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ON RACE AND SOLIDARITY
Reconsiderations

Lucius Turner Outlaw (Jr.)

Racial Solidarity?

If there are no “races”—that is, if notions that the human species is distinguished by diverse self-reproducing, bio-culturally related groupings of individuals who share the distinguishing characteristics of supposed raciality areerroneous since, empirically, there are no groupings that fulfill the notions—then notions of racial solidarity are likewise misguided, perhaps even immoral in important instances (e.g., when fostering such solidarity is for purposes determined unjust). The work to be done, then, seems that of identifying, explaining, and critiquing the misguided notions in keeping with efforts to promote the cessation of efforts to forge and/or sustain such forms of solidarity.

Numerous notions of raciality have been explored in various fields of natural and social sciences, and in socio-political life, and found inadequate. Recent debates among academic philosophers regarding the viability—or lack thereof—of such notions have given rise to sufficient research and scholarly activities as to generate a new disciplinary subfield, “Philosophy of Race.” And among philosophers, too, many are convinced there are no “races” or, at the very least, that referring to or regarding groupings of individuals as “races” should cease given all of the harm that has ensued by way of nefarious deployments of the notions.

Still, there some among philosophers, and among practitioners of various sciences—natural, social, and humanistic—and arts who argue for continuing to regard particular forms of bio-culturally related groupings as “races,” and as retrospectively and prospectively of substantial anthropological significance, though notions of raciality, many are convinced, do need careful rehabilitation. For some among this disparate aggregate of racialists, revised conceptualizations of raciality are important resources for understanding the emergence and dispersive, evolving developments of the human species across expanses of times and spaces into bio-culturally diverse populations, these populational diversities having become crucial to the evolutionary well-being of our species as well as the sources of so very much that has been, and can be even more, enriching of life lived in critical appreciation of the riches while attenuating the inevitable and promoted conflicts.

I count myself among those endeavoring to understand the developments of the formation and maintenance of such relatively distinctive groupings for which some
(though by no means all) forms and intensities of relations of solidarity have been anthropologically contingent necessities. In what follows I offer a sketch of an approach towards such an understanding, one that, if viable, might serve as a context for a fuller exploration of forms of “racial solidarity” worth fostering in the present and future. First, how best to understand human beings...

What Is “Man”?  

It is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and that man is by nature a political animal. And he who by nature and not by mere accident is without a state, is either a bad man or above humanity.

Aristotle’s characterization of “man” as a “political animal” is all too familiar. His characterization, however, was not what, today, is often meant when describing someone as “political”: namely, that they engage in self-serving, or unfair group-favoring, partisan, agonistic, adversarial activities in the realm of politics rather than seeking “the common good,” and in contrast to other modes of behavior appropriate to other, supposedly non-political, realms of life (private life, non-political social life, economic life). Rather, for Aristotle all of shared human living—that is, all of life lived in association with others—constituted “political” life, which, in the “highest” form of associated living in a state, was best structured by terms and principles of ordering that were explicated in a constitution. Only gods or beasts live otherwise, or alone, he reasoned.

For Aristotle, then, political life was characteristic of the human species by nature: it was the outcome of processes of development that actualize and realize potentialities definitive of our species. (The nature of a thing or being is what it is when it is “most fully developed” and that distinguishes it as the kind of thing or being that it is.) And in humans that developmental process began in the foundational unit of the nuclear family (male and female producing offspring), continued through collections of families into villages, and reached its fullness when villages came together to form a state (Politics 1973d: 596–598).

How was it for Aristotle that humans “by nature” developed in this way? It was because, as was the case for living beings of all kinds, humans have an “innate impulse to change”:

Of things that exist, some exist by nature, some from other causes. “By nature” the animals and their parts exist, and the plants and the simple bodies (earth, fire, air, water)—for we say that these and the like exist “by nature.”

All the things mentioned present a feature in which they differ from things which are not constituted by nature. Each of them has within itself a principle of motion and of stationariness (in respect of place, or of growth and decrease, or by way of alteration) . . . nature is a source or cause of being moved and of being at rest in that to which it belongs primarily, in virtue of itself and not in virtue of a concomitant attribute.

(Aristotle, Physics 1973c: 122–123, emphasis in original)

“Man,” then, as a kind of living being, has within itself “the source of its own production” (Aristotle, Physics 1973c: 123). Beings that are “by nature” have definitive,
inherent properties that make for—are a cause of—developmental changes; and the understanding of this particular cause—nature—was the effort of Aristotle’s Physics.

Thus, for Aristotle the understanding of “man” as a political animal could not be achieved by examining political life alone. Rather, “man” had also to be understood as a particular kind of living being of nature, by nature. And, understood, as well, in terms of how best—given a full understanding of “man” as a being of nature with inherent principles of motion (movement and rest) and of change or alteration (growth and decline) that persists in associations of interrelated levels of complexity (nuclear family; collections of nuclear and extended families constituting villages; collections of villages constituting a state)—the relations comprising the associations of political life should be oriented, forged, and regulated, and to what ends. The effort to achieve and articulate this understanding was the work of Aristotle’s Ethics: determining how normative ordering could and should be achieved and sustained through intelligently guided, intensively habit-forming practices that would subsequently structure and order ethical choices and behavior (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 1973b: 337–581).

More still was required: an understanding of the particular part of the makeup of the human animal that was the “source of its own production” of motion and change, and in terms of which the ethical ends of living, individually and in association with others, could be achieved if that particularly important part were properly ordered: an understanding of the soul of “man,” the work Aristotle pursued in De Anima (“On the Soul”):

the soul must be a substance in the sense of the form of a natural body having life potentially within in. But substance is actuality and thus soul is the actuality of a body . . . the soul is the first grade of actuality of a natural body having life potentially in it. The body so described is a body which is organized . . . If then, we have to give a formula applicable to all kinds of soul, we must describe it as the first grade of actuality of a natural organized body. 


The soul, further, was that which provided living things “the power of self-nutrition,” growth, and decay (Aristotle, De Anima (“On the Soul”) 1973a: 184–185). But in living things that were animals, the soul provided, in addition, “sensation, thinking, and motivity” (p. 185). Overall, Aristotle reasoned, animal souls were composed of four powers or faculties: growth and decay; desire or appetites; sensation; movement; and, most importantly for “man,” a fifth faculty or power: that of thought (p. 187).

Also to be understood in contenting with “man” was the orderliness encompassing the categories of things and beings, particularly the orderliness of the development definitive of each kind of being from emergence (birth) through development (maturity) to decay (death); and the orderliness of non-living nature—even the cosmos as then experienced and thought—such that, for Aristotle, from the lowest to the highest kinds of beings, each kind, so, too, the whole, was reasonable because each was, thus all were, defined by definite causal ends or purposes (functional imperatives) that were implicit in each kind’s form and origin, and that gave directional shape to the motion and/or development appropriate to each kind, thus to each individual of each kind. The Metaphysics, as well as the Physics, were studies through which Aristotle worked out his notions of the four fundamental causes (form, nature, matter, and end) that accounted for orderly development and, in the case of animals, accounted for cross-generational
persistence through the recurring and overlapping processes of birth, maturation, decay, and death, all managed, in the case of “man,” through the associations constituting political life. These cross-generational processes, though predicated on the mortality of each generation, made for the seeming immortality of “man” through the contingent potentiality of the infinity of the cross-generational continuation of the species. Of fundamental importance to such processes was the end: that toward which the processes tended that, accordingly, gave shape and direction to the processes.

