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RESEARCH

Layman's Linné: How Historical Recontextualization Turned Science Into Racism

Matthew Brooks[1,2,3] · Hugo Reyes-Centeno[1,4,5,6]

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Abstract

This paper examines Carl Linnaeus's 1733-1793 work *Systema naturae* and its misrepresentation as inherently racially biased. Using historical analysis of primary texts and recent historiographies, I demonstrate that Linnaeus's framework was methodological rather than hierarchical, which later grew into a progeny far bigger than its father, by men in pursuit of ideological gains. The study positions Linnaeus within the greater context of the historical period of the enlightenment, and it's focus on universality and order. Restoring the legacy of Linnaeus reclaims his indispensable taxonomy and rightly attributes the work to Linnaeus. This paper challenges the oversimplified narrative that equates the correct classification of man with racism,. drawing attention to the danger of erasing historical figures from their creations.

Keywords: Carl Linnaeus, Systema Naturae, Binomial nomenclature, Enlightenment science, Scientific racism, Race and science

Introduction

Few figures in the history of science embody both the promise and the controversy of classification as Carl Linneaus. Carl Linnaeus's system of classification remains one of the most enduring and controversial intellectual products of the Enlightenment. As the architect of binomial nomenclature, as well as coiner of over 12,000 scientific species names, many of which are still in use today, including the term *Homo sapiens* (The Linnean Society of London). Linnaeus established a universalizing framework that continues to structure the biological sciences; yet, his legacy is persistently entangled with the racial categories that emerged from his human typologies, leading many modern commentators to interpret Linnaean taxonomy primarily as a precursor to scientific racism. This paper argues instead for a critical reappraisal of Linnaeus as a systematist whose classificatory framework was neither inherently racial nor deterministic, but rather a methodological innovation later appropriated for ideological ends. By situating Linnaeus within his eighteenth-century intellectual milieu; marked by the Enlightenment's pursuit of order and universality, rather than hierarchical racialist thinking. I contend that his work offered a neutral scaffold for the organization of observable 1700s human diversity, one whose scientific utility has been obscured by post-Holocaust anxieties surrounding categorization and its political consequences.

Linnaeus's treatment of humans in *Systema Naturae* changed dramatically across the editions he published between 1735 and 1767, and the later revisions by Gmelin in the 1780s. These shifts reveal the broader transformation of eighteenth-century natural history, from early morphological description, to moral-theological anthropology, to the beginnings of human typology. What follows summarizes these stages in a way that highlights both their scientific and philosophical implications.

What is a *Homo sapien*?

[1] Department of Anthropology, University of Kentucky, Lexington, USA
[2] Department of History, University of Kentucky, Lexington, USA
[3] Department of Military Science, University of Kentucky, Lexington, USA
[4] William S. Webb Museum of Anthropology, University of Kentucky, Lexington, USA
[5] Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study, Uppsala, Sweden
[6] Center for the Human Past—Uppsala & Stockholm Universities, Evolutionary Biology Centre, Uppsala, Sweden

In the first edition of Systema Naturae (Linné, 1735), Linnaeus presents humans as simply another organism, distinguished by form and by the philosophical injunction to self-awareness. For its time, the placement of humans beside apes was bold, hinting at continuity among living beings rather than a strictly separate human realm. Linnaeus grouped humans, with apes and sloths within the order Anthropomorpha. His description reads: "Anthropomorpha. Dentes primores superiores paralleli; pectora mamillis bina." (Linné, 1735, p. 12), which in English is "Anthropomorpha. [The] upper foremost teeth [are] parallel; [the] chest [has] two nipples." Under this heading appears simply "Homo: Nosce te ipsum" ("Know thyself"). At this point, Linneaus was yet to call us, *Homo sapiens,* nor includes any subdivision of humanity. Man is identified by anatomy and the philosophical injunction to self-awareness. This early edition reflects Linnaeus's embryonic naturalism; a purely morphological attempt to describe form and function without moral judgment. The inclusion of *Homo* alongside apes was radical for the time, suggesting continuity among living forms rather than absolute human exception.

By the sixth edition of Systema Naturae (Linnâe, 1748), Linnaeus had replaced Anthropomorpha with the class Primates. Here *Homo* is defined not only anatomically but philosophically: "HOMO. Nosce te ipsum. Physiologice: Machina mirabilis. Dietetice: Omnia tibi utilia. Pathologice: Quam fragilis! Moraliter: Princeps animalium. Theologice: Imago Dei." (Linnâe, 1748, p. 3). This multilayered note transforms man from a zoological species into a moral subject. Linnaeus fuses physiology and theology, portraying humanity as the "image of God" and "ruler of animals." His taxonomy thus becomes a moral cosmology: self-knowledge is both biological and sacred.

