

ARTICLES AND ESSAYS

François Bernier and the Invention of Racial Classification *by Siep Stuurman*

It is generally agreed that modern, 'scientific' racialism originated in early-modern Europe.¹ It is less clear, however, what were the intellectual and political origins of this novel and dangerous idea. In this article, I will examine what was probably the first attempt at a racial classification of the world's population, framed by the seventeenth-century French traveller, physician and Gassendist philosopher François Bernier.

Bernier (born 1625 at Joué-Etiau, in Anjou; died Paris 1688) was a doctor of medicine, he wrote against astrology, and from the early 1640s he was closely associated with the famous philosopher and competitor of Descartes, Pierre Gassendi.² Gassendi had published a critique of Aristotelianism as early as 1624, seeking to replace it with a Christianized version of Epicureanism. He defended a mechanist atomism and the existence of the void, and he was the first to measure the speed of sound. Gassendi's philosophy was more empiricist than that of Descartes, and he is now generally acknowledged as a major philosophical influence on John Locke.³ In the 1670s and '80s Bernier published several editions of a voluminous *Abrégé de la Philosophie de Gassendi* which were of great importance for the wider dissemination of Gassendism (Gassendi's own writings were only available in Latin).

Bernier's lasting fame in French society, however, was based on his career as a traveller. He visited Poland in 1648. In 1656 he left France, stayed a year in Cairo, and then sailed for India. There he spent twelve years, employed as a physician by the Aga Danechmend Khan, a high official at the Mughal court. Back in France, he published an account of his travels, in 1670–1. This was reissued by a Dutch publisher in 1671–2 and 1699; published in English, London, 1671 and 1776; in Dutch, Amsterdam, 1672; in German, Frankfurt, 1673; and in Italian, Milan, 1675.⁴ Bernier's observations on the Mughal Empire were to become one of the major sources for the eighteenth-century theory of 'Oriental Despotism'.

Finally, it is worth noting that Bernier played the role of the major intermediary between Gassendism and Locke: he and Locke spent a lot of time together during the latter's stay in France (1675–9). Given the tremendous importance of Locke's philosophy and anthropology for the formation of the eighteenth-century 'Science of Man', it is also of some significance that Locke was heavily indebted to the anthropological insights in Bernier's account of the Mughal Empire.⁵

Bernier's 'new division of the earth', published anonymously in 1684 in the prestigious *Journal des Sçavans*, can be situated at the 'beginning' of the long and complex intellectual trajectory of modern racial thought. That is not to say, however, that Bernier invented a full-blown racial theory of history, and to speak of the author himself as a modern racist would be as anachronistic as saying that, say, Newton was a 'physicist' in the nineteenth-century meaning of the term. But neither should we, in an over-anxious attempt to ward off any semblance of a whiggish history of racism, isolate his thought entirely from the posterior development of modern racial thought.

For, although the term 'race' as such was not new, and specific racial prejudices certainly predated the seventeenth century, the idea of giving a physico-biological notion of race foundationalist status in the classification of the human species was a significant intellectual innovation, paving the way for the further elaboration of race as a concept in eighteenth-century natural history. By contrast, most sixteenth and seventeenth-century anthropological and travel literature ordered the inhabitants of the known world in terms of religion, morals, customs, language, and politics, and made only accidental use of physical, 'racial' criteria.⁶

Bernier's classification also marked a rupture with another long-standing tradition, the explanation of the human variety in the world in terms of a biblical genealogy: neither the sons of Noah nor the Lost Tribes of Israel have any role to play in his account of world population. Admittedly, he held on to the monogenetic view of the history of mankind prescribed by the Christian tradition, complemented with an Asiatic migration theory about the origin of the Americans. (In this essay, 'Americans', following seventeenth-century usage, will refer to the original inhabitants of America; the term 'Indians' will exclusively refer to the population of India.) However, Bernier's acceptance of the monogenetic theory was also based on solid intellectual, non-theological grounds: in his discourse on the origin of the human species, Scriptural truth and modern geography and anthropology were seamlessly joined.

