, against which every distinction is arbitrary, then every classification – even more so, that of the most plastic species, which is the most prone to degeneration – does not count as mirror of nature, but only as a modelling based on the perception and the typification of some particularly meaningful occurrences. This is also what Blumenbach maintains in his own classification in the context of his own natural history. However, when a component of the classification is not only an intermediate model between two extremes, but is also, because of its intermediate position, the concrete, historical, and natural point of departure of the equally concrete, historical, and natural process of 'degeneration' of the human species, then one might well wonder if the continuum of history has not been made discrete or if the classification is still only typological. This is to ask whether or to what extent the relationship between typology and genealogy is still solidly grounded theoretically and methodologically. This issue signals not only a theoretical and methodological difficulty, but also an historical transition between two eras and between two different ways of understanding and practising natural history.

## 5. Skulls, Natural-Cultural Environments and Exemplarities: on the Ways of Illustrating Human Variety

The illustrations of the preceding section indicate how Blumenbach and his scientific enterprise were seen and represented during his life as well as in the history of anthropology: references to his craniological studies are dominant. Now I would like to conclude with images once again, but this time that concerning anthropological data taken from Blumenbach's writings. Among those illustrations, Table II of the Dissertation in the third edition of 1795 [Fig. 6] is probably the most famous and most frequently cited: it is a strictly typological and purely physical representation, consisting of only osteological objects, extracted from the anatomical context. We clearly see the status of the Caucasian race as the intermediate race by virtue of the harmony of proportions. This table commonly stands for

the whole classification and anthropology of Blumenbach, but actually it aimed to illustrate not the five human varieties in itself, but the five varieties of skulls which are the most enlightening research objects in the study of human variety. [40]



Fig. 6

J. F. Blumenbach: *De generis humani varietate nativa* (1795): Tab. II.

Blumenbach's writings contain a further, far less known, but more comprehensive image, in which the craniological data are considered and included in the representation, though becoming altogether secondary: this image aims to illustrate the five principal varieties of mankind and it is the sequence of five vignettes in Part One of the *Beyträge zur Naturgeschichte* [Fig. 7.1-7.5]. [41] Here, the prototype of each single race is presented as a whole in its physical entirety as well as in its social dimension, defined essentially by its own natural and cultural context. Conditioned by today's predominant cultural paradigm of natural sciences, one might suppose that only the table has a scientific value, while the vignettes are meant to be mere decorative illustrations. This assumption would be utterly false. Who commissioned the vignettes and why?



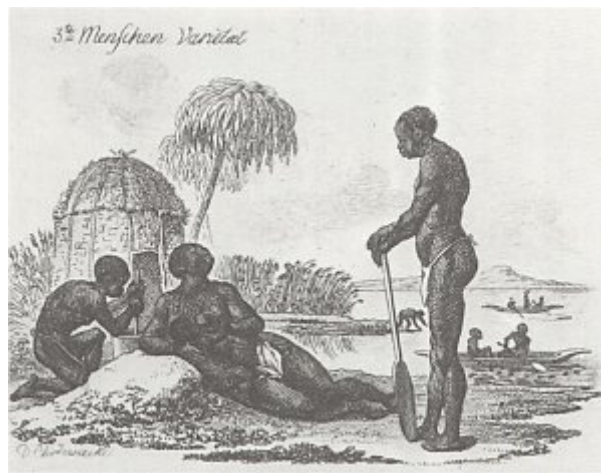




Fig. 7 (1.2.3.4.5)

J. F. Blumenbach: *Beyträge zur Naturgeschichte. Erster Theil* (1790): Vignettes of the five human varieties by D. Chodowiecki.

