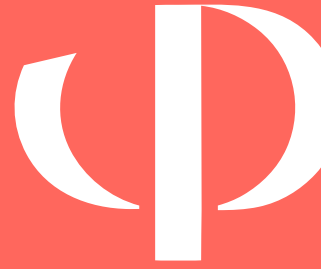


# Philosophy and the Black Experience



SPRING 2022

VOLUME 21 | NUMBER 2

## FROM THE EDITOR

Dwayne Tunstall

## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND INFORMATION

## ARTICLE

J. L. A. Garcia

*Professor Tommy Curry and “African American Philosophy”: What is it? What should it be? Why care?*



APA NEWSLETTER ON

# Philosophy and the Black Experience

---

DWAYNE TUNSTALL, EDITOR

VOLUME 21 | NUMBER 2 | SPRING 2022

---

---

## FROM THE EDITOR

Dwayne Tunstall  
GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

There is no "Footnotes to History" section for this issue. It will return in the next issue.

This issue of the newsletter features J. L. A. Garcia's polemic essay, "Professor Tommy Curry and 'African American Philosophy': What is it? What should it be? Why care?" Garcia challenges Curry's call in his 2011 *Journal of Black Studies* article, "The Derelictical Crisis of African American Philosophy," for African American philosophy to be historically and culturally grounded in African American culture and intellectual thought. Garcia rejects the view he attributes to Curry that there is a distinctively "African American" philosophy held only by Black people in the United States. Garcia prefers that philosophers who care about questions and topics associated with race and ethnicity (e.g., racial discrimination and racial identity) investigate them using philosophical tools such as conceptual analysis. In addition, he thinks that the study of questions and topics related to Black people (e.g., Black solidarity, Black nationalism, anti-Black discrimination, and anti-Black racism) would be improved if scholars of race and ethnicity in Black Studies and other fields adopted the standards of conceptual clarity and rigor associated with philosophical inquiry.

What makes this essay worth publishing is not Garcia's criticism of Curry's 2011 *Journal of Black Studies* article. It is worth publishing because it could start a metaphilosophical discussion on what African American philosophy is and ought to be. Then again, it could convince some readers that any discussion of the nature of African American philosophy should not be pursued by up-and-coming Black philosophers, or anyone else for that matter. That is an acceptable risk.

I also hope that this essay could motivate some younger scholars in African American philosophy and philosophy of race to explore the merits and demerits of Garcia's largely a priori and personalist approach to philosophical inquiry about issues involving race and ethnicity and of Curry's more empirically and culturally informed philosophical approach to studying race and ethnicity. The Curry that should be explored, though, is not primarily the Curry of "The Derelictical Crisis of African American Philosophy." It would be more fruitful to explore the disagreements between Garcia's approach to philosophical inquiry and

the Curry of *The Man-Not* (Temple University Press, 2017) and "Must There Be an Empirical Basis for the Theorization of Racialized Subjects in Race-Gender Theory?" which was published in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 121 (2021): 21–44.

If readers would like to read critics of Curry's criticism of academic African American philosophy who self-identify as scholars of African American philosophy, they should read Robert E. Birt's and Lucius T. Outlaw, Jr.'s responses to Curry's article, "On Derelict and Method: The Methodological Crisis of African-American Philosophy's Study of African-Descended Peoples under an Integrationist Milieu," in vol. 14, no. 2 of *Radical Philosophy Review* (2011). Readers would also benefit from reading Curry's replies to Birt and Outlaw in that same issue of *Radical Philosophy Review*: "It's Still Black in the Details: Reflections on Robert Birt's Interrogation of 'On Derelict and Method,'" 169–70, and "It's a Criticism...because 'I' Said So: A Reply to Lucius Outlaw's Defense of Status Quo Disciplinarily," 175–76.

The next issue will be a tribute to Charles W. Mills's contributions to African American philosophy. Stephen C. Ferguson II will be the guest editor for that issue. Even though he has solicited a few articles to be included in it, we welcome any articles or short notes honoring Mills's work in African American philosophy.