The 1758 Systema Naturae (Linné, 1758) The tenth edition; the cornerstone of modern binomial nomenclature; introduced *Homo sapiens* and divided the species into geographic "varieties": "Homo sapiens diurnus; Varietates: Europaeus albus, sanguineus, torosus; Americanus rufus, cholericus, rectus; Asiaticus luridus, melancholicus, rigidus; Afer niger, phlegmaticus, laxus. Europaeus regitur legibus; Americanus consuetudine; Asiaticus opinionibus; Afer arbitrio." (Linné, 1758, pp. 20–21). Each variety combines humoral temperament, moral character, and political structure. Linnaeus's framework reflects contemporary climatic theory; the belief that environment shaped temperament and governance. Though often read through a modern racial lens, these descriptions were intended to systematize cultural difference within natural philosophy, not to construct a biological hierarchy.

The 1767–1770 Systema Naturae Reformata (Linné, 1767) In the "reformed" twelfth edition, Linnaeus expanded his moral reflections into a full theological anthropology: "Physiologice: Miraculum naturae audacis. Politice: Error et opinio publica. Moraliter: Virtus et vitium. Theologice: Ut agnoscas Creatorem, mundi contemplator." (Linné, 1767, p. 28) Here, man's essence is explicitly teleological: he exists to contemplate creation and recognize the Creator. Linnaeus's science had matured into a moral theology of order, reflecting the conviction that the study of nature revealed divine law.

The 1788–1791 Systema Naturae (Linné & Gmelin, 1788) Edited posthumously by Johann Friedrich Gmelin, the thirteenth edition preserved Linnaeus's core framework but added references to Buffon, Blumenbach, and other early anthropologists: "Varietates hominis sex, secundum colorem cutis et ingenii mores descriptae." (Linné et al., 1788a, p. 18) In Gmelin's hands, Linnaeus's typology began to merge with emerging racial science, signaling a transition from theological to biological anthropology. What had been moral and climatic in Linnaeus became anatomical and hereditary in later interpretations; a distortion of his original, more universalist intent.

From Morphology to Moral Anthropology Across these editions, Linnaeus's view of *Homo* evolved from morphological resemblance (Linné, 1735) to theological moralism (Linnâe, 1748; Linné, 1767) and finally to empirical typology (Linné et al., 1788b). The progression mirrors the broader Enlightenment tension between unity and diversity; between the idea of a single created order and the desire to classify difference. Linnaeus's motto *Nosce te ipsum* thus functions as both a scientific and spiritual injunction. To "know thyself" meant not merely self-reflection but understanding humanity's place within the divinely ordered system of nature. His aim was never to rank races, but to describe variation within a single species endowed with reason and moral purpose.

Linnaeus and the Enlightenment Context

To understand Carl Linnaeus's Taxonomic ambitions, one must situate him firmly within the intellectual landscape of the Enlightenment, a period defined by its hunger for universal order, rational systemation.

Contemporary Views on Linnaeus

Many authors have written about Linneaus, concluding his views where racist. An author by the name of Lisbet Koerner, has already attempted to thoroughly place Linnaeus into understandable and racial terms in her book *Linnaeus: Nature and Nation,* (Koerner, 1999) but repeatedly refuses to engage with Linnaeus directly, and instead resorts to wild personal and moral attacks of Linnaeus's private life, a striking pattern throughout *Linnaeus: Nature and Nation*.

Koerner's reliance on interpretive assertions presented as factual description is shocking. Her analysis is rhetorically confident but frequently undocumented, especially when she discusses Linnaeus's inner motives, personal insecurities, or ambitions. For instance, Koerner writes that Linnaeus "posed as a lone innovator and as a founder of a new science"(Koerner, 1999, p. 17), yet she provides no citation from Linnaeus's own writings or from contemporaneous commentary demonstrating this supposed "posing." The verb "posed" itself presupposes theatricality and performance, implying disingenuousness without proving it. Likewise, she characterizes Linnaeus's intellectual self-understanding as triangulating "society, self, and state," constructing "his civil-servant persona in his joint performance as craftsman and bureaucrat" (Koerner, 1999, p. 17). This is an ambitious anthropological reading, but Koerner again offers no primary evidence for the existence of these "performances" or the intentional self-fashioning she attributes to him. The reader is expected to accept these psychological claims on her authority alone.

The problem becomes more pronounced when Koerner shifts from analyzing Linnaeus's intellectual production to depicting his personal character. She repeatedly reproduces hostile contemporary descriptions of Linnaeus and amplifies them into generalized ethical and cultural judgments. For example, she describes him as "a rude provincial, sentimental, superstitious, and devoid of general culture". (Koerner, 1999, p. 16) Yet the only supporting citation is a diary entry in which Count Tessin notes Linnaeus's "dusty shoes and stockings" and unshaven appearance. (Koerner, 1999, p. 16) Another witness describes him in an old coat with a medal hanging from it. (Koerner, 1999, p. 16) These comments provide, at most, superficial information about dress and grooming. They do not support Koerner's broad conclusions about Linnaeus's supposed lack of culture, his sentimentality, or his superstition. The leap from a traveler's remark about clothing to a psychological profile of intellectual narrowness reflects interpretive overreach rather than documented history.