The epistolary of Blumenbach with his friend Johann Christian Dieterich (1722-1800), future editor of the *Beyträge*, and with Daniel Nikolaus Chodowiecki (1726-1801), the author of the vignettes, allows us to establish that Blumenbach conceived them as an essential part of his anthropological project, and that he took care of them in every detail, giving accurate instructions on the basis of this project. Indeed, on December 17, 1781, Blumenbach writes to Chodowiecki, showing a deference that suggests the prestige of the artist he is approaching as well as attesting to the esteem he wished to convey:

Most Illustrious Sir, allow me to beg the help of your skillful hand, not for the mere beautification, but rather eminently for the explanation and clarification of a text that I publish with the publishing house of our Mr. Dietrich [*sic*] on the Natural History of the Human Race. I wish, in fact, to see drawn by you, most illustrious, in as many vignettes, the five main races or varieties into which I have divided the entire human race. [42]

When sending to Dietrich the letter to forward to Chodowiecki, Blumenbach is even more adamant and categorical:

The vignettes—he cuts short to avoid misunderstanding—are not a mere ornament to the book; rather, they are *essential* and *necessary* [*wesentlich notwendig*] and could not be satisfactorily drawn by either Ender or Meil, but only by Chodow[iecky]. [43]

The order in which these names are mentioned mirrors an ascendant order of aesthetical values and professional prestige consistently confirmed by later critics, in this case perfectly in accord with the perception of those artists in their time. Indeed, Johann August Roßmäsler (1752-1783) who died prematurely a year later, was a youngster who was already active on the market yet devoid of his own style, who took Chodowiecki as his model without having been his disciple. [44] In contrast, Georg Gustav Endtner (1754-1824) had a more solid professional profile, despite being a mediocre artist. [45] Endtner had already had ongoing

collaborations with various publishing houses in the past (among them Breitkopf), and he had just been nominated teaching assistant to the Chair of Drawing at the Leipzig Academy where he had studied. For his commissioned works, academic standing, and cultural impact Johann Wilhelm Meil (1733-1805) was a more highly regarded artist, and Blumenbach had already commissioned him to do the frontispiece of *Über den Bildungstrieb*. At the time, he was well connected and well known in the Frederician political, academic, and cultural environment, as one can infer from his collaborations with the royal porcelain factory, the Prussian court theatre, and the artists involved in the decoration of the new castle of Sanssouci on the one hand, as well as with several writers on the other. Meil, who is today considered the main codifier of Prussian Anacreontic and the “appropriate book illustrator of Frederician Enlightenment”, made a contribution that was “crucial to the establishment of the drawing style inspired by the French tradition, without however arriving at the popular-bourgeois realism of a (...) Chodowiecki”. [46] Meil was nominated rector of the drawing class at the Berlin Academy of Fine arts in 1783, and then became the Academy’s director at Chodowiecki’s death, in 1801. Compared with Chodowiecki, to whom he had taught the art of engraving, Meil was, however, less original and innovative: in addition to remaining tied to the stylistic conventions of French ornamentation, he worked with an allegorical “limited group of elements”, selecting “according to the baroque principle of the emblem books, single elements full of symbolic significance”, that he then “put together” in continuous variations. [47]

At this point, outlining in detail the life and work of a much more complex and famous author such as Chodowiecki – who has been the subject of so many partial studies and monographies regarding his technique and aesthetics, as well as about the sociology and history of art and culture – would occupy too much space and end up being somewhat superfluous. [48] The son of a Polish merchant of noble ancestry and a Swiss Huguenot, and a man perfectly integrated in the French Protestant community and in the French-derived Masonic community of Berlin, Chodowiecki had served an apprenticeship in commerce and had had a non-academic artistic education, reaching success as an engraver in a sudden and sensational way at the end of the 1760s. From that moment, his fame and business had steadily increased and been consolidated, among other reasons thanks to his illustrations to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s (1729-1781) comedy *Minna von Barnhelm*. [49] He was also ‘principal illustrator’ [50] of the *Göttinger Taschenkalender* of Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (1742-1799), published by Dietrich. In both cases, he resorted to dramatic and contemporary subjects. His fame was also strengthened by his collaboration as illustrator and editor, respectively, in two cultural enterprises which were extremely representative of that historical moment: Johann Kaspar Lavater’s (1741-1801) *Physiognomische Fragmente*, [51] and Johann Bernhard Basedow’s (1724-1790) *Elementarwerk*, a study in pedagogy. [52]