---

## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND INFORMATION

The *APA Newsletter on Philosophy and the Black Experience* is published by the committee on the status of Black philosophers. Authors are encouraged to submit original articles and book reviews on any topic in philosophy that makes a contribution to philosophy and the black experience broadly construed. The editors welcome submissions written from any philosophical tradition, as long as they make a contribution to philosophy and the black experience broadly construed. The editors especially welcome submissions dealing with philosophical issues and problems in African American and Africana philosophy.

All article submissions should be between ten and twenty pages (double spaced) in length, and book reviews should be between five and seven pages (double spaced) in length. All submissions must follow the APA guidelines for gender-neutral language and *The Chicago Manual of Style*

---

formatting. All submissions should be accompanied by a short biography of the author. Please send submissions electronically to [apa.pbe.newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:apa.pbe.newsletter@gmail.com).

#### DEADLINES

Fall issues: May 1

Spring issues: December 1

#### EDITOR

Dwayne Tunstall, [tunstald@gvsu.edu](mailto:tunstald@gvsu.edu)

#### FORMATTING GUIDELINES

- The APA Newsletters adhere to *The Chicago Manual of Style*.
- Use as little formatting as possible. Details like page numbers, headers, footers, and columns will be added later. Use tabs instead of multiple spaces for indenting. Use *italics* instead of underlining. Use an "em dash" (—) instead of a double hyphen (--).
- Use endnotes instead of footnotes. Examples of proper endnote style:

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 90.

See Sally Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?" *Noûs* 34 (2000): 31–55.

---

## ARTICLE

### *Professor Tommy Curry and "African American Philosophy": What is it? What should it be? Why care?*

J. L. A. Garcia

BOSTON COLLEGE

Professor Tommy Curry has written work on what he calls "African American philosophy" that has, I'm told, strongly influenced some younger philosophers of color. Here, I wish to engage just one of his articles on this topic, "The Derelictical Crisis of African American Philosophy,"<sup>1</sup> in order to expose some of his presuppositions, challenge some of his claims, interrogate some of his reasoning (both explicit and implied), and offer some alternative ideas.<sup>2</sup> It would be a pity and a loss if young people who are developing philosophical skills and with something to offer on issues where philosophy and Black Studies intersect were deterred by navel-gazing worries whether what they are doing is really African philosophy. What matters for them and for us is that more of them turn their abilities to the topics that have shaped much of Black people's experience or promise to reshape it: anti-Black discrimination, racism, injustice, and the like, on one side, and Black solidarity, nationhood, pride, identity, and more, on another. It's urgent they join the fruitful recent projects using philosophy to deepen and improve our comprehension of all these and related

phenomena. My hope here is to deepen and elevate the discussion and give pause for reflection to those tempted to follow Prof. Curry's lead.

First, Prof. Curry's underlying concern and question seems to be, roughly, whether African American philosophy is African enough.<sup>3</sup> It's hard for me to see why this question is interesting, important, or even clear. (The question, "Is Black philosophy Black enough?" seems to me even more confused.) This differs, of course, from concern over whether what's been called African American philosophy is *philosophical* enough. That may well be important because it engages what we in philosophy have to contribute to the discussion that's distinctively ours. Prof. Curry talks as if the only thing that African American philosophy does or should provide is a certain "history of ideas,"<sup>4</sup> and maybe he thinks this about all philosophy. This gets things wrong in at least two ways. One is that philosophers' work, alongside that of natural and social scientists and of others in the humanities, develops and systematizes the ideas that intellectual historians study. Philosophy offers theories and speculations, analyses and visions, justifications and critiques, conjectures and proofs, arguments and counter-arguments, proposals, creations, and more. Philosophy, then, is not history. Prof. Curry's other error here is to neglect a crucial fact: philosophy investigates ideas chiefly in order to penetrate beyond them, seeking to comprehend the realities to which ideas merely point us, the realm of things that our ideas are about. Philosophy, then, is not mainly about ideas.<sup>5</sup> Marx was no fan of our discipline, but even his famous "11th Thesis" recognizes that philosophy strives to "understand the world." Why should African American philosophy seek so much less?