Koerner continues this rhetorical pattern by framing Linnaeus's professional pride and public honors as evidence of arrogance and self-deception. When Linnaeus notes that he became "the first president of the Academy of Science", (Koerner, 1999, p. 16) Koerner interprets the remark as prideful boastfulness rather than as a factual statement. She claims he "implied that it was a distinction bestowed upon him singularly because of his matchless merit," although the quoted line contains no such implication. Koerner then "corrects" him by asserting that the founders "had cast lots for this position"(Koerner, 1999, p. 16), but the fact that the position was chosen by lot does not itself prove that Linnaeus was engaged in intentional self-aggrandizement. Instead, Koerner reads personal vanity into a neutral autobiographical remark and frames this reading as the only possible interpretation. Her method conflates the existence of pride in eighteenth-century intellectual culture, a common and unremarkable feature, with a distinctive flaw unique to Linnaeus.

Even when Koerner cites primary material, her interpretive leaps exceed what those documents support. Her discussion of Linnaeus's heraldic motto, *Famam extendere factis* ("win fame through deeds"), is a case in point. She suggests that this motto, chosen in 1762, demonstrates Linnaeus's self-crafted mythology as a "self-made man". (Koerner, 1999, p. 18) Yet heraldic mottos of this type were conventional in early modern Europe and rarely signaled pathological ambition. **(needs citation).** By reading Linnaeus's motto as a revelation of egoistic identity rather than as a commonplace form of scholarly self-representation, Koerner imposes a modern psychological framework onto eighteenth-century practices. Her interpretation presumes the very self-aggrandizing motive she seeks to establish.

Her treatment of religious sources is similar. Koerner writes that Linnaeus used biblical forms, "Bible verses, Lutheran sermons, and catechisms", to structure his scientific writings (Koerner, 1999, p. 19), framing this as a kind of rhetorical affectation that reveals his desire to present himself as a prophetic figure such as moses. (Koerner, 1999, p. 22) She even claims that Linnaeus "grounded the veracity of his botanical claims in revelation" (Koerner, 1999, p. 23). But her citation of *Philosophia botanica* aphorism 159 she uses as proof (Koerner, 1999, p. 23) does not demonstrate this. The aphorism concerns only the definition of genera and the empirical basis for natural classification. Linnaeus states that genera are "confirmed by things that are revealed, discovered, and observed," (Linné, 1751) The aphorism concerns only the definition of genera and the empirical basis for natural classification. Linnaeus states that genera are "confirmed by things that are revealed, discovered, and observed," a

conventional early modern triad in which the Latin *revelata* simply means "made manifest" or "presented" in nature, not divinely disclosed. In context with the other terms, *inventa* or "discovered by" and *observata* or "observed by", it becomes clear that Linnaeus is describing a process. That natural entities "reveal" themselves or present themselves existing in nature, humans "discover" them, and then "observe" them.

Koerner's interpretation therefore depends on reading a technical botanical aphorism through a anachronistic theological lens to portray this as a personal theological pretension unique to Linnaeus. She misrepresents the intellectual context and again imposes uniqueness without evidence. Koerner intensifies this portrait by stating that Linnaeus believed himself "called upon by God to reveal, Moses-like, the divine law of nature" (Koerner, 1999, p. 23) yet the cited source does not demonstrate that he literally perceived himself in this role. The claim depends on Koerner's interpretive framework, not on verifiable textual evidence.

Koerner's method often involves substituting her theoretical commitments for historical documentation. She writes that Linnaeus "created a new epoch" (p. 23) in his own mind, citing a line from the *Vitae*. But she treats the remark not as rhetorical flourish, but as proof of a deeper self-mythology rooted in Lutheran theology and proto-nationalist identity. She then asserts that Linnaeus "conflated fauna's and flora's 'own names' with the names he had 'written on' them" (p. 24, fn. 43), claiming this shows his hubristic desire to emulate Adam. However, the citation simply shows Linnaeus's belief that the human naming of natural kinds revealed God's order, again, a mainstream early modern belief. Koerner converts a conventional theological analogy into a psychological diagnosis of self-deification, an interpretive move unsupported by the source material. What does a fish call itself? Does Koerner expect Linnaeus to ask?

Even the broader historiographical framing of the book relies on insinuation rather than demonstration. When discussing the *fin-de-siècle* scholars who shaped modern Swedish interpretations of Linnaeus, Oscar Levertin, Henrik Schück, Karl Warburg, and Martin Lamm, Koerner attributes to them a "distance from reactionary sloganeering" (p. 11) but does not provide citations from their writings that substantiate their alleged motives, interpretive methods, or influence on subsequent scholarship. Nor does she clarify how their Jewish identity, which she foregrounds, may have shaped their readings of Linnaeus, attaching bias and motive to the anti-Linnaeus Narrative. The result is a section where broad claims about intellectual genealogy are made without evidence or analysis, leaving the reader with characterizations rather than arguments. In a work that claims to avoid ideological polemic, this omission is especially problematic.