Bernier's new classification of humanity in 'races' or 'species' is in some respects a typically seventeenth-century anthropological essay, but in other respects it anticipates the eighteenth-century genre of the natural history of mankind. The contours of the presumed races are in some cases ill-defined, the status of 'colour' is, to say the least, unclear, and Bernier's sketchy classificatory scheme is a far cry from later, more theoretically-elaborated, racial typologies. What it has in common with later racial thought, however, is that it is exclusively based on *physical* criteria. Overall, it is best characterized as an intellectual experiment, a try-out of a new mode of discussing human variety. The historical significance of Bernier's discourse on race lies precisely in its experimental, transitional nature.

Bernier's introduction of a racial classification of mankind cannot be regarded as a logical intellectual consequence of post-Columbian European

expansion. It is certainly true that his interest in the extra-European world was stimulated by his travel experiences in India, as well as by the energetic, outward-looking mood of the French nation in the 1660–90 years, when French colonial expansion gained a new importance, the slave trade boomed, slavery was legally regulated by the *Code Noir* (1685), Colbert launched the French West India Company, trade outposts were established in South Asia, a diplomatic mission was sent to Siam, and French missionaries ventured as far as China, Japan, and Tonkin.⁷ However, considered as a discursive move Bernier's tentative classification of humanity calls for an explanation in terms of intellectual history.

Given the tremendously destructive impact of the idea of race on the ulterior course of European and indeed world history, it is surprising that no detailed, contextual investigation of Bernier's ideas has been undertaken in the historiography of modern racism. In his recent, broad-ranging history of the idea of race, Ivan Hannaford, like many previous scholars in the field, mentions Bernier's pioneering role, but does not discuss his contribution in any depth.⁸ Hannaford then goes on to locate the methodological foundations of the emergence of the modern idea of race in the philosophy of Hobbes and Locke, omitting any consideration of Bernier's own *Abrégé de la Philosophie de Gassendi*, the definitive, seven-volume edition of which came out in 1684, almost simultaneously with the essay on the racial classification of humanity. Furthermore, it is surely necessary to take into account Bernier's writings on the Mughal Empire.

In this article, I will first discuss Bernier's racial classification in the context of his own philosophical and ethnographic thought, and then situate it in the larger intellectual transitions of the late seventeenth century. We shall see that there are interesting affinities between the new discourse of racial inequality and the empiricist turn of mind exemplified by Gassendist philosophy. Besides, Bernier's racialism partakes in a double intellectual transition: from sacred history to natural history, and from the kaleidoscopic, ungoverned taxonomies of Renaissance cosmography to the systematic spirit of classification that originated with Bacon and Descartes. Finally, the case of Bernier enables me to make a more general point about the intellectual origins of racial classification: even though the ascendancy of modern racism came about only in the eighteenth century, and possibly even later, its origins can be firmly located in the intellectual world of the late seventeenth century.

BERNIER'S CLASSIFICATION OF HUMANITY

Bernier's *Nouvelle Division de la Terre* was no heavy-handed philosophical piece. If anything, the essay strikes the modern reader by its casual style and conceptual innocence. However, beneath the playful surface a deeply serious argument is being conducted. Bernier submits that there is a scientific, objective way of classifying human beings according to physical characteristics

such as skin colour, facial type and bodily shape, and that such a classification of humanity is somehow more fundamental than the traditional geographical division of the world.

According to Bernier there are, among the innumerable differences in the physical appearance of humans, 'four or five Species or Races of men so notably differing from each other that this may serve as the just foundation of a new division of the world'.⁹ Bernier's racial classification prefigures modern racism in some respects but is quite unlike it in others. He distinguishes four 'races': 1. The 'first' race; 2. The African negroes; 3. The East and Northeast Asian race; 4. The Lapps. The major axis of difference is between the 'first' race and the Africans, and here Bernier surely anticipates later racial discourse. On the other hand, his first race comprises not only Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and India, but also a part of South-East Asia and, what is more surprising, the entire native population of the Americas (the *Amériquains*). Admittedly, Bernier hesitated in the last case: he briefly considered the possibility that the Americans represented a fifth race, but finally decided against it. The Mongols, Chinese and Japanese he regards as 'véritablement blancs' [really white] but so differing in bodily shape and facial form that they constitute a separate race. The Lapps, finally, are 'nasty creatures', they are short and thick-set, with 'hideous bear-like faces'; the so-called 'étrènes' text (explained in note 9) castigates them also for their habit of drinking fish oil.