When Blumenbach approached him, Chodowiecki was certainly the most sought after, acclaimed and lucrative engraver in Germany; [53] however, the reason why Blumenbach wanted him and no one else is theoretical. Chodowiecki dedicated his art to the principle of imitation of nature and he was acclaimed for his ability in showing the interaction between



the individual, corporeal expressiveness and the natural or social context of action. Thus he could provide Blumenbach the greatest guarantee of intellectual and aesthetic affinity. The vignettes for the *Beyträge* were commissioned precisely to illustrate the doctrine of human varieties as products of the interaction between the natural and the cultural, between specific natural traits (as shown by physical anthropology and geography) and specific cultural and social traits as identified by the new emerging science, ethnology.

Unfortunately, the *Beyträge zur Naturgeschichte* have not been much studied by the scholars of Blumenbach. Thus, no one has ever properly examined the relations between the sequence of the *Beyträge* and the Tables of the dissertation. Two answers are possible: either the Tables move beyond the vignettes and replace them, or tables and vignettes are two faces of the same coin, two complementary ways to work on the same object. It seems to me for several reasons that the second answer is correct: first – from a philological point of view – when Blumenbach edited the first section of the *Beyträge* for the second edition, he corrected and updated his work in different ways (e.g., the origin of basalt, teleology, methodology, the classification itself), but he did not feel any need to eliminate the vignettes. Secondly – and this is a theoretical remark – the tables and vignettes exemplified two essentially different types of approach to anthropology: one focused on the causes of ‘degeneration’, the other was based on craniological investigation.

In Blumenbach these two types of approach coexist; a third sequence of images reinforces this assumption [Fig. 8-12]. The text from which it is taken, the *Abbildungen naturhistorischer Gegenstände* of 1796, is undoubtedly a publication that has a scientific character and purpose; this is corroborated by Blumenbach’s mentions of it in his academic text *par excellence*, the *Handbuch der Naturgeschichte*, where the *Abbildungen* are referred to as an apparatus of scientific sources. [54] What is more, the preface of the *Abbildungen* themselves directly attests to this, since the book is clearly presented here as a repertoire of epistemic objects set in continuity with the doctrine of the relation between direct and indirect knowledge, [55] which we know from the image of the book of nature and the symbolic books. In this capacity, the *Abbildungen* serve both as a text complementing the natural history handbook, and as general support for research activities within the naturalistic field. In particular, the epistemic objects of anthropological value in the *Abbildungen* – that is to say the so-called “model heads representative and characteristics of the five main races” – constitute a convergence of: 1) physical foundations of classification (the shape of the face and of the skull); 2) cultural variables of the so-called human degeneration or mutability (represented here, excepting only the so-called ‘Negro’, by the clothing and stylization of the face of the populations included within the racial types); and 3) humanistic principles of Blumenbach’s physical anthropology (equal dignity and potential of all five human varieties, expressed through the choice of representing the five main races through models of virtues and talents, and figures of great men of art: painters, lifestyle: gentlemen, science: theologians, and politics: diplomats, army commanders). The correspondence between these real life models and the craniological models depicted in the tables of the dissertation is explicitly stated. [56] Failing to show the natural environmental variable of degeneration, which could not be

divorced from the *Beyträge* vignettes, does not mean leaving out climate as a cause of degeneration – as it is rather a direct consequence of the will to faithfully reproduce the epistemic object, which is here a pre-existing portrait since the beginning. Blumenbach's focus on combining physical and cultural data is, however, apparent and can lead to restrictive interpretations.