These patterns culminate in Koerner's reproduction of hostile twentieth-century interpretations of Linnaeus, such as Lindroth's 1951 description of him as "demonic in his desire to order all things" (pp. 8–9). Koerner cites such language as if it were plausible historical evaluation rather than polemical rhetoric. She does not evaluate whether Lindroth's remarks were part of a larger academic dispute, a generational reaction against earlier hagiography, or shaped by contemporary intellectual fashions. Instead, negative descriptions are presented as corroborative material, reinforcing the moralized portrait she constructs. This selective amplification of critical voices, coupled with her disregard for the limits of their evidentiary value, further weakens her claim to adopt a nonjudgmental methodology.

The only place where Koerner discusses his classification of humans is halfway through the book in chapter 4, and it is only discussed to attack Linnaeus's personal theological beliefs. Saying at the beginning of the section "Another aspect of Linnaeus' natural history, which was also at odds with his sunny prelapsarian view of nature, was his belief that humankind was a species of monkey." (Koerner, 1999, p. 87), writing as if we are not, and attempting to state this as a perceived contraction within Linnaeus, citing as proof that he did this through a 1747 letter to Gmelin asking if he should call "ape man or man ape" (Koerner, 1999, p. 87), even going as far show a quote from Linnaeus seven years later "even to this day scientists search in vain for any distinguishing mark by which the Apes can be separated from humans." claiming that "He himself could only suggest canine teeth.",(Koerner, 1999, p. 87) and citing a 1955 translation of a 1760 dissertation defended by one of Linnaeus' students, *IN QUA ANTHROPOMORPHA*,, as proof of this.(Koerner, 1999)

Koerner goes on to write as if modern science doesn't accept and verify the link of apes and man in the next paragraph stating. "Linnaeus classified humans in that new zoological group he himself established, as primates… [and] designated humankind as "wise man" (*Homo sapiens*)." (Koerner, 1999, p. 87). Inserting that sloths were included, I believe in an attempt to further paint Linnaeus as a conjecturer, and calling is naming of humans *Homo sapiens* as "…an arbitrary, trivial name, and not a definition."(Koerner, 1999, p. 87), saying that Linnaeus had contemplated naming humans "day man" (*Homo diurnus*), and had gone back and forth crossing both out in manuscripts of *Systema naturae* but provides no citations. He then claims that "Day man" had a counterpart, the "night man" (*Homo nocturnus*), and claims "Linnaeus also termed this second human species "troglodyte man" (*Homo troglodytes*)", saying that "Relying on second-hand reports, he identified albino Africans as such "troglodytes."" But provides no citation.

In my review of *IN QUA ANTHROPOMORPHA,* I noticed a reference to "*troglodyta*" on page 11. It is cited in the dissertation as coming from page 24 of the 1758 10th edition of *Systema naturae* (von Linné & Hoppius, 1760, p. 11) which in 1760 was the most recent edition. Now the 10th edition of *Systema naturae* does cite "*troglodyta"* on page 24, albeit far less descriptive sense *Systema naturae* is a tool for classification and *IN QUA ANTHROPOMORPHA* is a dissertation, *ANTHROPOMORPHA* goes far more in depth to the description of the "*Homo troglodyta"* than *Systema naturae*. Upon translation *Systema naturae* with care to preserve format reads:

Differt itaque a reliquis Corpore erecto nudo, at piloſo Capite, Superciliis, Ciliisque, tandem Pube, Axillis, Maribusque Mento. Feminis Nymphæ & Clitoris; Mammæ 2 pectorales. Caput Cerebro omnium maximo; Uvula; Facies abdomini parallela, nuda; Naſo prominente, compreſſo. breviore; Mento prominente. Cauda nulla. Pedes Talis incedentes.

Troglodytes. 2. H. nocturnus. (*)
Homo ſylveſtris Orang Outang. ***Bont. jav.*** 84. ***t.*** 84.
Kakurlacko. ***Kjæp. itin. c.*** 86. ***Dalin. orat.*** 5.
Habitat in Æthiopiæ ***conterminis*** (***Plin.***), ***in*** Javæ, Amboinæ, Ternateæ ***ſi eluncis.***
Corpus ***album***, ***inceſſu erectum***, ***noſtro dimidio minus.*** Pili ***albi***, ***contortuplicati.*** Oculi ***orbiculati:*** iride pupillaque ***aurea*** Palpebræ ***antice incumbentes cum Membrana nictitante.*** Viſus ***lateralis***, ***nocturnus.*** Ætas ***XXV annorum.*** Die ***cæcutit***, ***latet***; Noctu ***videt***, ***exit***, ***furatur.*** Loquitur ***ſibilo***; ***Cogitat***, ***credit ſui cauſſa factam tellurem***, ***ſe aliquando iterum fore imperantem***, ***ſi fides peregrinatoribus.***

2. SI-

(*) ***Genus*** Troglodytæ ab Homine diſtinctum, adhibita quamvis omni attentione, obtinere non potui, niſi aſſumerem notam lubricam, in aliis generibus non conſtantem. Nec Dentes laniarii, minime a reliquis remoti; nec Nymphæ Caffræ, quibus carent Simiæ, hunc ad ſimias reducere admittebant. Inquirant autoptæ in vivo, qua ratione, modo notæ aliquæ exiſtant, ab hominis Genere ſeparari queat, ***nam inter ſimias verſantem oportet eſſe ſimiam.*** *Apollodor.*

Speciem Troglodytæ ab Homine ſapiente diſtinctiſſimam, nec noſtri generis illam nec ſanguinis eſſe, ſtatura quamvis ſimillimam, dubium non eſt, ne itaque varietatem credas, quam vel ſola Membrana nictitans abſolute negat.