It was the confluence of these lines of reasoning that led Aristotle to conclude that “man is by nature a political animal,” and to conclude that the formation of states is the highest end, or fullest possible development of the potentialities, of the human animal:

Every state is a community of some kind, and every community is established with a view to some good; for mankind always act in order to obtain that which they think good. But, if all communities aim at some good, the state or political community, which is the highest of all, and which embraces all the rest, aims at good in a greater degree than any other, and at the highest good.

(Politics 1973d: 595)

The point of this truncated rehearsal of several of Aristotle’s interrelated studies was for the purpose of highlighting just this important point: that the studies were interrelated and intended to provide a comprehensive account by drawing on a number of fields of study each pertinent to considerations of “man.” An understanding of “man” as a “political animal” required a combination of insights from several different lines of inquiry: politics; what most closely approximates what came to be called “psychology” (studies of the “soul”); functional, teleological developmental biology; what has come to be called “ethology” (study of animal behavior, that characteristic of “man” especially); metaphysics (the consideration of substance and being qua being); physics (studies of matter, of living beings especially); studies of the normative ordering of “political” life, of human associations in bio-social, bio-cultural reproductive collectives from nuclear families to states: that is, ethics.

Aristotle was on to something significant in terms of endeavoring to produce insightful, comprehensive understandings of “man” through a unifying confluence of these related lines of inquiry via a number of methods of inquiry (methods, he insisted, that were always to be forged and pursued, the conditions to be met to produce knowledge, in keeping with the nature of the subject matter). I dare say that today too few efforts to wrestle with challenging subjects of socio-political life, especially by many philosophers, are ever fueled by aspirations to produce a similarly comprehensive understanding of our species as a contextual and foundational prerequisite for understanding important aspects of political life. Or even dare to aspire for such. If not dismissed outright, such an aspiration would likely face passionate criticism from many (producing much heat, as it were, but little, I think, in the way of informed understanding), especially if the understandings pursued involve efforts to have evolution-focused accounts of biological and cultural developments provide explanatory foundations for understandings of the sociological, political, ethical, intellectual, and aesthetic activities and productions of humans. Such understandings would have important implications for addressing questions of the veracity and integrity of deliberately “philosophical” explorations and declarations regarding Homo sapiens, especially those efforts in service to intentions to
establish normative guidance secured by “right reasons/reasonings” that satisfy rules of logic(s) applied to or derived from non-empirical “ideal” considerations.

This is especially the case when many philosophers (though not just philosophers . . .) endeavor to grapple with problems involving matters of race (see, for example, Banton 1998). For reasons easily understood, many who consider “race” have taken flight from affirmative considerations of group-shared biological, socio-cultural, even psychological characteristics as conditioning factors in the composition of populations identified (or mis-identified) as races, and as conditioning factors in the way those thought to be members of a historically bio-culturally interrelating, supposedly racial population go about their lives. Out of opposition to centuries of forms of practices of racism—from racialized enslavement and genocide to what today are characterized as “micro-aggressions”—to a large extent such practices have been condemned as unjust and immoral, justified, in large part, by appeals to supposedly widespread scientific consensus that “there are no races.” Often such justifications of oppositions, even to affirmative considerations of racial groupings, are enforced by strenuous policing criticisms supposedly secured by appeals to frequently unspecified, but nonetheless supposedly authoritative, “science”—as in such claims as “there is no ‘science’ to notions of race”—or by resorting to the ad hominem declaration that “no ‘reputable’ scientist has claimed or would claim that there are races.” All too often such appeals fail to account for just what settled conclusions have been produced by which enterprise(s) of scientific knowledge production, or fail to account for how a scientist’s supposed lack of reputation is determined, and by whom. Much too infrequently there has been too little reasoned, measured, productive debate regarding the propriety of considering certain groupings of humans as “races,” considerations supported by conclusions based on relatively well-settled and integrated disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and cross-disciplinary theoretical and empirical work challenged by mutually respectful disagreements.

Reconsiderations are needed by many philosophers, I among them, who are concerned with matters having to do with racialized populations, reconsiderations that draw on and integrate pertinent knowledges that continue to enrich understandings of the histories of the emergence and ongoing evolution of developmental Homo sapiens during migratory radiations from locale(s) of emergence to settlings in, and adaptations to, the various geographical settings in which our world’s various civilizational populations and peoples developed and produced the diversity of still-evolving genotypes, phenotypes, and cultural legacies that enrich and sustain our species. Productions and refinements of these knowledges are well underway in a number of disciplines across the natural and social sciences, though with much too little impact on the thinking of many philosophers, while efforts to contend with, and to work against, racisms continue and, by necessity in too many instances, are intensified. With assistance from considerations of these pertinent knowledge-producing efforts, the reconsiderations of philosophers concerned with “race” matters might well avoid the hyper over-reaction to racism manifested in efforts to ignore, rather than understand thoroughly, the significance of self-reproducing bio-cultural groupings of developmental human beings subject to, while actively contributing to, the adaptive evolution of our species. If understanding our bio-culturally diverse species as by nature political in something of an Aristotelian sense for which modes of solidarity are an anthropological necessity for persistent contingent existence, pursued and sustained by way of reproductive groupings forged and sustained by various forms and intensities of shared investments in socially bonding associational
identities and obligations, we might, then, be compelled to reconsider how solidarity at “racial” group levels has, too, been by nature. Still, it must be emphasized that such a conclusion compels no endorsement of any and all forms and agendas of “racial solidarity.” Other considerations must be satisfied before endorsements are warranted. Meanwhile, towards a reconsideration of the “political nature” of our species . . .

Human Sociality

Though we are a long way from Aristotle by thousands of years when measured by the average longevity of individual human lives, there are many researchers who endeavor to understand the emergence and continuing developing existence of Homo sapiens, among other species, not only as both biological and social (or political, in Aristotle’s sense), but through enlarged and enriched, though quite complicated, theories, experiments, and comparative studies of human and other social species in order to determine and understand species-specific interrelated phylogenetic, ontogenetic, and socio-cultural developments. And to be noted, the understandings of such developments are forged through disciplines structured by appropriately vetted norms and practices of knowledge-production constitutive of enterprises of scientific investigation (among them paleontology, entomology, archaeology, ecology, cognitive neuroscience, developmental cognitive psychology, social psychology, human genetics, history, and evolutionary biology, among others), all sharing, more or less, core theoretical notions of development by way of survival through adaptive evolution.