The 'first race' comes first in more than one sense. It is discussed before the others and thereby becomes the yardstick against which the others are measured. The authorial voice continually shifts between the 'I' of François Bernier and the 'we' of the first race. The first race comprises Europe and all the areas of high civilization with the exception of China and Japan. What is perhaps most significant is that Bernier does not really describe it in any detail, in fact he does not even call it white nor does he discuss its facial or other physical characteristics: the reader is supposed to know what 'we' look like. However, Bernier acknowledges the importance of 'whiteness' when he justifies the inclusion of South Asia and the Middle East in his first race, arguing that the darkish ('basanez') complexion of the Indians and Egyptians is only 'accidental' since it is caused by exposure to the southern sun. Those who stay out of the sun are not noticeably darker than, for example, Spaniards. If the degree of darkness were a mark of racial difference, Bernier further observes, we ought to distinguish different races within Europe as well. The absurdity of the latter thought goes (literally) without saying. Likewise, the native Americans are 'olivâtres' and their faces look different from 'ours', but these differences are not sufficient to warrant their designation as a separate race. Moreover, such internal variation is also found in the other three races.

Bernier's first race is thus a highly peculiar cultural construct: within it there is an undefined boundary line between 'us' and 'them'. The inclusion of the Indians in the first race is justified by their relative likeness to 'us'.

The peoples of India, then, are members of 'our' race but they are not quite 'us'. The same can be said with even more force about the Americans whom Bernier does not discuss at great length; they are, hesitantly, included in the first race but everything that is said about them is informed by a discourse of difference, in accordance with the common beliefs of the time which designated the inhabitants of the Americas as 'savages'.

Bernier's account of the inhabitants of the Middle East and South Asia displays a certain amount of familiarity and sympathy. As we know, he was well acquainted with these parts of the world from his extensive voyages in Turkey, Egypt, Persia and India. His discussion of the Lapps is at another extreme. It is marked by a hostile tone, and it betrays an unfamiliarity that borders on outright ignorance: Bernier reports that he has once seen two Lapps at Danzig (he had visited Poland in the late 1640s),¹⁰ and that some men who had travelled in Lapland told him that the inhabitants were 'vile animals'. That is about all the reader learns of the fourth race.¹¹

About the African 'negroes' he is far better informed but his knowledge is of a very specific sort. Bernier relies mostly on what he has personally observed in the Islamic world, and it is quite clear that the chief locations of his observations were Turkish and Arabian slave markets. In his narrative Africans appear, before all else, as people who are 'for sale' or 'transported'. They have thick lips and an oily skin, three or four tufts of beard, and a peculiar sort of hair (which is not proper hair at all according to Bernier), and finally their blackness is due to genetic factors for African children born from parents who are transported to cold climates are as dark as their parents. According to Bernier, this outcome can only be explained by their bodily constitution, their semen, or their blood (he observes, however, that the semen and the blood of the Africans are of the same colour as everywhere else). In the 'third species' Bernier includes Japan, China, the greater part of Indo-China and Indonesia, the Philippines, the Tartars and other peoples of Inner Asia, as well as a part of the eastern borderlands of Muscovy. All these nations are 'really white', but they have broad shoulders, a flattish face, a small flat nose, 'little, deeply set pig's eyes', and three tufts of beard.