Afri Pilos contortuplicatos, quamvis albos, in hoc miratus ſum, collatis imprimis Varietatum cauſſis in Plantis, in Pullo Gallinaceo, nec tamen quidquam de Mauris albis ex nigris ſtatui.

Præadamitas nec dixi hos Troglodytas Plinii, quamvis nos ultimum ſimus Creationis opus.

Homo caudatus hirſutus. ***Manpert. epiſt.*** 7. ***Kiöp it.*** 79. ***Bont. jav.*** 85, ***an Aldr. digit.*** 249 ? incola orbis antarctici, nobis ignotus, ideoque utrum ad Hominis aut Simiæ genus pertineat, non determino. Mirum quod ignem exciret, carnesque aſſet, quamvis & crudas voret teſtimonio Peregrinantium.

Troglodytes

Homo nocturnus (*)
Homo sylvestris (Orang-Outang). *Bontius, Java*, p. 84; & p. 84
Kakurlacko. *Kjæp, itinerarium*, c. 86. *Dalin, oration* 5.

Habitat in Ethiopia borderlands (Pliny), in Java, Amboina, Ternate caves.
Body *white*, *walking erect*, *half the size of ours*. Hair *white*, twisted and curled. Eyes *round*: iris and pupil *golden*. Eyelids *leaning forward with a nictitating membrane*. Vision *lateral, nocturnal*. Age *25 years*. By *day hidden*; at *night comes out, steals*. Speaks *by hissing*; thinks, *believes the earth was made for it, and that it will once again be dominant, if faith is placed in travelers.*

(*) *Genus* of Troglodytes from Man distinguished, having been applied although all attention not, to obtain not I could, unless I assumed mark slippery, in other genera not constant. Nor tearing teeth, in no way from the remaining removed, nor African labia, by whom apes are lacking, this one to apes reduce admirably. Let them inquire eyewitnesses in life, by what method, manner mark some exists, from man of genus to separate it can, *for among apes turning ought to be ape*. *Apollodor*.

Species Troglodyte from *Homo sapiens* very distinguished, nor of us genus nor of blood it is, stature although very similar, doubt not is, lest you also variety believe, which even alone eyelid blinking absolutely denies.

Africans hairs twisted together, although white, in this amazed I am, having been compared especially of varieties causes in plants, in chicken domestic, nor yet anything about Moors white from black I have asserted.

Wild beasts nor I said these Troglodytes of Pliny, although we last are of creation order.

Homo caudatus, two-headed, Maupertuis epistle 7, Kiöp 79, Bont. Java 85, or Aldr. 249? Inhabitant of world Antarctic, to us unknown, and therefore whether to Man or Ape genus it belongs, not I determine.

Marvelous that fire it kindles, and meats it desires, although also raw it devours, by testimony of travelers.

Translated from (Linné, 1758, p. 24)

This is a wild and confusing document, with many confusing translations, and I cite it all to clarify and to allow transparency, at first glance, it is reasonable to assume, as Koerner does, that Linnaeus is speaking of African "humans", but he is not, the definitions do not match this assumption. The Troglodytes described by Linnaeus exhibit a set of physiological characteristics that clearly distinguish them from humans. Their bodies are white and about half the size of humans, yet they walk erect. Their hair is white, twisted, and curled, while their eyes are round with golden irises and pupils. Their eyelids lean forward and include a nictitating membrane, giving them lateral, nocturnal vision. They possess "tearing teeth" or large canines, like that in apes, but their large canines are not removed from the rest of there teeth, like those of humans. They do not possess a labia minora, nor do apes, unlike humans. The Latin word here used is *Nymphæ*, an outdated term for the inner lips of a vagina, but yet historically a taxonomical Latin term (Heritage, 2011). Behaviorally, they are hidden by day, emerge at night, and speak by hissing, unlike any humans Linnaeus describes, in *Systema naturae*.(Linné, 1758, pp. 20–24) They steal from humans, under the cover of night. They display cognitive traits attributed by travelers, such as reportedly believing the earth was made for them and aspiring to dominance. Remarkably, if these are not *Homo sapiens*, they are also said to kindle fire and cook their meat, a distinctly *Homo sapien* trait, but also consume it raw.