I think we should be unashamed about using distinctively philosophical methods, especially ones that are conceptual, that take morality seriously by treating moral features as genuine and discovered, that probe into reality's kinds and structures, and that are unabashedly a priori in method (or, at least, that aim at necessary conclusions). We should be bolder, I think, more audacious, in challenging historians, literary critics, sociologists, psychologists, and others, to meet our discipline's standards of clarity, imagination, and rigor. For my part, I've sometimes allowed hints of exasperation, and even a little gentle ribbing, into my discussions of work by such historians and social scientists as Michael Omi and Howard Winant, Manning Marable, and even George Frederickson, on racism.<sup>6</sup> Their studies are helpful in several ways, but they often also need correction. Less deference to empirical disciplines, and more challenge, and even leadership, from philosophers, is in order.

What philosophical inquiry can contribute to Black Studies, etc., are treatments that are more critical (including self-critical), foundational, creative/imaginative (e.g., taking recourse to counterfactuals), carefully reasoned, normative, conceptual, and ontological. (I return to this below.)

Related to this, I find it more helpful to describe at least one of the subfields here as "philosophy and race," or "the intersection of philosophy and race-studies." That terminology, to my mind, better accommodates writing

on the nature and reality of race, on the nature and (im) morality of racism, on the concept of racial discrimination, etc., as well as on racial solidarity, Black Nationalism, racial identity, and the like.<sup>7</sup> Personally, I also dislike having my work grouped within “critical philosophy of race” because I don’t see my own thought as at all continuous with, or as developing out of, the law professors’ late twentieth-century movements, critical legal studies and critical race theory, and still less connected to the so-called “critical theory” originated interbella in the Frankfurt School and later developed in New York, California, and elsewhere. However, I won’t further pursue that issue here.<sup>8</sup>

Second, I can claim little knowledge of recent historiography and even less of current empirical psychology, but I wonder whether Prof. Curry is correct to think that either “Black history” or “Black psychology” is really so different in its methodologies from older, more mainstream, subfields in those disciplines.<sup>9</sup> Don’t Black specialists in Black history do the same things as their colleagues, only with different sources: consulting archives, reading diaries and letters, scrutinizing newsletters and journalism, gathering statistical data, and so on? Why then expect—let alone, recommend—that African American philosophy employ (or think it needs) a different method from that in academic philosophy’s other subfields?

Third, Prof. Curry leaves much beneath the surface, but his criticism seems to presuppose a view of philosophy (and thence, of African American philosophy) as a kind of study of people (e.g., DuBois, Douglass, Delany, Martin Luther King, Jr.). Moreover, he seems to assume that we study them as members of their community and even as representatives of their (our) culture. Thus, he continually speaks of Black (or, a little differently, of Africana) philosophy in relation to “the culturally particular perspectives African descended people develop,”<sup>10</sup> of “the centrality of culture . . . [in] Black thought” and “advancing the self-understanding of African peoples,”<sup>11</sup> of “distinct Black intellectual traditions that have formed the basis of African-descended people’s relation to the world.”<sup>12</sup> He insists on “the basic need in the field for organic and visceral connections to the people it seeks to study and theorize about,”<sup>13</sup> and so on. Prof. Curry quotes, without demurrals on the important point, West’s claim that “Afro-American philosophy is the interpretation of Afro-American history,”<sup>14</sup> and calls for “an independent cultural system of philosophical inquiry.”<sup>15</sup> But why think African American philosophy is, or should be, a study of Black people, any more than German philosophy is a study of German people, or French philosophy of French people? Should British philosophy be more “Britain-centered,” as Africana philosophy should supposedly be more “African-centered theory”?<sup>16</sup> Why think so? More deeply, what would any of that mean or consist in? This is all bizarre, deeply implausible, and, worse, it’s all asserted (or, more often, implied) as if obvious and incontrovertible. African American philosophy, insofar as it exists, is largely just philosophical inquiry performed by (some) African American people, not *into* them, just as European philosophy is philosophy done by European people, not about them. Aristotle wrote no treatise titled “On the Greek Soul,” nor Descartes a “Discourse on French People’s Method,” nor Kant any “Critique of the Germans’ Pure (or Practical) Reason.” Why

think Africana philosophy should be so different in its interests? No philosophy is simply ethnology.