Of course, the foundational notions of evolutionary development (by “natural selection”) were initially worked out and articulated by Charles Darwin (1859) in his historic publication On the Origin of Species By Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life. A contemporary effort toward a more comprehensive account (quite similar to Aristotle’s account of “man’s” development from families through tribes to states and empires), an effort bolstered by substantial findings produced by refined and well-tested theories and comparative empirical studies, and amplified by ongoing speculations developed since 1859, and much enhanced by further refinements of the axial synthesis of continuously accumulating, more or less settled scientific discoveries and understandings of the nature of, and changes to, the human genome as a (not the only) principal means by which evolutionary adaptations are fostered, has been offered by Edward O. Wilson in several works. Particularly noteworthy are his The Social Conquest of the Earth (Wilson 2012) and the mammoth Sociobiology: The New Synthesis (Wilson 2000) in which he endeavors to produce a synthesis (consilience is Wilson’s preferred concept; Wilson 1999) of the findings that, together, are offered as the most comprehensive and integrated articulation of the disciplinary complex of sociobiology (see also Wilson and Wilson 2007).

E.O. Wilson is a controversial figure, to say the least. I do not draw on his work because I am convinced that his attempted comprehensive synthesis is settled and authoritative, or fully convincing. It is neither of these. However, his efforts do provide a broad and rich heuristic framework of multidisciplinary, multilevel evolutionary considerations in the context of which I can explore continuing efforts at reconsideration of particular cross-generational bio-cultural populations often referred to (frequently imprecisely and, too often, perniciously) as “races.” Wilson’s is a framework that has the virtue, among others, of daring toward synthesis or consilience, having reached a
conclusion, reminiscent of Aristotle, which serves as fruitful heuristic platform for my reconsiderations. In his words (Wilson E. O. 2000: 553), “The building block of nearly all human societies is the nuclear family.” From this building block, kinship systems are developed as family-members leave the nuclear unit to form new, linked families, and as linked families form bands and tribes.

As societies evolved from bands through tribes into chieftdoms and states, some of the modes of bonding were extended beyond kinship networks to include other kinds of alliances and economic agreements. Because the networks were then larger, the lines of communication longer, and the interactions more diverse, the total systems became vastly more complex. But the moralistic rules underlying these arrangements appear not to have been altered a great deal. The average individual still operates under a formalized code no more elaborate than that governing the members of hunter-gatherer societies.

(Wilson E. O. 2000: 554)

These strong similarities in the developmental accounts of Aristotle and E. O. Wilson—though there are quite substantial differences in the knowledges, and in the methods of knowledge-production, that are synthesized into their respective accounts—have sufficient heuristic promise as to persuade me to draw on their efforts to aid in reconsidering how best to approach matters of the history of development of humans as a distinctive kind of social species that, in persisting, has evolved relatively distinctive bio-cultural populations and sub-populations often characterized as “races,” in part on the basis of presumptions that members of such groups share the conditions and factors, and processes of development, that determine the persistence and/or dissolution of the characteristics shared to a sufficient degree by enough members of the populations as to be taken as bases for identifying and regarding the populations as comparatively distinct in several evolutionarily significant ways.

(Wilson E. O. 2000: 554)

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Ours is a species for which associational existence is a definitive characteristic, though we are not thereby unique: there are many other species (20,000 among insects, among other species, Wilson asserts) characterized by what biologists term eusociality or “‘true social condition’. Members of a eusocial animal group . . . belong to multiple generations. They divide labor in what outwardly at least appears to be an altruistic manner” (Wilson E. O. 2012: 109). Still, according to Wilson, among animal species two developments stand out regarding eusociality, the consequences of cause and effect (evolution): land-based animals are dominated by those with the most complex social systems; and the evolutionary rarity of the eusocial species (p. 109). Across millions of years of theorized evolution of life on planet earth, from among all of the eusocial species, and from among the several ancestor species (Homo floresiensis, Homo neanderthalensis, and “Denisovans” that were, it is speculated, vicariant to the Neanderthals), Homo sapiens “emerged in the last several hundred thousand years and spread around the world only during the last sixty thousand years” (p. 15). And from the theorizing reconstructions of this evolutionary history, a stunning, sobering conclusion:
By one means or another, through competition for food and space or outright slaughter or both, our ancestors were the future exterminators of this [the Neanderthals] and any other species that arose during adaptive radiation of *Homo* . . . In the process, all other human species encountered were swamped and erased. (p. 10)

(Regarding this, *much* to be considered . . .) And, Wilson takes care to note:

Human beings create cultures by means of malleable languages. We invent symbols that are intended to be understood among ourselves, and we thereby generate networks of communication many orders of magnitude greater than that of any animal. We have conquered the biosphere and laid waste to it like no other species in the history of life. We are unique in what we have wrought . . . We are an evolutionary chimera, living on intelligence steered by the demands of animal instinct . . . Humanity is a magnificent but fragile achievement. (2012: 13)

Ours is, then, a fragile *social* species, a species of various scalings of socially bonded groupings of individuals, that emerged evolutionarily out of conditions on the landmass now long called “Africa,” from which, over tens of thousands of years, small bands radiated out, settling along the way, the survivors reproducing while adapting to new environments with new bands of successive generations moving further, settling, adapting, reproducing, and giving rise to still more bands migrating to other areas of the planet. Survival of the bands of individuals through adaptations to new environments was predicated on *sociality*: transgenerational groupings formed by alliances (to construct settlements or “nests”; forming teams to secure food, particularly in the form of non-human animals that when consumed fulfilled the evolving need for protein); groupings structured by emotionally charged identities (that established the meaningfulness of natal and related groupings, and of individuals within the relationships) and in which individuals evolved to make good judgments of the intentions of others (within natal and related groupings, especially), and planned and executed strategies of interactions—all of these endeavors being made suitable to environments through adaptations (Wilson E. O. 2012: 20). Bonding and cooperation among individuals and groupings, then, were fundamental to meeting the needs of survival, thus to the evolutionary development and persistence of the various forms of human sociality. Hence, the development of emotionally charged social intelligence—that is, “a sharp sense of empathy”—became crucial to the evolution of our *Homo* species. And, Wilson emphasizes, settlements—in the form of campsites early on—that became sites (“nests”) of concentrated groupings that necessitated protection and compelled *social cohesion*, were especially crucial factors. It was this cohesion that “launched the final drive to modern *Homo sapiens*” (p. 44). It is forms of this supposed “cohesion” that have been explored by many thinkers by way of accounts of “solidarity.”

Conceptions of the or “a” *biological individual* are being challenged by recent research findings, most notably in work reconsidering the division between humans and other sentient beings, such as animals, and what distinguishes individualism—anatomically, physiologically, or in terms of symbionts (Gilbert, Sapp, and Tauber 2012: 325–326). Still, in stressing the evolutionary significance of the “eusociality” of our
species, the importance of “individuals” must not be overlooked. For in accounting for (theorizing) eusocial evolution, Wilson and others have concluded that the evolutionary dynamics that have been at work in the creation of new groupings by humans, at present and stretching back into prehistory, have involved multileveled processes of selection: that is, have been “driven by both individual and group selection” (Wilson E.O. 2012: 52). And the processes of “selection” at work were affecting the genome, of “individuals” and of the groups, the sources of the driving forces being the natural environments in which the out-radiating groups had settled, and the likewise evolving socio-cultural practices forged, sustained, and modified in responses to environments that are both human-modified natural and human-made cultural—and, consequently, are dynamic. Both modes of evolution, genomic and socio-cultural, were mutually conditioning, it is theorized, and were affected by contacts with other, comparatively distinct groups. Both modes, and their interactions, are now being explored guided by the heuristic notions and theories of gene-culture co-evolution (2012: 195–210).