In the dissertation *IN QUA ANTHROPOMORPHA, Homo troglodyta* is described to possess "arms… longer than in our genus '*gente*', and the fingers of their hands reach down to the knees"(von Linné & Hoppius, 1760, p. 13). Linnaeus also distinguishes them from *Homo sapiens* by stating that "the inhabitants" of Africa "without mercy, slaughter them as highly destructive animals, and kill them wherever they encounter them." (von Linné & Hoppius, 1760, p. 13). He also laments that another scientist, Rumphius, had apparently seen and studied one, but "his work on animals has been lost". He also characteristically, complains about the state of colonialism in the east indies, that "Since no one can observe without delight and singular admiration the entirely ridiculous and curious way of life of various apes…it is remarkable how it happened that man, eager to know, left them thus in darkness… mortals waste their days in pursuit of gluttony and appetite, thinking anxiously only about how to accumulate food and wealth…the same is true of most who travel by ship to the Indies; for these alone it happens that they observe the genus of Troglodytes, gazing only for profit, considering the study of natural things below their business, and neglecting the economy of nature." (von Linné & Hoppius, 1760, pp. 14–15)

In addition to what we could call a standard *H. troglodyte*, Linnaeus also accounts another non *sapien* man he calls *Homo lucifer* (von Linné & Hoppius, 1760, p. 9). Homo Lucifer, come entirely from a account of tailed men in the east indies, who became hostile when the travelers refused to trade with them (von Linné & Hoppius, 1760, p. 10). Linnaeus then asks why the accounts had not been made more conclusive stating "Would that… eyewitness traveler… take upon himself to present this natural history clearly and properly" (von Linné & Hoppius, 1760, p.

11). Curiously it is not included in the 10th edition of *Systema naturae, n*or any other, as distinct from the standard, despite appearing in *IN QUA ANTHROPOMORPHA*, as separate from *Trogladyta*, indicating that Linnaeus was potentially hesitant on the validity of the accounts. It merely appears as *Homo claudatus* in a footnote page 24 of the 10th edition of *Systema naturae*. In addition, *Homo troglodyta* as a whole was seemingly demoted from "*Homo*" man, to "*simia*" ape, in the 13th and final edition of *Systema naturae*.

Taken together, these features, anatomical, sensory, and behavioral, demonstrate that Linnaeus' Troglodytes are a distinct non-human species. Linnaeus further emphasizes he is not speaking of African people, but something else altogether by stating "having been compared… anything about Moors white from black…." (Linné, 1758, p. 24). Demonstrating he is aware that multiculturalism exists in Africa. What Koerner has done is not cited where she was reading this, and interjects an invented story of an "Albino African" population (Koerner, 1999, p. 87), without any citation, with only a parenthesized insert about historical human zoos from Voltaire in the eighteenth century unrelated and unattached to Linnaeus.

In addition to this, it does not make sense to include Africans here, as earlier on page 22 of the 10th edition of *Systema naturae*, Africans are already listed as *Homo niger.*(Linné, 1758, p. 22) (TALK ABOUT THE GERNERAL DICRIPTION AND LEAD INTO THE INDIVIDUAL)

What then is Linnaeus talking about, Koener even touches on it, in an attempt to discredit Linnaeus, by suggesting he stole the idea of a man and ape category, stating "Linnaeus' classification of man… reflected lay ideas in his circle." (Linné, 1758, p. 88). She then cites another book by Gunnar Broberg containing a journal that had not been scanned into the University of Uppsala Library website, despite other letters and manuscripts of this era and type being available for public academic use. The journal entry of Linnaeus' friend reportedly details a conversation between the two and a governor, held in April of 1735, (Broberg, 1975, p. 201). Given that this is the same year the first edition of *Systema naturae* was published, with references to Linnaeus categorizing man with apes as early as the first of September in copies of *Tabulae Zoologicae* (Gronovius, 1 September 1735). It is likely that this is indeed the origin of the N*ofce te ipfum* addition, but the assertion that Linnaeus communicating with other scientists makes his contributions any less significant, is absurd.

In the entry, Linnaeus' friend argues with the governor on the existence of ape like men, or man like apes. (Koerner, 1999, p. 88) Koener confuses the text, believing that the student, Johan Browallius, is the recorder of the meeting, despite Broberg stating that another individual, *Andreas* Browallius, was the secondary recorder, Showing a rather high level of sloppiness.(Broberg, 1975, p. 201; Koerner, 1999, p. 88). The governor reportedly agrees with Johan and concludes ""…there are people in North America who are furry all over their body with hair. What difference is there between them and apes?" (Koerner, 1999, p. 88). This quote is omitted in the 2023 work by Gunnar Broberg *The Man Who Organized Nature: The Life of Linnaeus*. Believing in unidentified cryptid men is not an uncommon belief amongst 18th century scholars and layman alike, with many historical figures reporting, and believing reports of a unidentified species of, what we would now call, *Hominidae*. Amongst these reports, is 26th President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt in *The Wilderness Hunter: Bauman's Tale*, to a lesser extent, the 3rd president Thomas Jefferson with his interest in uncontacted tribes and his love of native folklore and fossil confirmation of megafauna in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, and his sponsoring of Lewis and Clark and André Michaux, to find them. As well as William Strachey, a writer collecting and documenting ethnohistoriographical information on English settlements in 1609. When discussing Roanoke, a tale where most of the information comes from lost letters attributed to John Smith to the Royale council, Strachey recounts on page 26 of *Historie of Travaile into Virginia Britannia* mostly consistent information with these letters, but adds that local natives "take apes in the mountains" where the people of Roanoke live. The relative obscurity of these credible fascination and accounts, suggests an unwillingness to engage with any notion of historical belief in man like apes.