I suppose Prof. Curry would decry my Eurocentrism on this, suggesting that there are “European elements of [Prof. Curry’s own] thinking,” a charge he levels against Outlaw.<sup>17</sup> Yet his implicit view sounds to me Hegelian, recalling the famous “Owl of Minerva” passage and all that: Philosophy is viewed simply as articulating and revealing a society’s cultural “meanings,” or values, or self-understanding, or something like that. It’s never about the world as it is. His remarks about any concepts we study being “culturalogically reformulated” as “element[s] of African-descended peoples’ historical consciousness”<sup>18</sup> and his invoking both a “genealogy of the ideas that actually define Africana philosophy’s Diasporic identity” and (social) “construction and cultural manipulation of the raw materials that constitute . . . ‘objective’ reality”<sup>19</sup> sound to me as if they’ve been lifted from Hegel, Nietzsche, and various postmodernist *epigones* on the European mainland.

I don’t see anything I’ve written as fitting Prof. Curry’s (perhaps Hegelian) bill, nor anything by those I judge to be the better practitioners into philosophy-and-race. Nor do I see that or why that’s a bad thing. We chiefly study *questions* and *topics* of certain types (e.g., the nature and morality of such phenomena as race, racism, discrimination, racial solidarity, and identity), not various groups of people or their cultures, and, at what I think is our best, we study those questions and topics through close attention to the discourses in which we employ, express, and delineate those concepts. Prof. Curry’s worries seem orthogonal and irrelevant to those projects, and thus, I worry, to any genuine and recognizably philosophical inquiry.<sup>20</sup>

Fourth, it would behoove us at this point to get some clarity about what might make something to be Africana philosophy. It’s best to work by analogy from more familiar and uncontroversial concepts. As I indicated above, French philosophy and German philosophy are best thought of as the philosophy thinking and writing that’s been done by French and German people, respectively. We needn’t and shouldn’t assume that, to use these ethnic designations meaningfully, there must exist a French and a German *Volksgeist* from which Descartes and Sartre, Kant and Nietzsche, and the rest, emanate and to which their writings give voice. There’s no reason to think there is, let alone that we can find and articulate such a common spirit across these diverse minds. Just the same holds for Africana philosophy. It need not be confusing and confused even to use the term, but in doing so, we must take care to avoid unnecessary and unjustified presuppositions of a common culture or mind that must, ought to, or does, underlie the subfield. If it exists, it’s just the philosophical work done by various individuals whose forebears were among the African people dispersed throughout the world. The same holds, *mutatis mutandis*, for African American philosophy. We don’t all agree, nor should we, except insofar as it would be better if everyone knew what’s true about the important questions about the world that philosophers investigate.

Though Prof. Curry criticizes positions taken by Lucius Outlaw, Cornel West, and others, I hasten to make clear that

my intent here is not at all to defend their thought against his critique. West claims that “philosophical techniques requisite for an Afro-American philosophy must be derived from a lucid and credible conception of philosophy . . . that expresses displeasure with the ahistorical character of modern philosophy,”<sup>21</sup> but I see greater danger in a historicism that relativizes our concepts, reality, and truth itself to particular times, places, and cultures. Rather than take West’s or Outlaw’s side, then, my hope is to expose and challenge some dubious assumptions that Outlaw, West, and company, seem to share with Prof. Curry about African American philosophy.

But suppose we forget about Hegel and his followers. Let’s allow that Profs. Curry’s, West’s, and Outlaw’s way of conceiving philosophy is more African than mine, in that it is, say, more commonly, or firmly, held there. How could that be a reason to agree with them? What sort of reason would it be? It doesn’t seem to be either an epistemic or moral reason, since it doesn’t show the belief more likely to be true or virtuous.<sup>22</sup> Is it a political reason? A cultural reason? What are those? Why think they exist, unless they reduce to epistemic or moral ones? Insofar as a reason to do, or feel, or think something makes doing it, or feeling it, or thinking it better in some way, how does its being African or more African improve holding their conception of philosophy? I’m at a loss.