Theories of bio-social evolution(s) are offered to account for (to explain) the group-based cultural and genetic diversities that emerged by way of the out-radiating groupings that settled in different geographic environments thus producing, over the course of tens of thousands of years, the evolutionary formation of anthropologically relatively distinct (culturally, phenotypically, and genotypically) sub-populations of Homo sapiens that came to be called “races”—or termed “geographic races” by some population geneticists and other researchers—though these “races” were/are not internally homogeneous genetically or phenotypically. Still, over the course of tens of thousands of years, the adaptive radiations and settlements of Homo sapiens have resulted in our being a species (but by no means the only such species) that is notable for substantial intraspecific diversities. And to good ends: for Wilson (and I agree): “In evolution, from diversity comes opportunity” (Social Conquest, 2012: 27). The crucial importance of this diversity is expressed forthrightly by Wilson, but, against the backdrop of much too much nefarious history, it is how he positions indigenous peoples of Africa in doing so that is quite astounding and worth quoting at great length:

The ancestors who achieved the breakout from Africa and conquered Earth were drawn from a diverse genetic mix. Throughout their evolutionary past, during hundreds of thousands of years, they had been hunter-gatherers. They lived in small bands, similar to present-day surviving bands composed of at least thirty and more than a hundred or so individuals. These groups were sparsely distributed. Those closest to each other exchanged a small fraction of individuals each generation, most likely females. They diverged genetically enough that the entire ensemble of bands (the metapopulation, as biologists call such a collectivity) was far more variable than the indigenous humans destined to achieve the breakout.

That difference persists. It has long been known that Africans south of the Sahara are far more diverse genetically than native peoples in other parts of the world . . .

It has not escaped the attention of human biologists and medical researchers that the genes of modern-day Africans are a treasure house for all humanity. They posses our species’ greatest reservoir of genetic diversity, of which further study will shed new light on the heredity of the human body and mind. Perhaps the time has come, in light of this and other advances in human genetics, to adopt a
new ethic of racial and hereditary variation, one that places value on the whole of
diversity rather than on the differences composing the diversity. It would give proper
measure to our species’ genetic variation as an asset, prized for the adaptability it
provides all of us during an increasingly uncertain future. Humanity is strengthened
by a broad portfolio of genes that can generate new talents, additional resistance to
diseases, and perhaps even new ways of seeing reality. For scientific as well as for
moral reasons, we should learn to promote human biological diversity for its own sake
instead of using it to justify prejudice and conflict.

(Wilson E. O. 2012: 80–81 (emphasis added))

Wilson has concluded that “groupism,” the propensity of Homo sapiens to “form groups,
drawing visceral comfort and pride from familiar fellowship, and to defend the group
enthusiastically against rival groups,” is one of the “absolute universals of human
nature and hence of culture” (Wilson E. O. 2012: 57 (emphasis added)). Once groups
are formed, their boundaries are flexible, with members developing loyalties to other
groups, and with groups admitting as members others (recruits, allies, converts, hon-
orary inductees, traitors from rival groups (p. 57)). The propensity toward groupism,
Wilson reasons, is a biological product of forces of selection acting on the group that
produces an instinct for group formation, and is as much an evolutionary aspect of the
psychological makeup of modern groups as is theorized was the case for tribes of ancient
history and prehistory. Consequently, he concludes, “[p]eople must have a tribe”
(p. 57).

Of course, Wilson’s conclusion is questionable, thus requires more compelling
evidence to be convincing. Nonetheless, modern humans are hardly without social
groupings—contrary to centuries of philosophical celebrations of various forms of indi-
viduality and individualism as the ethnically preferred model of human living—but live
much more complex group-ordered lives, navigating a social world not of a single tribe,
“but rather a system of interlocking tribes” (Wilson E. O. 2012: 57) that, in some case,
have spanned continents and centuries. The theory of evolutionary eusociality provides
a path toward an explanation, perhaps, of why virtually all of the world impacted by
European and Euro-American Modernities, for example, have been structured verti-
cally and horizontally by systems of interlocking tribes ordered by conceptions—and
 correspondingly by horizontal and vertical valorizations—of raciality in combination
with other group-life and world-ordering systems of meaning and practices (religion,
economies, territoriality, etc.): namely, conceptual and practical schemes constituting
White Racial Supremacy. Modern racialisms are but forms of tribalism, we might say,
scaled up to nation-state, multistate (“Europe,” for example), and ancient and modern
empire formations (nation-states and their colonies and territories). We might con-
sider racialisms as historically contingent socio-cultural developments out of a powerful
species-specific instinctual propensity or “prepared learning” (“the inborn propensity
to learn something swiftly and decisively” (2012: 59)) for in-group biases that seem
likely to be consequences of adaptations on the group level. Racialisms, therefore forms
of racism, are constructed (socio-culturally) out of this propensity, not determined by it
genetically, though Wilson is convinced that “different parts of the brain have evolved
by group selection to create groupishness” (2012: 61).

Still, it must be insisted, individuals can (and do!) defect from the tribe, can become
traitors to a tribe’s racialism and racism. Moreover, the terms and valences of group
life are always subject to entropy and revision. These, too, apparently, are among the evolved characteristics of the eusociality our species, the complete list being:

- Intense competition between and among groups;
- Instability of group composition;
- Perfecting of quick, expert reading of the intentions of others;
- Perpetual, unavoidable conflict between the products of group selection (honor, virtue, duty) and the products of individual selection (selfishness, cowardice, hypocrisy);
- Much of culture emerges from this clash between what has been produced, or conditioned significantly, by group selection and that produced or conditioned by individual selection (Wilson E. O. 2012: 56).

*Homo sapiens* eusociality, Wilson concludes, is instinctual, a consequence of advantageous mutations of the human genome, of natural selection, and cultural adaptations because the affected grouped individuals that adapted and survived challenges to existence produced offspring to which they conferred, genetically and culturally, the advantageous adaptations. “Natural selection” are the processes by which environmental conditions affect a gene or an arrangement of genes or alternative genes (alleles) in the heredity code such that a trait or combination of traits encoded by the affected gene, genes, or alleles becomes, or ceases to be, advantageous for successful living, individually and socially, and for reproducing and nurturing offspring. Processes of selection are multilevel, acting “on genes that prescribe targets [trait or combination of traits] at more than one level of biological organization, such as cell and organism” (Wilson E. O. 2012: 162).

The “selection” processes affect both individuals and groups of individuals; however, “Traits that are acted upon exclusively by selection between groups are those emerging from interactions among members of each group” (Wilson E. O. 2012: 163). To be noted, as well, is that relationships involving genes or combinations of genes and particular traits are quite complex: in some instances the trait(s) may be completely encoded by a gene or gene combination; in other instances the trait(s) is (are) only partially gene-encoded and may be subject to other conditions. In short, the trait(s) may be phenotypically plastic, differing in manifestation and effect though linked, in some way(s), to the same or similar genotype(s) (genes or combinations of genes). (These conditions explain, in significant part, why persons with more or less similar phenotypic features are regarded as being members of the same racial or ethnic group though, on examination, it turns out that within the purported group the members have different frequencies and/or combinations of genes: that is, there is substantial genomic variety among phenotypically similar members of the identified group (p. 163).)