The second part of Bernier's discussion of race is entirely consecrated to 'the beauty of the women' found in different parts of the world. This has sometimes been dismissed as an unserious frivolity on his part,¹² but in fact it echoes the preoccupation with gender found in virtually all travel relations.¹³ Moreover, by focusing on the aesthetics of the female body to the exclusion of all other criteria, the masculine, sexualized gaze naturally fits in with a discourse on race which posits physical, biologically-determined differences in looks, colour and bodily shape as the ultimate foundation of a 'new division of the earth'. Actually, it is in his discussion of female beauty that Bernier most emphatically posits his racist explanation of human variety, arguing that differences in beauty 'do not only come from the water, the food, the quality of the land and the air, but also

from the semen that is particular to certain races and species'. Finally, as Londa Schiebinger has forcefully argued, the fascination of European men with the exotic pertained to women as well as to far-away 'races', and out-landish animals from other continents.¹⁴

Once more, Bernier's treatment of the Africans is couched in the language of the slave trade, this time with a light pornographic touch added. He notes that not all African women had 'those thick lips', and reports that some of them were of such dazzling beauty that they surpassed even the Farnese Venus in Rome: 'Those cherry-red lips, those ivory teeth, those large lively eyes . . . that bosom and the rest . . . At Moka I saw several of them entirely naked who were for sale, & I dare say there is no more delightful spectacle in the world; but they were extremely expensive'. However, Bernier expresses a still greater admiration for the white female slaves the Turks imported from Circassia 'where according to all travellers the most beautiful women in the world are found', and he remarks in passing that at the market of Constantinople the purchase of these fair maidens by Christians and Jews is forbidden.

The greater part of Bernier's discourse on female beauty is about India. Many of the women of India are 'de belles Brunnes', and others have an exquisite complexion he calls 'petit jaune'. However, they are surpassed by the women of Kashmir, the mountain region extolled in Bernier's travel relations as 'the earthly paradise of the Indies'. Once again we encounter the subtle boundary line between a European 'we' and the other components of the first race: the Kashmiri women are depicted as 'white like those in Europe', and their whiteness is clearly seen as an enhancement of their beauty. The white norm-image also works the other way around: the women of Lahore are described as even more charming than the beauties of Kashmir 'despite their brown skin'.

The whiteness of the women of Kashmir was, however, no impediment to their enslavement. It appears that many Kashmiri girls were sold as courtesan slaves to the Ottoman Sultans, for on his return journey from Kashmir Bernier saw numerous men transporting little girls in some sort of basket on their backs. Generally, the linkage between beauty, or rather sex appeal, and classy slaves is a conspicuous feature of Bernier's text. About Persia we are told that the native women are rather unappealing but the streets of Ispahan are nonetheless full of very beautiful women on account of the great number of girl slaves imported from Georgia and Circassia. Bernier's high opinion of the sex appeal of slave girls may be explained by the circumstance that these were probably the only women he was permitted to watch at leisure with a potential possessor's gaze, whereas European travellers in Asia were not, as a rule, admitted to the company of indigenous upper-class women. Many travellers recounted their (sometimes perilous) attempts to get a glimpse of the Oriental ladies. Bernier concludes his essay on the racial classification of the world with a symbolic return to the self-evident, masculine culture of Europe: 'I won't tell you anything about the

beauties of Europe for without doubt you know as much about the subject as I do'.¹⁵

A PHILOSOPHICAL TRAVELLER

In Diderot's *Encyclopedia* (1751 on), Bernier is praised as a traveller who writes as a 'philosophe'.¹⁶ Indeed, his books on the Mughal Empire display a fortunate combination of entertaining narrative and social analysis. To a large extent, these books highlight the habitual topics of sixteenth and seventeenth-century anthropology: religion, political organization, customs and manners. Bernier's discourse on Mughal India wavers between Eurocentric arrogance and a willingness to accept the Indians, or at least the ruling Mughal elite, as partners on a basis of equality. After all, he moved for over ten years in Indian Muslim elite society, employed as physician in the personal service of the Aga Danechmend Khan, a high official in the Mughal government.¹⁷ Bernier speaks with great warmth about his patron, with whom he engaged in long conversations about the philosophy of Descartes and Gassendi.¹⁸ In his philosophical writings he acclaimed the intellectual subtlety of the Indians, both Muslim and Hindu, and their taste for scientific reasoning.¹⁹