Fifth, Prof. Curry ties the recent work he dislikes to “a cosmopolitan liberal ethic,” “liberalism,” “care ethics,” “the dominance of normative judgments,” “humanism,” and other bugaboos.<sup>23</sup> He needs to explain where he finds these supposed connections, what types of connections they are (logical presuppositions of recent work, e.g., mere associations, or something in between), and, more important, what’s wrong with each of them such that it should be avoided. To be sufficiently African, does African philosophy have to be parochial; illiberal; uncaring; antirealist about our virtues, obligations, and rights; and antihuman? If not, what is he saying? If so, why bother with African philosophy at all?

Sixth, whatever beef Prof. Curry may have with Shannon Sullivan, whose pragmatism and attention to Josiah Royce don’t interest me, his wider complaint against non-Black philosophers working in “African American philosophy”—at least, at the intersection of philosophy and race studies—is wrong-headed, as well as bigoted. It’s pretty clear that their exploration of these topics has sometimes greatly enhanced the discussions. Surely, Joshua Glasgow and Lawrence Blum, for example, have authored some of the best pieces in recent philosophy’s racism literature and some of the more thoughtful work on what race is.<sup>24</sup> One could also mention insightful contributions from Sally Haslanger, Linda Alcoff, John Arthur, and other non-Black authors that have advanced our discussions and comprehension.<sup>25</sup> The goal is not to achieve an African understanding of, say, racial discrimination, but one that’s correct, reasonable, and justifiably held.

Seventh, Prof. Curry is on to something worthwhile when he inquires how “African American philosophy” should relate, and ought to contribute, to Black Studies and, differently,

to efforts to ameliorate things for Black people. Here are my suggestions. “African American philosophy” (better, work in philosophy-and-race) should (a) clarify phenomena, concepts, and topics, therein (b) deepening our grasp of them. (c) It should correct errors of interpretation and overstated, or overlooked, implications. (d) It should add richness and profundity by grounding claims in robust realism about morality. (e) It should complicate, and sometimes moderate, positions by pointing out needed qualifications, limits, and conditions. (f) It should add new topics (especially, moral inquiries) and methods (especially, ontological, conceptual, normative, a priori). (g) It should also contextualize and analyze talk of racial (and of social) justice within some broader normative ethical theory that underlies political judgments. I’m sure this list is far from exhaustive.

Let me briefly illustrate my proposal. As Ibram Kendi lays it out in *How to Be Antiracist*, for example, antiracism requires holding all cultures to be equal (morally?), both before and after we know their contents.<sup>26</sup> (So much for learning by empirical observation, I guess.) Similarly, Ta-Nehisi Coates goes on about wrongs done to “Black bodies” but, of course, mistreating Black people’s bodies matters chiefly because someone therein mistreats Black persons, possessed of their dignity, derivative equality, implied individual rights, moral inviolability, etc., etc., none of which is rooted in their materiality.<sup>27</sup> Why haven’t Black philosophers been more vocal and insistent in calling out this sort of sloppy reasoning, doctrinaire foolishness, and clumsy rhetoric?

Eighth, besides thus aiding the Black academy, work in philosophy-and-race may also assist Black, African diasporic, people in their daily lives. (That’s not to say it owes that as a responsibility.) One way could be by helping disaggregate “Black Culture” so as to enable us better to evaluate its different cultural works, movements, elements, and so on. After all, not all of them are valuable. That’s likely not a way of being “culturally relevant to the actual lives of African people” that Prof. Curry has in mind, but it could help and would be more beneficial than the cultural cheerleading may offer.