This listing of features of *Homo sapiens* eusociality and discussion of the formative role of evolution by natural selection would hardly satisfy Aristotle as an explanation, that is, as a full account of the causes of eusociality, surely not the why or end. Producing such an account involves a number of related massive tasks, not yet completed, not even by Wilson, who is fully cognizant of what is required. As he notes,

The evolutionary origin of any complex biological system can be reconstructed correctly only if viewed as the culmination of a history of stages tracked from
start to finish. It begins with empirically known biological phenomena in each stage, if such is known, and it explores the range of phenomena that are theoretically possible.

(Wilson E. O., *Social Conquest* 2012: 183)^3

Wilson has a theory of these “stages” of evolution, still to be verified empirically, including by experimentation, and by comparison to the evolutions of other eusocial species. His list of stages (truncated):

1. The formation of groups . . .;
2. The occurrence of a minimum and necessary combination of preadaptive traits in the groups, causing the groups to be tightly formed . . .;
3. The appearance of mutations that prescribe the persistence of the group . . .;
4. In the insects, emergent traits caused by either the genesis of robot-like workers or the interaction of group members are shaped through group-level selection by environmental forces;

Clearly, much of this theory relies on studies of eusocial insects, other invertebrates, and vertebrates, not of humans (Wilson E. O. 2012: 187). How, Wilson asks (and we must ask), to explain more fully—to explicate the *causes* of—the extraordinarily rare evolutionary development and persistent eusociality of *Homo sapiens*, taking into account both genetic and cultural processes?

Very much in keeping with Aristotle’s investigations, Wilson devotes a chapter to the question “What is Human Nature?” (Wilson E. O. 2012: 191–211). It is not to be found in the genes, he reasons, nor defined by the cultural “universals” of social behavior and institutions found in all of hundreds of closely studied human societies (2012: 192). Rather:

If the genetic code underlying human nature is too close to its molecular underpinning and the cultural universals are too far away from it, it follows that the best place to search for hereditary human nature is in between, in the rules of development prescribed by genes, through which the universals of culture are created.

Human nature is the inherited regularities of mental development common to our species. They are the “epigenetic rules,” which evolved by the interaction of genetic and cultural evolution that occurred over a long period in deep prehistory. These rules are the genetic biases in the way our senses perceive the world, the symbolic coding by which we represent the world, the options we automatically open to ourselves, and the responses we find easiest and most rewarding to make.

(Wilson E. O. 2012: 193)

What have we, so far, in terms of a sketch of an evolutionary account of human sociality? *Homo sapiens* is an evolved and evolving, widely dispersed, genomically and socially dynamic metapopulation of likewise genomically and socially dynamic,
relatively distinct subpopulational groupings the “individuals” of which share variants of a species-specific genome that is composed of genes and alternate alleles, some of which prescribe and others that regulate gene expressions but do not themselves prescribe, all of which are subject to mutations, alterations of combinations during reproduction, and to natural selection. Individuals within particular subpopulations tend to share (more or less) epigenetic rules that regulate changes in gene activity and expression but are not dependent on gene sequences (Wilson E. O. 2012: 204) and that function to “prepare” the human individuals and groups for instances of learned behavior (e.g., lactose tolerance; incest avoidance; evolved and inherited systems of perception that condition the evolution of color vocabularies; the “Westermarck effect,” which is “the avoidance of sexual activity among closely related individuals who remain within their natal group” (2012: 200)); the capability of “shared intentionality” or “the ability to participate with others in collaborative activities with shared goals, and intentions” (Tomasello, Carpenter, Call, Behne, and Moll 2005: 675); and evolving cultural practices, which, drawing from Wilson, we understand as ultimately caused by the evolving genome, but not proximately caused by the genome—that can, in various instances, in Wilson’s words, “smother genetic evolution” (2012: 197), but not arrest the process altogether.

The singularity of the persisting (so far . . .) eusociality of *Homo sapiens* is marked by the development of many factors, greater by several magnitudes than those of any other known eusocial species, and further distinguished by their varieties in terms of cultures; languages; religions; and schemes of morality, creative arts, and technologies, among more than a few factors. One key to all of these developments has been the inheritance of a much-evolved brain with an extraordinarily complex, not-yet-fully-understood architecture and operations that make for, among other processes, various modes of mindfulness and communication that affect behavior. The brain was central to what Wilson theorizes was “the driving force that led to the threshold of complex culture”:

It appears to have been group selection. A group with members who could read intentions and cooperate among themselves while predicting the actions of competing groups, would have an enormous advantage over others less gifted. There was undoubtedly competition among group members, leading to natural selection of traits that gave advantage of one individual over another. But more important for a species entering new environments and competing with powerful rivals were unity and cooperation within the group. Morality, conformity, religious fervor, and fighting ability combined with imagination and memory to produce the winner.

(Wilson E. O. 2012: 224)

The significance of sociality for brain evolution has become the focus of intense research with results seeming to provide confirmations of the heuristic notion-cum-testable hypothesis of the “social brain”:

The broad interpretation of the social brain hypothesis is that individuals living in stable social groups face cognitive demands that individuals living alone (or in unstable aggregations) do not. To maintain group cohesion, individuals must be able to meet their own requirements, as well as coordinate their behavior with other individuals in the group. They must also be able to
defuse the direct and indirect conflicts that are generated by foraging in the same space.

(Dunbar and Shultz, *Evolution in the Social Brain* 2007: 1345)

From their research, Dunbar and Shultz conclude “the key selection pressure promoting the evolution of large brains is explicitly social” (*Evolution in the Social Brain* 2007: 1345), and that “it may have been the cognitive demands of pairbonding that triggered the initial evolution of large brains across the vertebrates. More important, pairbonding is the issue, not biparental care” (*Evolution in the Social Brain* 2007: 1346); see also (Dunbar 2003)).

Why? Because, possibly, reproductive pairbonds are especially demanding and risky, thus impose substantial computational demands (choosing mates of good quality who will be both loyal and contribute substantively to child-rearing across the length of a monogamous relationship); and, possibly, because “postnatal parental investment requires very close coordination and behavioral synchrony . . . the pair needs to regulate its activities so that each has enough time for feeding and rest. That will usually necessitate some degree of activity synchronization” (Dunbar and Shultz 2007: 1346). These considerations are consistent with quite similar considerations by Tomasello et al. (2005) of the evolutionary significance of synchronized or shared intentionality in developing and sustaining social cognition. As they note, “The result of participating in these activities is species-unique forms of cultural cognition and evolution, enabling everything from the creation and use of linguistic symbols to the construction of social norms and individual beliefs to the establishment of social institutions” (Tomasello, Carpenter, Call, Behne, and Moll 2005: 675). And consistent with conclusions drawn from considerations of field and laboratory research by Joan B. Silk, another proponent of the social brain hypothesis: “New evidence indicates that the competitive success and reproductive performance of individuals in primate groups is affected by the nature and quality of the relationships that they form” (Silk 2007: 1347).