On the other hand, he had nothing but contempt for the religion and philosophy of the Hindus, or, for that matter, of the Muslims. According to Bernier, some of the 'most learned' among the Hindu pundits intimated to him that the fabulous stories of Hindu mythology were really only 'inventions of the Legislators to preserve the religious sentiment of the people'.²⁰ However, Bernier's discourse on Hindu 'idolatry' is no straightforward affirmation of European superiority. Relating the superstitious reactions of the Delhi populace to the solar eclipse of 1666, he immediately observes that French reactions to the eclipse of 1654 were not very different.²¹ He ridicules European missionaries' tales about anticipations of the Trinity in Hindu theology.²² With barely concealed irony Bernier observes that the most ridiculous thing about Hindu monks is that 'they have the effrontery to compare themselves to our missionaries they have seen in the Indies'.²³ Likewise, his stories about the sly tricks employed by Brahmin priests to lure young maidens into bed will surely have reminded his French readers of the countless salacious stories about the sexual exploits of the Catholic clergy.²⁴ Finally, we find Bernier comparing the cruel fate of the Hindu widows with the sacrifice of Iphigeneia, quoting Lucretius by way of conclusion: 'tantum Religio potuit suadere malorum' ('So potent was Religion in persuading to evil deeds').²⁵ It seems clear that Bernier's critical treatment of Hinduism has to be read in the ironic mode, and not as an affirmation of the superiority of Christianity.²⁶ But on the other hand he frequently refers to the new philosophy (Gassendi, Descartes, Roberval) as a counterforce to the superstition of the European populace. In Hindustan, however, there were no colleges and academies, and Bernier, as the first

traveller in Asia familiar with the most recent innovations in European medical science, was extremely critical of Indian ignorance in physiology and anatomy.²⁷ Generally, the French and the Indians are both portrayed as ignorant and superstitious, but in France there existed a countervailing enlightenment in the intellectual elite that was lacking in the Indian case. In Europe, therefore, there was hope of enlightenment; in Asia there was not.

Furthermore, Bernier appears to be entirely serious when he posits European superiority in the field of political and military organization. He speaks contemptuously about the 'disorderly' Mughal armies, and adds that some twenty-five thousand seasoned Flemish troops under the command of Condé or Turenne would suffice to crush the entire Grand Army of the Mughal.²⁸ Coming to the economic and political organization of the Mughal Empire, Bernier paints the familiar picture of 'Oriental despotism' that would later be standardized by Montesquieu and, still later, severely criticized by Anquetil Duperron.²⁹ For all the veiled critique of French absolutism these parts of his books contain, his negative opinion of Mughal India and the contrast with European security of property and personal security are entirely serious.³⁰

Finally there is the issue of 'race'. In the first place it should be observed that race plays no role in the construction of the Europe/India comparison. However, Bernier pays some attention to the racial hierarchy *within* the Mughal empire. He tells his readers that the ruling elite in India originally came from Greater Tartary, but that at present there are many Persians, Arabs and Turks among the Mughal elite: 'to be considered a "Mogol" it is nowadays sufficient to be a white foreigner and a Muslim, and thus distinct from the Hindus who are brown and heathen, & the European Christians who are called "Franguis"'.³¹ Whiteness thus appears as a mark of superiority within Indian society. Similar observations, this time about Persian society, are found in the travel relations of Bernier's contemporary Jean-Baptiste Tavernier.³² Tavernier recounts a conversation at the Persian court about the different opinions on the beauty of women in various parts of the world. When the king inquires into his own preferences, he answers that in the purchase of women he applies the same standards as in buying bread or diamonds: white is the best. Laughing, the king agrees.³³

Both Bernier and Tavernier compare South-Asian and European society in terms of religion, political institutions, customs and manners, but they accept the superior status of whiteness *within* Asian society as a matter of course. It is also striking that both men discuss whiteness in a sexualized discourse on the beauty of women, especially female slaves. By way of provisional conclusion we might say that, while race is not among the major structuring ideas in Bernier's analysis of Oriental society, it is continually present as a subtext, mostly in the form of an ill-defined but nonetheless forceful distinction between 'whites' and 'others'.