I’ve sometimes presupposed here certain substantive conceptions of philosophical method and good philosophical doctrine. I should be open about my beliefs. My own view is that the best philosophy proceeds, largely a priori, by teasing out the content and implications of our world as it presents itself to us in everyday experience and as expressed in our conceptual understandings. We should do this in writing that strives for lucidity and reasoning marked by cogency. Further, I think good philosophical reflection on ethics supports a kind of naturalistic realist metaethics, and a normative ethics that centers on individual persons with capacities for virtue rooted in our nature and relationships, with rights rooted in our dignity as rational creatures, and with capacities for genuine fellowship rooted in our sociality. All social groups, on this view, are as such ontologically, explanatorily, teleologically, and normatively derivative from, and subordinate to, the individual persons whose welfare they serve. A valuable general term for this sort of approach is “Personalism,” a

long-neglected school of thought, theorized by some in Germany and eastern Europe and by others in the USA, that strongly influenced Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s thinking, and has recently found new admirers and adherents.<sup>28</sup> People interested in such matters should observe that some thinkers find commonalities between these Western approaches and approaches found in Africa and Asia.<sup>29</sup>

Of course, other thinkers within our discipline have ideas radically different from mine. They eschew a priori for experimental methods, are distrustful of the very idea of concepts and conceptual inquiry, seek only truths relative to particular histories and cultures, and advocate constructivist or otherwise antirealist about moral (including normative political) features. Moreover, that only describes disputes within current analytic philosophy. Many of those engaged chiefly with nineteenth-century and twentieth-century (as well as some twenty-first-century) schools of thought on the European continent—phenomenological, genealogical, poststructuralist, deconstructive, and the rest—will see all that still differently. Moreover, scholars who work largely in non-Western philosophy—African, East Asian, indigenous American, postcolonial, and so on—may have still other views about what philosophy properly is and how most fruitfully to conduct its inquiries. I won't here make my case against their views and for my own on those topics. My dispute with Prof. Curry is thus largely a metaphilosophical one, and anyone interested in carrying it forward should proceed on that basis, as a dispute about how to conduct philosophy. What's a bad idea is to drone on about how to be Black (people). The latter question seems to rely on a dubious notion of Black authenticity, where we can grade Black people for how Black they are. Yet there's nothing to this, though there may be a real question of how typical this or that person is of a certain group of Black people in some respect, say, in her mode of dress. Being typical is not itself a justified desideratum, of course. That's one reason why I suspect the discourse of racial authenticity is but empty sound, signifying nothing.

Black is something that we are, not something we do (or, in fashionable lingo, "perform"), and it follows that there are no ways, methods, means, style, fashions, or manners to be Black, let alone, different ways, etc., for different people. Ways, methods, and the rest characterize how we do things. Much the same goes for being African or part of the African diaspora. There may be a meaningful, and perhaps even serious, question of how someone should respond to the facts that she is Black, if there is such a fact, and is descended from Africans. Without delving into it here, let me say I think that the deepest and most general answer is that we should respond the way we should do anything else—virtuously. As I see it, that's best understood as indicating a response that befits our humanity and helps each of us to live so as to realize and bring toward fruition her development as a human being. Yes, many of us have (close or distant) African ancestors. We are Black persons. Within sober ethical theory, however, it is what corresponds to the noun in this phrase, not to its modifying adjectival phrase, that must do the lion's share of normative moral work here.

Who knows? Maybe in the end Prof. Curry will somehow be proven right about what African American philosophy is or should be. It wouldn't much matter. Those of us interested in applying such modest philosophical gifts as (we hope) we have to, among others, things that have, for better or worse, specially impacted the lives and experiences of Black people can proceed as before, under some different rubric such as race-and-philosophy or philosophy of race. Or, better yet, we can just do our philosophical work and leave its labeling to those who have nothing better to do.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful for Mr. Alexander Tolbert for prompting me to confront Prof. Curry's positions and for very helpful bibliographic suggestions I appreciate Ms. Michaila Peters's research assistance.