Fig. 8

J. F. Blumenbach: *Abbildungen naturhistorischer Gegenstände*, 1796-1810-1830. Head representing the Mongolian race.



Fig. 9

J. F. Blumenbach, *Abbildungen naturhistorischer Gegenstände*, 1796-1810-1830. Tayadaneega. Head representing the American race.



**Fig. 10**

J. F. Blumenbach, *Abbildungen naturhistorischer Gegenstände*, 1810-1830<sup>2</sup>. Mahommed Jumla. Head representing the caucasian race.



**Fig. 11**

J. F. Blumenbach, *Abbildungen naturhistorischer Gegenstände*, 1796-1810-1830. Omai. Head representing the Malaysian race.



Fig. 12

J. F. Blumenbach, *Abbildungen naturhistorischer Gegenstände*, 1796-1810-1830. Jaco[bus] Eliza [Elisa] Jo[hannes] Capitein. Head representing the Ethiopian Race.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it seems to me that Blumenbach did not resolve all ambivalent aspects of his doctrine – the inclusion of the category of beauty as a defining trait of the Caucasian race, the lack of a clear distinction between history as description and history as genealogy, or the opposition between nominal and genealogical classification. But nineteenth-century racism cleared all these contradictions by unilaterally developing certain aspects of his doctrine. As paradigmatically attested by William Lawrence's (1783-1867) lectures on natural history – a classical text of 19th-century British anthropology written by a translator and admirer of Blumenbach – Blumenbach's theoretical shortfalls and ambivalence in defining status and properties of the Caucasian race favoured a unilateral, radically racist interpretation of his racial classification and anthropology. [57] Lawrence integrally naturalizes the notion of Caucasian beauty and by analogical inferences he categorically deduces moral and spiritual properties from physical data.

Physical beauty as physical perfection now is made into an objective – physical and indisputable – foundation for absolute moral and spiritual superiority. This grounds a racial hierarchy and justifies imperial and colonial forms of domination and exploitation. All races can now be consequently derived from the Caucasian one according to a principle of decadence.

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[1] First published in *Human Diversity in Context*, ed. by Cinzia Ferrini, EUT, Trieste, 2019, pp. 43-73 (in the first edition the editor had enriched the present paper with some endnotes which deepen and enlarge the theoretical and historiographic frame of the following issues in a very stimulating way: Voltaire (1694-1778) and Montesquieu’s (1689-1755) preparation of Blumenbach’s argument against Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s (1712-1788) theory of the natural state of mankind; John Locke’s (1632-1704) contribution to a comparative approach to the *principium individuationis*; Albrecht von Haller’s (1708-1777) criticism of Georg Buffon’s (1707-1788) theory of matter; Alexander von Humboldt’s (1769-1859) attitude towards the belief in the existence of hierarchically different human races; and Immanuel Kant’s (1724-1804) interpretation of Blumenbach’s doctrine of the *Bildungstrieb*. These editorial notes have not been republished now, see therefore notes 10, 14, 16, 20, 21 in <http://hdl.handle.net/10077/30264>. Footnote 6 is new compared to the previous edition). I am grateful to Dr. Carlotta Santini for suggesting my paper to the editorial board of BEROSE. Furthermore I express my gratitude to my friends and colleagues Prof. Cinzia Ferrini (Trieste), Dr. Laura Follesa (Jena), Prof. Salvatore Tedesco (Palermo), Prof. Bettina Wahrig and Prof. Norbert F. Käufer (Braunschweig), Prof. Astrid Schwarz and Dr. Suzana Alpsancar (Cottbus-Senftenberg), MA Sophie Bitter-Smirnow and MA Lisa Glänzer (Graz) for allowing me to subject my work to their and other friends’ and colleagues’ (including Sarah Döring, Dr. Suzana Alpsancar, Brunello Lotti, Prof. Simone De Angelis, Prof. Wolfgang Proß) critical scrutiny as part of their university courses and seminars as well as in workshops and conferences they organized over the last year. The opportunities for debate and discussion they created have been a source of comfort during a personally difficult time and of encouragement to update,