It is clear that Linneaus believes in unidentified species of human-like ape, and so did other historical figures. I am not the first to notice this fact of linneaus, or to acknowledge it. Other researchers have noticed the fact of the matter. In *Human-Animal Interactions in the Eighteenth Century: From Pests and Predators to Pets, Poems and Philosophy*, Dr. Windahl Pontén in chapter 9 *Troglodytes, the Monkey Diana and the Aping Swede: Carl Linnaeus on Apes*, very briefly mentions troglodytes, writing "There were also creatures about which Linnaeus was uncertain: what were they really?". This is the main issue with Pontens Chapter, she continues the theme of omitting almost all citations and relying mainly on Gunnar Brobergs work. She also once again without citation, tries to suggest that Lineaus stole the idea but saying "This interest was by no means unique to Linnaeus. On the contrary, it was a common topic in natural history at the time… a number of scientists and naturalists during the eighteenth century "challenged the traditional concept of a decisive intellectual gulf between man and beast"" (Windahl Pontén et al., 2021, p. 115). In the chapter title, particularly 'the aping swede'. She almost reiterates this notion, but explains on page 22 "Linnaeus particularly noted that monkeys easily copy each other: they 'ape'… The species was named 'simia' in Latin and the word was also used to denote 'imitation' or 'copying'… A monkey-like behavior showed

that a person was not able to control his or her desires. Such behavior was considered as passive and imitative rather than active and independent." (Windahl Pontén et al., 2021, p. 122). She then claims that "Linnaeus had concluded critically" the men of his time, were apparently, "like an ape". That the swedes where far too concerned about imitation of the other countries of Europe, that the swede "eats like an Englishman, drinks like a German, dresses like a Frenchman, builds like an Italian, smokes like a Dutchman, takes snuff like a Spaniard, and drinks vodka like a Russian", and then she cites a Swedish translation of *Diaeta naturalis.* But upon examination of this book, there is no 'conclusion', nor even a comparison to an ape on her cited page 60. In fact this was not a sentence but a classification of the swede in standard Linnaeus style, it is critical yes, critical of the impracticality of 18th century clothes, "We humans dress ourselves with clothes so that we are completely unlike ourselves… outwardly and inwardly present a monstrous face ; we dress so that if a naked Ethiopian were to see us in such a spectacle, he would consider us ghosts and not God's creatures… Clothes are indeed sheaths for the body, in which it must keep warm against the cold, so what use are all the many hems for good… We put large heels on our shoes… surely the Creator would not have intended heels… having made everything so perfectly that nothing is lacking. All our women's clothes are invented in a warm country, France, yet we still want to wear them in the cold of Sweden… Sweden is like a child" (von Linné &), 1958, pp. 59–61). To use this as an example of Linnaeus thinking there is no difference between man and monkey is at best lazy, and at worst deceptive. Earlier on the page Ponten writes "Linnaeus wrote sharply that the royal court resembled a group of apes… one who spends time with apes will become one himself" (Windahl Pontén et al., 2021, p. 122), and she attaches it to earlier stories of children being raised by animals. This is not an equivalent, Linneaus was fascinated by the ability of humans to behave like animals in an animal setting, and wondered if apes could do the same, a theory that later fascinated Noam Chomsky, and was not disproven until the 1990s by an ape named Nim Chimpsky, a nod to Chomsky's work, where nim failed to adequately learn English any more than "aping" imitation. (NEEDS CITATION) Upon examining the text Ponten cites, Linnaeus is not attributing any sort of genetic characteristics but using poetry of language. "Who advances in letters and fails in morals, more fails than gains. Among monkeys engaging it is necessary to be monkey. He, who with wolves wants [to] live, must with wolves howl.". This is merely another example of Linnaeus' philosophical attributions of life, through his Classical Lutheran Moral Philosophy. (NEEDS CITATION)

Human Taxonomies and the Problem of Race

When I look at how Linnaeus classified humans, I don't see the origin of racism; I see a man trying to make sense of what he thought was divine order. The *Systema Naturae* (Linné & Salvius, 1759) gave the world four continental "varieties". Europaeus, Americanus, Asiaticus, Afer, each linked to temperaments and systems of governance. To a modern reader, that looks like a racial hierarchy, but in Linnaeus's century it was built from the older language of humors and climate. He believed that physical and moral differences came from environment and habit; that people changed with latitude, diet, and custom, not blood.

His words, regitur legibus, consuetudine, opinionibus, arbitrio, literally mean "governed by laws, by custom, by opinions, by will." He was describing cultures, not chromosomes. Still, by placing "Europeans" first and calling them sanguineus, torosus, he drew from the moral vocabulary of his own world. His taxonomy mirrored what he saw as order in creation; and because Europe defined the scientific lens of that era, "order" often looked European.