A GASSENDIST ANTHROPOLOGY

Let us now take a closer look at Bernier's *Abrégé de la philosophie de Gassendi*, in order to examine the connections between his philosophy and his views on race and anthropology. In Gassendist philosophy, as in Platonism and Cartesianism, the basic dualism of mind and matter was certainly upheld, but the biological side of man loomed larger than in Cartesianism. In the famous controversy about animal mechanism (the Cartesian view that animals were mere machines) Gassendi maintained that there were important similarities between man and the animals, despite the lack of a rational soul (*animus*) in the latter. What man shared with the animals was the *anima*, the sensitive soul or 'little flame' which functioned as the organizing principle of the body.³⁴

Bernier, who held a doctorate in medicine from the University of Montpellier, had always retained a lively interest in human anatomy and physiology, and was of a somewhat more agnostic and worldly turn of mind than Gassendi.³⁵ Like his philosophical master, he always insisted on the irreducibly non-material nature of the human mind.³⁶ On the other hand, he utterly rejected and actually ridiculed Descartes' animal mechanism.³⁷ He sought to maintain a clear distinction between 'the soul of man and that of the other animals', but his frequent use of the expression 'man and the other animals' points to some biological continuity as well.³⁸ In some passages Bernier allowed for a limited rationality in animals: from the example of a dog who runs away when he sees a man stoop to pick up a stone, he inferred that the dog is capable to reason from the sign to the thing signified.³⁹ Likewise, Bernier envisaged the possibility that some animals may use a very primitive language, and he compared them to 'Canadians and those other Savage Nations with a very limited vocabulary'.⁴⁰

Bernier followed Gassendi's theory that there are two souls in man, one sensitive and non-rational (which the animals also possess), the other spiritual and rational. The human soul as such is one, the two souls being essentially united in the same manner as the human person exists in the mode of the union of body and soul.⁴¹ The properties of the sensitive soul are hereditary, for the sensitive soul is transmitted to the foetus by the semen and also (in a somewhat unclear way) by the umbilical cord. The rational soul, however, is infused by God. The precise moment this happens is 'wholly obscure' and can therefore only be determined by the Faith (so that the Church is entitled to decide until which moment after conception abortion shall be permitted).⁴²

The upshot of the foregoing is that humanity has a double nature, both rational soul and sentient animal. This creates the possibility of differing degrees of rationality. Bernier indeed posits that some men may be less rational than others: the incorporeal soul infused by God is equal in all men, but the temperature of the brain and other bodily processes can cause inequalities in effective intellectual capacity.⁴³ Furthermore, Bernier

accepts the legitimacy of natural slavery, 'by which those who excel in the powers of the mind command those who only excel in brute force, just as the soul governs the body, and man rules the animals; all the more because it is useful for them to be governed by others, as it is useful for animals to be domesticated by men'.⁴⁴ Taking into account that this was written shortly before the infamous *Code Noir*, regulating the Atlantic slave trade, was promulgated by Louis XIV, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that black Africans are considered 'natural slaves' by Bernier. Elsewhere he speaks of certain cannibal tribes, like the Brazilians (the proverbial Tupinambu) and the Huron, in which nature has corrupted itself to such an extent that they 'retain less humanity'.⁴⁵ Such observations form a stark contrast with the egalitarian opinions of some contemporary Cartesian authors. Louis de la Forge, for instance, had mentioned precisely those proverbial cannibals, the Brazilian Tupinambu, to illustrate the thesis of the learning capacity of all men, and François Poulain de la Barre had relegated all notions of European superiority to the limbo of 'prejudice'.⁴⁶ It should be added, however, that Bernier also regards the 'savages' as people who live 'like our remote ancestors', thus defining the savage state in terms of a prior stage in human development, and not necessarily as a manifestation of intrinsic subhumanity.⁴⁷