revise, enrich, and supplement some sections of my article. The main goal of this article is to introduce the English-speaking public to some results of the research I conducted for the introductory essay to the Italian edition of Blumenbach's *Beyträge zur Naturgeschichte*, which I edited (CSN). New, compared to the Italian text, is the critical reference to gender studies and studies in the history of ideas regarding the notion of Caucasian race, on the one hand, and the expansion of the documentary base to include the apparatuses of images concerning the vertical norm and the so-called 'exemplary heads' of the five main races on the other hand. A further version of this study brings together these updates for the German-speaking public with the ones made between my introduction to the first modern reprint of the *Beyträge* (BN) and the Italian edition: see therefore Mario Marino, *Naturgeschichte und Rassenklassifikation. Zu Blumenbachs Anthropologie und ihrer Rezeption*, in *Bilddenken und Morphologie: Interdisziplinäre Studien über Form und Bilder im philosophischen und wissenschaftlichen Denken*, ed. by Laura Follesa and Federico Vercellone, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2021, p. 73-98.

[2] Blumenbach elaborated this method in a close critical discussion with the measurement and classification methodology developed by his Dutch friend and colleague Peter Camper (1722-1789). The latter methodology was based on the so-called facial angle criterion (a lateral view of the head measured and classified according to successive degrees of increasing approximation to a degree of angulation modelled on Greek statuary and considered ideally perfect) and had immediately become very popular among anatomists and scholars. In the third edition of his *De generis humani varietate nativa*, Blumenbach systematically exposes the limits of the codification and use of Camper's criterion as well as the self-perceived strengths of his own criterion (GH 1795, § 60: 200-203).

[3] As Bruce Baum pointed out (Baum 2006, 73,84-89, 59), the term was first introduced by Christoph Meiners (1747-1810) in an explicit and harshly racist context, then adopted and newly defined by Blumenbach after Meiners abandoned it. It is still in use with some differentiations – just to give a couple of examples – by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services and for the controversial racial profiling in the criminal justice system.

[4] Gould 2002.

[5] See *Die Blumenbach-Medaille von 1825*

in <http://www.blumenbach-online.de/Einzelseiten/Medaille1825.php> (accessed on 26th August 2019).

[6] See for instance HN 1821, 70. To my knowledge, Blumenbach used very late and only one time the formulation "three principal races", namely in his abstract of the lecture (*Spicilegium observationum de generis humani varietate nativa*) given on 3rd August 1833 at the Göttingen Academy of Science. In this short account, in which he presents three newly achieved epistemic objects – two skulls, a 'Caucasian' and an 'Ethiopian', and a Mongolian foetus – as further confirmations of some elements of his racial classification, he mentions the Caucasian, Ethiopian and Mongolian races as "the *three principal races* among the five, into which he [Blumenbach] believes it most according to nature to divide mankind" (*Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen*, 177, 4. November 1833, 1761-1763, here 1761. Blumenbach republished the abstract with few changes one year later in the Austrian *Medicinisch-chirurgische Zeitung*).

[7] GH 1795, 2004.



[8] See for further, astonishing evidence, the controversy between Thomas Junker and Stephen J. Gould on the visualization of Blumenbach's racial classification in Gould's essay on Blumenbach (Junker 1998 and Gould 1998).

[9] See for example BN 1790, 33-49.

[10] BN 1790, 35; BN 1806, 29.

[11] BN 1790, 37-39, 47-48, 54; BN 1806, 33-35, 38, 46-47.

[12] Mühlmann 1968, 59, 188-189.

[13] Marino 1975, 120.

[14] BN 1790, 48.

[15] Lévi-Strauss 1969, 5.