A striking conclusion drawn from these converging lines of research is that it was the evolving sociality of situated groups that drove the evolution of the *Homo sapiens* brain, which ratcheted up human capabilities by several magnitudes and has been a key resource for the inventiveness at the heart of cultural creativity. As Tomasello (2006: 205) concludes, “None of the most complex human artifacts or social practices—including tool industries, symbolic artifacts, and social institutions—were invented once and for all at a single moment by any one individual or group of individuals.” Rather, various cultures are cumulative cultural systems (Tomasello 2006: 205), which in turn, become major forces driving *Homo sapiens* life and evolution as yet-to-be-fully-understood complements to evolution of the genome (Levinson 2006).

To be noted: cultural systems are not completely independent of evolutionary genomic influences. However, the influences, in various instances, are, as noted by Wilson, mediated by epigenetic rules and by institutionalizations of cultural practices (norms guiding mate-selections, dietary practices, food productions, for example) that, as well, affect the genome (again, through diets, patterns of activity, impacts on the environment, etc.) (Francis 2011). A successfully adapting trans-generational group or complex of related groups must have in the arsenal of its cultural systems institutionalized strategies and social mechanisms by which to meet and resolve challenges to the groups’ survival: “these mechanisms also depend on biological underpinnings: the
ability to inhibit private interest, to pull together in times of stress, and also more gen-
erally the cognitive abilities that make long-term communal planning possible” (Levin-

Cultural systems, as noted when considering the processes of “ratcheting” by which
such systems are thought to be developed, are subject to and consequences of particu-
lar forms of evolution: that is, the elements of cultural systems, once acquired, can be
transmitted by way of teaching and learning (also parts of the cultural system) across
generations with modifications (revisions, new inventions, borrowings from other cul-
tures, or losses), thus are thought by some to be subject to distinctive forms and forces
In other words, cultural systems are sustained by retention and usage by the encultured
actors of the social group(s) who are the systems’ carriers and modifiers. As well, a
cultural system might become maladaptive in some circumstances, thus putting at risk
the survival and viability of the groupings, or portions of them. And all of this while
the genome is subject to evolutionary pressures, some of which have been initiated by
cultural practices. Hence, the need for considerations of “gene-culture coevolution” or
“twin-track” theories of gene-culture evolution (Levinson 2006: 3). The upshot of the
theories is that “the interaction between culture and genome in humans has produced
an extraordinary symbiotic hybrid, yielding a quantum leap in adaptational flexibility,
which allows humans to exist in every niche on the planet and beyond” (2006: 5). Cul-
tural systems are, consequently, both relatively unique and similar.

However, it is crucial to note that not all theorists of cultural evolution conceptu-
alize the processes using models of genomic evolution. An explanatory approach to
evolutionary understandings of Homo sapiens more robust than that of Wilson is offered
by the theorizing of Eva Jablonka and Marion J. Lamb: namely, that evolution is a
consequence not just of “two tracks” interrelated, but, rather, of interrelated develop-
ments and processes in four dimensions: genetic, epigenetic, behavioral, and symbolic
(Jablonka and Lamb 2014). They regard all four dimensions as “inheritance systems,”
that is, as structured systems through which developments occur, are transmitted and
acquired (inherited), in the case of behavior and symbolic activities, especially, by way
of socially mediated learning that results in “reconstruction in an ancestor’s behavior or
preferences in its descendants” (Jablonka and Lamb 2014: 156). And in both inheritance
systems (behavioral and symbolic) social learning predominates. Hence, the evolution
involves culture: “the system of socially transmitted patterns of behavior, preferences,
and products of animal activities that characterize a group of social animals” (produc-
tion and transmission, for example, of knowledge, habits, preferences, skills, culinary
traditions, group histories, identities, etc., and, through socially mediated learning, the
production and transmission of new traditions, identities, etc.).

All of these transmitted developments are “to a large extent independent of genetic
variation” (Jablonka and Lamb 2014: 159). Rather, the carrying weight, so to speak, is
borne not by genes, but by the meaning-informing, meaning-conveying sign and sym-
bol systems of a given culture. For Jablonka and Lamb, as for Wilson and other theoriz-
ing researchers, the most distinguishing feature of Homo sapiens eusociality remains “the
way we organize, transfer, and acquire information . . . our ability to think and commu-
nicate through words and other types of symbols,” these systems having become espe-
cially adaptive in enabling “the construction of a shared imagined reality” (Jablonka
and Lamb 2014: 189, 197) and “forward planning” while also providing resources by
which to manage the experiences of a dynamic and diverse world by grouping things into relatively distinct categories, among these color categories, shape categories, etc. (Jablonka and Lamb 2014: 173). Language is crucial to this categorization: “There is a core set of categories that are identifiable in all languages, although the way that they are indicated grammatically varies from language to language. In addition, different languages may structurally distinguish some categories that are not distinguished in others” (Jablonka and Lamb 2014: 300). A most pertinent example: how color categories came to be used to signify and symbolize “races” in the Modern West, but through differing schemes of racialized categorization being constructed in different polities (e.g., the United States of America, Brazil, South Africa . . .).

It is within this Homo sapiens geographically distributed evolutionary genome-epigenomic-behavioral-symbolic (bio-cultural) nexus of populational sociality that the species-particular forms of psychological and cognitive systems and processes have been developed and actualized in forming groupings (geographic races), culture-societies, and polities in the occupied locales into which our migrating ancestors moved and settled, then produced successive generations that continued the settle-move demographic dispersals in spreading and adapting to various environments of planet earth. By some accounts, these developments resulted in the development of the “five continental races”: Africans, East Asians, Caucasians, Native Americans, and Australian aborigines, including the people of New Guinea (Wade 2014: 94). Although Wade cautions that “portioning human variation into five continental races, is to some extent arbitrary,” he nevertheless concludes, “But it makes practical sense. The three major races are easy to recognize. The five-way division matches the known events of human population history. And most significant of all, the division by continent is supported by genetics” (Wade 2014: 93–94). More needs to be said, however, about just what is the basis of the attribution of a notion of raciality to these groupings, though I am willing to forgo arguing for the nomenclature here while holding on to the accounts that trace the historical formations of the continental groupings. More pertinent is to consider the something that constitutes the sociality that continues to make of such forms of groupings of individuals much, much more than an aggregate of monads. Sociality is by nature. But, what is the “stuff” of sociality?

Relations, certainly. Particular forms and intensities of relations between and among “individuals” of eusocial species are both contingent and necessary: “contingent” in that neither their formation nor their persistence is necessary; “necessary” in that no “individual” comes into existence on its own, nor can care for itself across the long years of precarious existence that must be negotiated successfully if the “individual” is to develop from totally dependent newborn to an only partially independent and self-sustaining adult. The sustaining of life through development, from initiation in utero to death in old age, requires enablement by and complementarity with other humans within social (or Aristotelian political) networks, necessarily. And the processes by which new human life is created are the most intimate, and the most foundational to the persistence and evolution, of the species, thus, though embellished in their practice with cultural variety, are species-universal. So, too, the caring for, nurturing, of newborns. And none of these relations and their constitutive practices are consummated or sustained in keeping with the speculations of sociality as a function or consequence of strictly rationalist “contractual” arrangements between mature, “free,” and “equal” negotiating, self-interested individuals. The persuasive arguments have been made disclosing that the
supposed “contracting” between abstract, reasoning, free “individuals” in the formation and maintenance of decidedly “modern,” supposedly democratic polities were thoroughly invested with social-ordering schemes of institutionalized meanings, characterizations, and practices involving considerations of sex and gender (Pateman 1988) and of race (Mills 1999).