Bernier accepts the habitability of the entire world because the 'latest navigations' have disproved the ancient opinion that the torrid and arctic zones were uninhabitable.⁴⁸ Likewise, modern travellers have laid to rest the fabulous stories about people without heads or with gigantic feet.⁴⁹ The entire world, Bernier maintains, is inhabited by men who are all members of the same species. All men walk upright, in contrast to the animals.⁵⁰ In line with this view, he defends a monogenetic theory of the origin of the human species. He briefly mentions polygenism, but rejects it 'because we are obliged to believe that all men are descended from one individual who was made in our Ancient World'.⁵¹ This sounds a bit disingenuous, but it is followed by the entirely serious theory that the *Amériquains* had migrated over a land-bridge to America. The Strait of Anian, Bernier explains, is still only a hypothesis, and even if there were a narrow sea between Asia and America men could easily cross it.⁵² In this, he obviously followed the migration theory formulated by Jose de Acosta in the late sixteenth century and reaffirmed by Joannes de Laet in his polemic with Hugo Grotius in the 1640s.⁵³

Bernier posits the unity of the human species but at the same time underlines that 'man' is an abstract idea: 'It is truly hard, if not impossible, to imagine Man in general, as neither great, nor small or of medium size . . . neither white, nor black or otherwise coloured: But we should at least keep in mind that we have to abstract from all those differences when we wish to consider Man in general'.⁵⁴ Accordingly, we can find in Bernier's treatise affirmations of the unity of man side by side with more empirical statements about difference, hierarchy and sometimes even differences in 'nature'. The

truism that a white man is not an 'Aethiopian' is used to illustrate a point of elementary logic, and the theory that certain people are 'natural slaves' is fully endorsed. The hypothesis of different 'races', discussed above, is not to be found in Bernier's philosophical treatise. But neither do we encounter there any strong egalitarian statements of the kind found in the writings of several Cartesians.

Bernier's entire philosophy is impregnated with a sceptical, empiricist attitude. His observations on human variety are scattered through the seven volumes of the *Abrégé de la philosophie de Gassendi*, they do not add up to a unified, consistent theory. However, the 'Nouvelle Division de la Terre', published in the very same year, testifies to Bernier's interest in the topic of the inequality of men, and shows that he had at least the beginnings of a theory.

FROM SACRED HISTORY TO NATURAL HISTORY

Until the late seventeenth century the European debate about the classification of humanity was conducted within a biblical framework. Whatever the scientific merits of the various migration theories put forward to account for the origin of the Americans, their ultimate purpose remained the insertion of America in the Old-Testament vision of history. The mid seventeenth century revival of theories about the Jewish origin of the Americans illustrates the continuing salience of theological issues for the debate. In the same manner, the racial prejudices about Africans were traditionally buttressed by the biblical story of the curse of Ham. Finally, anti-Jewish sentiments, even in the racialist form they acquired during the Spanish Reconquista, remained firmly tied to the Christian myth of the Jewish 'deicide' [the alleged murder of Christ by the Jews]. On the other hand, the Church always upheld the universality of salvation, even though it frequently condoned slavery and genocide in practice. The Christian doctrine of the unity of mankind thus coexisted more or less uneasily with the brutal practices of European expansion, but at the same time it precluded the emergence of a full-blown *theoretical* racism.

Polygenism, the theory that mankind had originated in various parts of the world and that there were other 'first men' besides Adam, has sometimes been interpreted as a typically modern current of thought, linked to scepticism and free-thought. However, polygenism in its first fragmentary appearances, in Paracelsus and Giordano Bruno, was closely tied up with a deeply religious, albeit not orthodox-Christian, world view.⁵⁵ Likewise, Richard Popkin has shown that the polygenetic theory of Isaac La Peyrère (1655) was embedded in an eschatological vision of the future, in which the coming of the Messiah and the imminent conversion of the Jews were of overarching significance.⁵⁶ This is not to discount the modern, 'scientific' side of Lapeyrère's work, but to warn against an unquestioning identification of polygenism and the modern, 'new philosophy' of the seventeenth century.