[16] See therefore Gehlen 1983a, b and 2004. Gehlen explicitly refutes the hypothesis of a wild natural state of human being for anthropological, sociological and political reasons in Gehlen 1983c, 130-133.

[17] BN 1790, 50-55, especially 54-55.

[18] BN 1790, 59-61; BN 1806, 51-54.

[19] See furthermore the observation in BN 1806, 69, which is insofar important, as it states that, in the study of the differences between the dissimilar varieties, one must consider the characters as a whole and not just some of them—not only the skin color, for example, and another couple of things, but the whole, because the organism, writes Blumenbach, is a system, a natural system ("*natürliches System*"). See also BN 1806, 77, where the comparison between an ugly specimen of Negro and the aesthetic ideal of classical Greece is disputed, here with reference to the shape of the face: this procedure would indeed contradict the rule in question, to which Blumenbach refers here, and would therefore not be scientific. As it will happen with regard to the beauty of the Caucasian race, which I will discuss later, here too Blumenbach relativizes the belief that blacks would be ugly while whites would be beautiful—that is, he relativizes the idea of a racial exclusivity of aesthetic values.

[20] BN 1790, 81.

[21] Lepenies 1980.

[22] BN 1790, 62-78.

[23] BN 1806, 55-66.

[24] In particular, on the one hand, his research would be based on findings of different provenance and

nature (including indirect, of “reliable observers”), which are evaluated and cross-checked: in this regard, Blumenbach’s thesis is that certain congruities among the data cannot be reasonably explained as pure accidents when the origins, ages, and types of converging findings are so different. On the other hand, he explains that he uses the findings for the purposes for which they are suitable and then provides some examples: craniology would not be suitable for determining the diet adopted by various peoples, but it would be very useful when it comes to the question of the “national formation of human varieties” (BN 1790, 68). Generally Blumenbach states that “there is no more fervent friend of the natural method in natural history, and particularly in that section of natural history that concerns the human stock, than myself; since so often, and precisely in relation to the society in question, I have warned against judgments based on the formation of a single body part; nor have I in general, however, used a piece of my collection for the history of man other than for what this was good”, BN 1790, 67). Blumenbach takes the opportunity to separate himself – and his discipline – from the summarizing and generic spirit of those writers who simply put together information from travel reports. Here the great importance of the “*anschauliche Kenntniss*” is reiterated, which in the case of physical anthropology is obtained through the direct analysis of the physical structure of the human being, compared with that of other animals and, when it is not possible to directly experience such structure, with the data provided by other observers deemed reliable with good reason.

[25] BN 1790, 69.

[26] BN 1790, 69-70.

[27] This, however, is one of the two noteworthy changes to this paragraph made between the first and the second edition; the other concerns the way of dealing with indirect sources and their validity. The latter modification emphasizes the need for a critical attitude toward indirect sources and further warns against the identification or total interchangeability of indirect sources with intuitable reality. The former highlights the distance from a theistic and traditional idea of God’s relationship with creation, that is, the disambiguation of natural history and theology. See BN 1790, 69-70: “Alle die Nachrichten von noch so fähigen und glaubwürdigen Zeugen, sind im Grunde doch für den Wahrheitssuchenden Naturforscher nichts mehr und nichts weniger als eine Art symbolischer Bücher, die er mit guten [sic] Gewissen nie anders als quatenus unterschreiben kan [sic], in so fern sie nemlich mit dem geoffenbarten Wort im Buch der Natur übereinstimmen’ and BN 1806, 53: ‘Denn to die Nachrichten die man darüber, wenn auch mit möglichst critischer Vorsicht aus andern schöpft, sind im Grunde doch für den wahrheitssuchenden Naturoshopers nichts mehr nichts weiter als eine Art symbolischer Bücher, die er mit gutem Gewissen nicht anders als quatenus unterschreiben kann, in so fern sie nämlich mit dem geoffenbarten Buch der Natur übereinstimmen ...”. The remainder of the text coincides.