#### NOTES

1. Tommy J. Curry, "The Derelictical Crisis of African American Philosophy: How African American Philosophy Fails to Contribute to the Study of African-Descended People," *Journal of Black Studies* 42 (2011): 314–33. His term "derelictical" derives from his view that Africana philosophers have been "derelict" because their work is supposedly "culturally [ir]relevant to the actual lives of Africana people" (Curry, "Derelictical Crisis," 314). Readers should be aware that this is not simply a general journal in that area of study, but was established by Molefi Asante and tied to the "Afrocentric" school of thought that has informed Temple University's African American Studies program under his long leadership.
2. Curry has treated this topic in a number of pieces, but I leave a deeper dive to someone more interested in this topic, and more interested in Prof. Curry's ideas on it, than I am.
3. Or maybe his objection is that it's not Africana enough. He complains that work by Black philosophers has failed to "separate from American and continental [European] philosophical traditions," on one hand, and, on the other, that it offers no "history of ideas (a philosophical genealogy)" to establish "the limits, aims, and scope of African-descended thought" (Curry, "Derelictical Crisis," 314, 316). Put together, I take these claims to mean the work he criticizes is too close to that of Europe and America insufficiently engaged with African or Africana thinking.
4. Curry, "Derelictical Crisis," 316.
5. I've starkly contrasted history of ideas with (genuine) philosophy. We should note the literature offers more complicated positions. Tommie Shelby distinguishes history of ideas from "history of philosophy," where the latter can extend beyond analyzing a thinker's positions and reasoning to improving the former through reformulation and the later through replacement with more rigorous or compelling arguments. I've heard J. J. E. Gracia contrast approaching history of philosophy historically with approaching it philosophically, where the latter might include much of what Shelby considers "doing" history of philosophy *tout court*. I recall Robert Gooding-Williams, in a Harvard lecture late in the 2010s, allow for an unusual way of incorporating historical texts and figures in a philosophical argument. If I understood his oral remarks right, he envisioned someone sketching out a position today and then selectively drawing on various historical texts to suggest ways it might be articulated or supported, allowing that the historical figures so conscripted may not have meant the selected passages in the way now intended and, considering their whole corpus, might not have endorsed the position now advanced.

Whatever distinctively philosophical work, then, may be done in what Shelby calls history of philosophy (as opposed to history of ideas), or in Gracia's history of philosophy philosophically pursued (in contrast to historically pursued), or when Gooding-Williams's theorist dragoons historical authors and texts into her projects, none of these more complicated views justifies Prof. Curry's program of reducing Africana philosophy (and perhaps all philosophy) to—better, to replace it with—history of ideas.