We should think of sociality, then, not as an addition to the life of free-standing persons that is a consequence of relations deliberately forged “contractually” by “free individuals” (or by pre-social “individuals” who came before them) who have somehow (unaccountably) grown to contract-making maturation on their own. Rather, we should think of sociality as co-constitutive of individuality: as the enabling matrix in which “individuals” come to be and are sustained while having their development forged into a relatively unique group(s)-networked “individual” who is group(s)-forged out of genomic substrates and cultural matrices bequeathed by socially networked significant others making the investments in order that there continue to be related and relating others. More succinctly still: “Even genetic and developmental interactions within a single individual can be regarded as social, since the organisms of today are now known to be the social groups of past ages” (Wilson and Wilson 2007: 329). Of course, there is no possibility of determining the detailed how of the initial emergence of the various lines of decent from which our species evolved. Suffice it to say, once “the threshold of eusociality” was “crossed” (heuristic notions at best . . .) sociality was not, is not, an independent element that may or may not be present.

What, further, is sociality? In one sense, the term seems a poor resource for the distinguishing work that is called for in explaining, if you will, “the ties that bind”: for explaining how it is, in particular, that “individuals” connect with, become “bonded” to, other networked “individuals” in anthropologically specific ways that provide conditions of possibility for sustaining, cross-generational life, thus for adaptive survival. But the sense of the term only seems inadequate if the search is for sociality as an independent, non-essential, or even corrupting addition to free and self-sufficing “individuals” as a contractual option.9 Instead, ours is a species that is by nature social: that is, is composed of groupings of “individuals” whose very being and persistence require sustained and sustaining relationships with others. Moreover, we would do well, even, to rethink and revise our notions of “individuality” as characterizing an autonomous, biologically self-contained, and singular person determined as such anatomically, physiologically, genomically, and developmentally and think, instead, of “individuals in cooperative and competitive relationships” that constitute/are constituted by “organic systems.”

The rethinking is being compelled by findings from new lines of research guided by system-focused paradigms and aided by new technologies that continue to dramatically transform our conceptions of the planet’s biosphere. The research has revealed not only a microbial world of much deeper diversity than previously imagined, but also a world of complex and intermingled relationships—not only among microbes, but also between microscopic and macroscopic life . . . Symbiosis is becoming a core principle of contemporary biology, and it is replacing an essentialist conception of “individuality” with a conception congruent with the larger systems approach now pushing the life sciences in diverse directions.

(Gilbert, Sapp, and Tauber 2012: 326)
In short, the discovery of symbiosis is providing a counter to “the notion of essential identity” (Gilbert, Sapp, and Tauber 2012: 326). Subsequently, systems, and systems-of-systems, should command our attention, groupings of rethought-“individuals” being one form of systems-of-systems.

Of course, there will still be need for important distinctions to be made, for rethought-individuals differ in more or less significant ways that are, in important instances, crucial to the roles played and contributions made to the prospects for the adaptive survival of our species. In sex-selection and sexual reproduction, for example; in the female-male pair-bonding that, with Homo sapiens, is a precursive condition that enhances the prospects of a structuring relational social context that provides for well-being in the foundational units of human sociality: nuclear, then extended, families. Females and males have evolved for crucial roles (male to female; female to female; male to male) with genetic and epigenetic substrates out of and on which are developed the complex repertoires of brain-coordinated, culturally influenced hormonal, emotional, psychological, homeostatic, sensory-motor, and cognitive systems that make for the always culturally conditioned, emotionally loaded relations that have been crucial to human sociality across centuries. Recall that for Wilson and other sociobiologists, eusociality involves a group that is composed of members; that spans multiple generations; whose members are “prone to perform altruistic acts as part of their division of labor” (Wilson E. O. 2012: 16 (emphasis added)). In an important sense, then, “sociality” refers to all of those “elements” of dynamic biological and socio-cultural relationality, the consequences of multilevel selection, as well as of cultural evolutions, as human bio-cultural reproductive groupings survived across generations by adapting successfully to different continental and smaller-scale natural and politicized environments.

And to be reiterated: adaptive evolution involves the enormously significant cultural contributions, creations of an evolved social brain. Among those creations are legitimated social norms and abstracted/abstract “principles” (ethics, for example) fashioned by humans as conceptual tools with which to order various aspects of social life. The forging and articulation of the tools are institutionalized social practices. As is clear with social rituals, often the articulations are embellished with emotional loadings and often are mediated during culturally specific times or periods of life, all the more to enhance the “stickiness,” we might say, for retention by individuals for the good of the social whole: the emotional as well as cognitive loadings that heighten the meaningfulness of articulations that are embraced by socially linked persons as more or less definitive of who they take themselves to be; of their place(s) in the world; of their historicity: lived, imagined, desired. It is this “stickiness” that makes for the “bonding attachments” between and among “individuals,” that makes for the sociality quite often pursued for clarification and normative management by philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists, and political scientists, among others. The term and concept long use to denote and connote this “stickiness” and its varying degrees of attachment and bonding are “solidarity,” solidarity.

“Solidarity”

It has become apparent that we lack adequate language with which to describe relationships, yet bondedness is precisely what primate sociality is all about. Intuitively, we know what we mean by bondedness because we experience it
ourselves, and we recognize it when it happens. The problem, perhaps, is that bondedness is an explicitly emotional experience and language is a notoriously poor medium for describing our inner, emotional experiences.

(Dunbar and Shultz, *Evolution in the Social Brain* 2007: 1346)

While there are many meanings and uses of “solidarity,” common to many is the idea of “a mutual attachment between individuals, encompassing two levels: a factual level of actual common ground between the individuals and a normative level of mutual obligations to aid each other, as and when should be necessary” (Bayertz 1999: 3; see also Laitinen and Pessi 2014). Another sense of the term explored by Bayertz is that relations of solidarity constitute “the inner cement holding together a society . . . central elements of such a cohesion include a common descent and history, a common culture and way of life, and common ideals and goals” (p. 9; see also Salmela 2014). Very much in this regard, notions of raciality have long served to mobilize rationalizing cognitive and emotionally charged bio-social and cultural preferences in order to forge and sustain groupings of varying scalings both vertically (in terms of genealogies) and horizontally (across politicized geographies). The European Modernities have been paradigmatic instances of such constructions, decisive in their global impacts as worldviews by way of which non-European racialized populations were subjected to genocidal decimation, others to enslavement and oppressive colonization.13

To conclude, as did Aristotle, that humans are by nature political is to conclude that humans are by nature social beings emotionally connected with varying degrees and forms of solidaristic intensity: by anthropologically contingent necessity, individuals live as members of one or more groupings of individuals of the same species and are organized in a cooperative manner facilitated, primarily, by reciprocal communication (Wilson E. O. 2000: 7). And if both Aristotle and Wilson are correct in theorizing that the foundational units of social life have been nuclear and extended families—foundational in that it is within such a grouping that, heretofore, new beings have been created, receive primary life-sustaining nurturance and the cultivation of such primary nurturance—then of particular importance to foundational sociality are the complex, dynamic ways in which genetic relations (the passing of genes from parents to offspring, thus the genomic constitution of “individuals”) condition (though not determine in every instance) individual behavior and social relations (cognitively, emotionally, psychologically, culturally), even as social relations are governed by the logics of group socio-cultural norms and institutions, not by genes. Both Aristotle and Wilson seek understandings that grasp the developmental and integrated complexities of our species-being that make for sociality (“political life” for Aristotle; “eusociality” for Wilson) while also accounting for those aspects that, when compared to other species, render ours particularly unique. For both theorists, understanding the developmental histories of living beings was, is, foundational.