[28] Baum 2006, 91.

[29] AT 298.

[30] Beutel 2009, 113.

[31] See Marino 2010

[32] HN 1797, 23.

[33] See therefore BN 84-118.

[34] Cf. HN 1788, 60-61, and HN 1791, 54-55.

[35] HN 1797, 61 (as well as HN 1830, 56). In earlier editions of the *Handbuch*, Blumenbach affirms more in general that the conformation of the Caucasians is the “best” one according to the above mentioned parameters of beauty (cf. for instance HN 1788, 61).

[36] HN 1779, 63.

[37] HN 1788, 60; 1791, 54.

[38] HN 1797, 63.

[39] HN 1799, 64.

[40] GH 1795, 198.

[41] Neither Schiebinger 1993 nor Bindman 2002, who are to my knowledge the only scholars who are aware of and comment on this sequence, could provide the reader with a correct interpretation of the vignettes.

[42] BC 1, Nr. 176 (Blumenbach to Chodowiecki, Göttingen 17 December 1781), 289-290. Indeed, Blumenbach was not the only one at the time who believed that, in such circumstances – which is to say when the illustration was an eminent part of the intellectual project pursued by the author with his work – Chodowiecki was unique and irreplaceable. In a letter to Chodowiecki from Hamburg, dated September 18, 1779 (valuable also because it is indicative of the fame that surrounded Chodowiecki as a “painter of the soul”), Joachim Heinrich Campe declares that he is “about to get into print a *little psychology for children*, which would however still need his skillful hand to become what it must be. All that psychological knowledge, which children must already have before they can be taught religion and morals, I am in fact trying to make it so sensible and so intuitive that an eight-year-old child with normal abilities can grasp it. Images will be a means to their sensible rendering. But these images (if they really have to conform to the purpose) can be done, as far as I know, only by you, because what matters is that every feeling, every impulse, every passion that I describe, is expressed in the faces and positions of the figures so as to be recognizable to the point that, even if there were no text, they would be unmistakable’ (Chodowiecki 1919, letter No. 359, pp. 260-263, here pp. 260-261).

[43] BC, 1, Nr. 177 (Blumenbach to Dieterich, Göttingen, 17 December 1781), 293.

[44] See the entry

Roßmäsler in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 29, *Rodde-v. Ruesch*, Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot 1889, pp. 267-268.

[45] To evaluate his distance from Chodowiecki, see Kirves 2012, 570. Comparing Chodowiecki's 1779 '*Kunst Kenner*' original with the copy made by Endtner, Kirves points out the latter's lack of creativity and the woodenness and inexpressiveness of his execution in light of the mastery and effectiveness exhibited by Chodowiecki, "painter of the soul" (ibid.) in his expressive rendering of the moods and psychological situations of the characters.

[46] See Deuter 1990, 653, which also provides a synthetic formulation of Meil's aesthetic parable in the various phases of his artistic production.

[47] Schumann 1999, 65-88, particularly 69-72.

[48] As a first introduction, see Bernt 2013.

[49] It is the focus of M. Kirves 2012.

[50] Busch 1997, 77.

[51] See in this regard at least Kirchner 1997.

[52] § Schmitt 2007 and Schäfer 2013.

[53] See Selwyn 1997, 15: "in his requests for a fee, Chodowiecki always had a real self-awareness; in particular, one could not overlook the economic value of his illustrations [...]. That [...] they were more than favourable to the sale of the books and calendars that they embellished is demonstrated by numerous letters from authors and publishers who were willing to pay almost any price for them, and were very eager to pay half of his requested fee as an advance".

[54] See for instance HN 1807, xii, 67-69, 73-74.

[55] AG (*Vorbericht*, unnumbered pages),

[56] AG (*Characteristische Musterköpfe von Männern aus den 5 Hauptrassen im Menschengeschlecht*, unnumbered pages)

[57] Lawrence 1822, 290-292.