6. See Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2014); George Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); and Luc Faucher and Edouard Machery, "Racism: Against Jorge Garcia's Moral and Psychological Monism," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 39 (2009): 41–62. Compare my critiques of each at, respectively, J. L. A. Garcia, "Philosophical Analysis and the Moral Concept of Racism," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 25, no. 5 (1999): 1–32; "Three Sites of Racism," in *Justice Through Diversity?*, ed. Michael Sweeney, 35–55 (Cornell University Press, 2004); and "Racism, Psychology, and Morality: Reply to Faucher and Machery," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 41 (2011): 250–68.
7. Still, since I'm of African descent myself and some of my philosophical work engages that of many others who are similarly descended—Kwame Anthony Appiah, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Lewis Gordon, Manning Marable, Charles Mills, Tommie Shelby, and a number of others—then shouldn't it also count as Africana philosophy? Isn't a German philosopher writing on contemporary German philosophers' thought therein contributing to German philosophy? Or must someone treat thinkers from a century or more ago, e.g., DuBois or Schopenhauer, respectively, to count? Why think it must? To my mind, someone analyzing and critiquing Moore's and Russell's early thinking is doing work that is part of British philosophy, probably whether or not she is herself British. In the same way, there's a good case to be made that some of my own writings on racism are part of African American, and therefore of Africana, philosophy. I can't see, however, that, how, or why these classificatory questions are important. So, as I said, I'm content to call it work in philosophy and race, and leave the term "African American philosophy" and the wider "Africana philosophy," if they want it, to those (both Black and non-Black) philosophically treating Blyden, Delany, Douglass, DuBois, and others.
8. A summary of what's called "critical philosophy of race" is offered in Linda Alcoff, "Critical Philosophy of Race," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/critical-phil-race>. For popular accounts of the US legal academy's development of critical race studies out of critical legal studies, see Jalani Cobb, "The Man Behind Critical Theory," *New Yorker*, September 20, 2021, pp. 20–26, and Lauren M. Jackson, "The Void That Critical Race Theory Was Created to Fill," *New Yorker*, July 27, 2021, accessed at <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/the-void-that-critical-race-theory-was-created-to-fill>. A more academic reflection on this appears in Devon W. Carbado, "Critical What What?" *Connecticut Law Review* 43 (2011): 1593–643. On the relevant German social thought, see the helpful overview in James Bohman, "Critical Theory," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/critical-theory>. An influential critique of that school of thought appears in Raymond Geuss, *Idea of Critical Theory* (Cambridge University Press, 1981).
9. Curry, "Derelictical Crisis," 314.
10. Curry, "Derelictical Crisis," 315.
11. Curry, "Derelictical Crisis," 316.
12. Curry, "Derelictical Crisis," 318.
13. Curry, "Derelictical Crisis," 319.
14. Curry, "Derelictical Crisis," 318.
15. Curry, "Derelictical Crisis," 320.
16. Curry, "Derelictical Crisis," 325–26.
17. Curry, "Derelictical Crisis," 325.
18. Curry, "Derelictical Crisis," 322, 327.
19. Curry, "Derelictical Crisis," 316, 327–28.
20. "The study of philosophy aims not at knowing what men feel, but at what is the truth of things" (Thomas Aquinas's commentary on Aristotle's "Of the heavens and the cosmos," bk. I, lect. xxii, para. 228; translated by Fabian Larcher and Pierre Conway, accessed at <https://isidore.co/aquinas/DeCoelo.htm#1-22>). To this wisdom, I should add only that philosophy similarly transcends what groups of people happen (or incline) to think, want, value, choose, perform, make, and the various other elements of different societies' cultures.
21. Quoted at Curry, "Derelictical Crisis," 318.
22. Alastair MacIntyre appears to hold that someone must do her reasoning within an intellectual tradition because it (alone?) can provide her the standards she needs to determine whether, for instance, the considerations in support of a thesis provide adequate grounds to justify accepting it (*Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* [University of Notre Dame Press, 1988]). Yet even if MacIntyre is correct, does Prof. Curry offer the same defense? What makes it the case that an African-descended person's intellectual tradition is some African one (which one?), rather than that of the place where she was reared or resides? If I understand him, MacIntyre thinks anyone can, and sometimes should, achieve sufficient detachment from her own tradition to allow her to accept revisions to it, blend some of its elements with some from another one, or even to repudiate and replace it. Even if something like MacIntyre's view is correct, does it really entail that a certain belief's being (more) African in some sense is a genuine reason to accept it? Does Prof. Curry agree with the qualifications I've pointed to in MacIntyre's traditionalism? If not, why not? If so, then what shows an African-descended person isn't well placed and well advised to detach from and critically evaluate what's widely believed, not only in the West, but also in Africa?
23. See Curry, "Derelictical Crisis," 315, 317, 321, 326–27.
24. See, for example, Glasgow, *Racism as Disrespect*, *Ethics* 120 (2009): 64–93; and Blum, "I'm Not a Racist, But . . ." (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002).
25. See, for example, Haslanger, *Resisting Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Alcoff, *Visible Identities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); and Arthur, *Race, Equality, and the Burdens of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
26. Ibram Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist* (New York: One World, 2019), esp., chap. 7.
27. "Here's what I would like for you to know: in America, it is traditional to destroy the Black body—it is heritage" (Ta-Nehisi Coates, "Letter to My Son," *The Atlantic*, July 4, 2015, pp. 82–91).
28. On the personalist thinkers who impacted King's education, see Kipton Jensen, "Pedagogical Personalism at Morehouse College," *Studies in Philosophy of Education* 36 (2017): 147–65.
29. See Thomas Williams, "Personalism," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, entry revised 2018, accessed January, 2021, at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/personalism/>; and Thomas Buford, "Personalism," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed January 2021, at <https://iep.utm.edu/personal/>.