



# **Nature's Man: Thomas Jefferson's Philosophical Anthropology (Jeffersonian America)**

*Maurizio Valsania*

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Although scholars have adequately covered Thomas Jefferson's general ideas about human nature and race, this is the first book to examine what Maurizio Valsania terms Jefferson's "philosophical anthropology"—philosophical in the sense that he concerned himself not with describing how humans are, culturally or otherwise, but with the kind of human being Jefferson thought he was, wanted to become, and wished for citizens to be for the future of the United States. Valsania's exploration of this philosophical anthropology touches on Jefferson's concepts of nationalism, slavery, gender roles, modernity, affiliation, and community. More than that, *Nature's Man* shows how Jefferson could advocate equality and yet control and own other human beings.

A humanist who asserted the right of all people to personal fulfillment, Jefferson nevertheless had a complex philosophy that also acknowledged the dynamism of nature and the limits of human imagination. Despite Jefferson's famous advocacy of apparently individualistic rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, Valsania argues that both Jefferson's yearning for the human individual to become something good and his fear that this hypothetical being would turn into something bad were rooted in a specific form of communitarianism. Absorbing and responding to certain moral-philosophical currents in Europe, Jefferson's nature-infused vision underscored the connection between the individual and the community.



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