For *Homo sapiens*, solidaristic sociality has been definitive of the formation and persistence of continentally dispersed and settled populational groupings comparatively distinct genomically and socio-culturally though indisputably all of the same species. For more than six hundred years, pernicious mobilizations of the distinctivenesses through conceptual and social systems fostering solidarity predicated on notions of supposed racial differences as definitive of the populations have ratcheted up the evolutionary persistence of the differences, of their meanings, by embedding racial considerations in
the social and cultural systems that have become of primary significance for human evolution. The anthropologically contingent necessity of solidaristic sociality required for the evolutionary persistent of *Homo sapiens* continental populations came to be characterized as “racial.”

Even so, there was, is, no evolutionary necessity that such characterizations be racist. Accordingly, it is not necessary that forgoing considering these populations as “races” is the only, or even the best, means for contending with racism. Certainly, I am convinced, there are compelling evolutionary imperatives for fostering the diversities constitutive of the populations: they are crucial to the adaptive survival of our species. And to this end, we desperately need the cultivation of solidarity within and among racialized groupings, while together working to curtail the laying-to-waste of our species and our planet-home that have been characteristic of our species-made species-being for far too long . . .

**Notes**

1 For a critique of different forms, intensities, and agendas of among and on behalf of black folks, see Tommie Shelby’s *We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity* (2007).

2 Conceptions of “the” or “a” biological individual are being challenged by recent research findings:

> Animals cannot be considered individuals by anatomical or physiological criteria because a diversity of symbionts are both present and functional in completing metabolic pathways and serving other physiological functions. Similarly, these new studies have shown that animal development is incomplete without symbionts. Symbionts also constitute a second mode of genetic inheritance, providing selectable genetic variation for natural selection . . . Recognizing the “holobiont”—the multicellular eukaryote plus its colonies of persistent symbionts—as a critically important unit of anatomy, development, physiology, immunology, and evolution opens up new investigative avenues and conceptually challenges the ways in which the biological subdisciplines have heretofore characterized living entities. (Gilbert, Sapp, and Tauber, 2012, pp. 325–326)

3 The evolutionary origin of any complex biological system can be reconstructed correctly only if viewed as the culmination of a history of stages tracked from start to finish. It begins with empirically known biological phenomena in each stage, if such is known, and it explores the range of phenomena that are theoretically possible. Each transition from one stage to the next requires different models, and each needs to be placed in its own context of potential cause and effect. This is the only way to arrive at the deep meaning of advanced social evolution and the human condition itself. (Wilson E. O., *Social Conquest*, 2012, p. 183)

4 When thinking about evolution by natural selection, a crucial and necessary distinction to make is between proximate causation, which is how a structure or process works, and ultimate causation, which is why the structure or process exists in the first place. (Wilson E. O., *Social Conquest*, 2012, p. 164)

5 We propose that the crucial difference between human cognition and that of other species is the ability to participate with others in collaborative activities with shared goals and
intentions: shared intentionality. Participation in such activities requires not only especially powerful forms of intention reading and cultural learning, but also a unique motivation to share psychological states with others and unique forms of cognitive representation for doing so. The result of participating in these activities is species-unique forms of cultural cognition and evolution, enabling everything from the creation and use of linguistic symbols to the construction of social norms and individual beliefs to the establishment of social institutions. (Tomasello, Carpenter, Call, Behne, and Moll, 2005, p. 675)

What distinguishes human culture from that of chimpanzees and other species is the existence of the “ratchet” effect. The basic idea is that the cultural traditions and artifacts of human beings accumulate modifications over time. Basically none of the most complex human artifacts or social practices—including tool industries, symbolic artifacts, and social institutions—were invented once and for all at a single moment by any one individual or group of individuals. Rather, what happened was that some individual or group of individuals first invented a primitive version of the artifact or practice, and then some later user or users made a modification, an improvement, that others then adopted perhaps without change for many generations, at which point some other individual or group of individuals made another modification, which was then learned and used by others, and so on over historical time. This process of cumulative cultural evolution requires not only creative invention but also, and just as important, faithful social transmission that can work as a ratchet to prevent backward slippage, so that the newly invented artifact or practice may preserve its new and improved form at least somewhat faithfully until a further modification of improvement comes along. The outcome is that human beings are able to pool their cognitive resources in ways that other animal species, whose cultural traditions do not ratchet up in complexity over historical time, are not. (Tomasello, 2006, p. 205)

On the crucial differences between “signs” and “symbols,” see (Berger and Luckmann, 1966).

The first step in making sense of human variation and the emergence of races is to follow the historical succession of major population splits . . . the first such split occurred when a small group of people left northeast Africa some 50,000 years ago and populated the rest of the world. The first major division in the human population is thus between Africans and non-Africans . . . Among the non-Africans, there was an early division, whose nature is still poorly understood, between Europeans and East Asians . . . Australian aborigines can reasonably be considered a race although a minor one in terms of population size, because of their distinctness, antiquity and the fact that they inhabit a continent . . . American Indians, the original inhabitants of North and South America, can also be considered a race . . . Such an arrangement, of portioning human variation into five continental races, is to some extent arbitrary. But it makes practical sense. The three major races are easy to recognize. The five-way division matches the known events of human population history. And most significant of all, the division by continent is supported by genetics. (Wade, 2014, pp. 93–94)

For an informative discussion of the function of social bonds as determined by field and laboratory studies of social cognition as the basis for social behavior in primate groups, see Silk, 2007.

We report here that the zoological sciences are also finding that animals are composites of many species living, developing, and evolving together. The discovery of symbiosis throughout the animal kingdom is fundamentally transforming the classical conception of an insular individuality into one in which interactive relationships among species blurs
the boundaries of the organism and obscures the notion of essential identity. (Gilbert, Sapp, and Tauber, 2012, p. 326)

11 Accounting for “evolution” across the “four dimensions” of genomic (genomic, epigenomic) and socio-cultural (behavioral, symbolic) systems (Jablonka and Lamb, 2014) is more than can be accomplished on this occasion. For further enlightening discussion with rich bibliographic resources, see Richerson and Boyd (2005); and for a helpful discussion and assessment of various approaches to theories of “cultural evolution,” see Lewens (2015).

12 For an especially insightful discussion of “conceptual systems of universe maintenance” in the context of the discussion of the significance and functions of “legitimation” in social life, see the seminal work by Berger and Luckmann (1966).

13 For an illuminating critical reconstruction of an impactful deployment of such a worldview see (Smedley and Smedley, 2011).

References


ON RACE AND SOLIDARITY