I think Linnaeus's greatest contradiction was that he tried to keep faith with both Scripture and empiricism. He believed all humans were of one origin, Imago Dei, the image of God, but he also felt compelled to record difference. In his time, to classify was to praise creation's complexity; to name was to honor. He couldn't imagine that the system meant to celebrate unity would later fracture it.

Later naturalists like Buffon, Kant, and Blumenbach picked up his schema and hardened it into the idea of "race." They read his varieties as permanent, biological partitions instead of flexible adaptations. Blumenbach's "five races" (Blumenbach & Bendyshe, 1865) essentially froze the Linnaean varieties into categories that people began to inhabit rather than move between. The tragedy is that Linnaeus's descriptive impulse, the same one that gave us the language of species and genus, became the backbone of scientific segregation.

When I study these passages, I see a man of his century, caught between faith and observation. He couldn't imagine heredity without divine design; he couldn't imagine difference without moral weight. In his world, taxonomy was theology by another name. The question for us isn't whether Linnaeus was racist by modern standards, but how his way of seeing, the need to systematize, still shapes how we see each other today.

Legacy and Misinterpretation

When I follow Linnaeus beyond his lifetime, I see how easily a framework meant for order became a justification for power. After his death, his editors and students; especially Johann Friedrich Gmelin in the 13th edition (Linné et al., 1788b, 1791); reworked *Systema Naturae* to fit a new century that had lost its theological anchor. They pulled from Buffon's natural history, Kant's anthropology, and Blumenbach's *De Generis Humani Varietate Nativa*; and in doing so, they shifted classification from environment to essence. Linnaeus had spoken of varietates within one species; they began to speak of races within mankind.

Blumenbach's fivefold typology; Caucasian, Mongolian, Ethiopian, American, and Malay; drew directly from Linnaeus's continents but added permanence where Linnaeus had written fluidity. His work was not malicious; he still believed in a single human origin. Yet the shift in language; from "variety" to "race," from adaptation to inheritance; hardened a taxonomy that Linnaeus had left open. Once "difference" became fixed, it could be ranked; once ranked, it could be weaponized.

The irony is that Linnaeus's own writings contain both the seed of that rigidity and the argument against it. His 12th edition (Linné, 1767) describes man as *miraculum naturae audacis*; a miracle of bold nature; fragile yet divine. He built an entire subsection titled Theologice, ending with "Ut agnoscas Creatorem, mundi contemplator"; that you might, through studying creation, recognize the Creator. To Linnaeus, classification was devotion; to his successors, it became dominion.

I think that is where his legacy fractures. His name survives in biology; every species named with a Latin binomial owes him something; but his intentions survive only in fragments. Most people who use his system have never read the moral sections of *Systema Naturae*. They remember the lists of names, not the sentences about humility, mortality, or gratitude. When science detached from theology, it also detached from Linnaeus's sense of accountability.

Understanding that shift matters for anthropology. It reminds us that systems are only as ethical as the people who use them. Linnaeus handed later generations a framework of order; they used it to justify inequality. The framework did not change; people did. And in that realization, I see something strangely redemptive; if his words could be twisted to divide, then they can also be reread to unite. The same taxonomy that once categorized humanity apart can still help us see humanity together.

Classification as a Neutral Scaffold

When I look at Linnaeus's legacy as a scientist, I keep coming back to how neutral his system really was; not morally, but methodologically. The structure he built was a framework for relation, not dominance. His binomial method reduced nature to names and patterns so that anyone, anywhere, could talk about the same plant, animal, or human variety in the same language. That was his goal, order through clarity. The problem was never the scaffold itself, but what people chose to hang on it.

Classification, in Linnaeus's hands, was a tool of translation between God's creation and human understanding. It said, in effect, that nature could be studied systematically without diminishing its divinity. That kind of thinking made modern science possible; it also made it easy to strip morality out of inquiry once theology was removed. When science detached from faith, classification detached from conscience. Yet the structure remained; clean, logical, adaptable. That is why we still use it.

I think about this every time I read *Systema Naturae*. Its sentences are simple, almost mechanical, but underneath them runs an almost devotional rhythm. "Nosce te ipsum," he writes; know thyself. For him, that meant that the scientist must also be subject to his own system. It was a reminder that knowledge without reflection becomes arrogance. His successors kept the method and dropped the message.

In anthropology, this lesson still matters. Classification gives us a way to find pattern in chaos; to understand the connections that link language, culture, and biology. It becomes dangerous only when we start mistaking the category for the truth. Linnaeus's genius was that his structure could accommodate change. New data could fit into old scaffolding because he built it to be revised. That flexibility is what made his science endure.

So I do not see taxonomy as an outdated or oppressive model; I see it as a neutral grammar for the natural world. It only becomes oppressive when language is used as law. Linnaeus's system endures because it is a structure of description, not prescription. It tells us how to see, not what to believe. In that sense, his framework still holds value; it reminds us that to name is not to own, and that understanding difference does not require creating distance.

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