The case of Bernier is a good illustration of the pitfalls of such an approach. Giuliano Gliozzi, one of the very few historians of racism to pay serious attention to Bernier, characterizes him as a crypto-polygenetic thinker, a covert follower of La Peyrère, but Gliozzi did not consult Bernier's philosophical writings.⁵⁷ As we have seen above, Bernier explicitly embraced a monogenetic standpoint, although he was aware of other hypotheses. His inclusion of the Americans in the 'first race' points in the same direction, for La Peyrère had advanced polygenism precisely to account for the separate origin of the native population of the Americas. In my opinion Bernier was *perhaps* agnostic on the issue of polygenism versus monogenism but he was certainly not a follower of La Peyrère.

In all of his writings, and this is the crucial point, Bernier displays a notable lack of interest in the whole issue of sacred history. He reacted with scorn and ridicule to the attempts, still quite common in his day, to establish similarities between Asian religions and Christianity. At the time of his sojourn in India, Melchisedek Thevenot had asked him for information about Jewish tribes who had supposedly migrated to Asia in antiquity. Bernier replied that there were only Gentiles and Muslims in India, but that a Jesuit missionary at Delhi had received a letter from his colleagues at Peking who had heard rumours that there might be Jews in China. Further, there were indications of an earlier Jewish presence in Kashmir: the name 'Mousa' ('Moses') was rather common in those parts, and there was a mountain called 'the Throne of Salomo'.⁵⁸ Bernier never returned to the issue and the whole question of the Asian Jews is only an anecdotal aside in a narrative informed by other concerns.⁵⁹

In the end, Bernier is not interested in pre-Adamites because he is not so very interested in Adam himself. He pays lip-service to received Christian doctrine, but everything he says about religion is informed by a sceptical, epicurean turn of mind. His travelogue on Mughal India as well as his essay on racial classification address questions formulated outside the biblical framework. The modernity of Bernier is precisely that he is no longer an intellectual prisoner of sacred history: racial classification is not polygenism, because natural history and ethnography are not the same thing as a discourse on biblical origins.

It is worthwhile to look further into the question of classification. Like all the modern philosophers from Bacon onwards, Bernier is keenly interested in taxonomy.⁶⁰ In his treatise on the philosophy of Gassendi he observes:

the multitude of species can be such that it is impossible to enumerate them, so that it is necessary to reduce the particular to the general, and these to even more general species, until only a few, containing all the others and easy to count, are left. That is why we have reduced the Species, or the countless multitude of human beings, to Europeans, Asians, Africans, and Americans.⁶¹

In the essay on race, the division of the world into four or five races is presented as an alternative for this geographical scheme, thereby making anthropology as simple as traditional geography. A similar approach can be found in some unpublished notes by William Petty, the only contemporary of Bernier to arrive at the idea of several 'species' of humanity. It should be added, however, that Petty's notes on a 'scale of creatures' were rather sketchy and he did not produce an inclusive classification of mankind; but his way of thinking nonetheless resembled Bernier's. It is especially noteworthy that Petty was wellnigh obsessed with classifications and taxonomies.⁶²

In this connection, Bernier's division of the world into a few races might be seen as one attempt among many to escape from the labyrinthine universe of Renaissance cosmography. In *Mapping the Renaissance World* Frank Lestringant has shown that sixteenth-century geographers were unable to cope with the enormous amount of new material at their disposal. As a result, their books became 'rudimentary montages of heterogeneous data . . . incessant short-circuits between distinct languages, images and sciences by which Renaissance science came to resemble a disconcerting *bricolage*'.⁶³ The difficulty of coping with the kaleidoscopic multiplication of observed phenomena presented itself in other areas as well. The number of known plants and animals increased at an amazing pace between the early sixteenth and the late seventeenth century, and in the 1680s and 1690s John Ray, Joseph de Tournefort and Edward Tyson put forward new criteria for herbal and animal taxonomy. Tyson was also the first to compare the anatomy of humans and apes.⁶⁴ The debate on the nature of fossils also began in these decades.⁶⁵ After the mid seventeenth century the concerns of physicians with physiology and anatomy increasingly intersected with natural history.

Bernier's racial classification, then, was consistent with broader trends in taxonomy, geography, and natural history in the second half of the seventeenth century. Let us recall that Bernier was a physician who was closely acquainted with some of the scientists who were in the forefront of the new developments in physiology, anatomy, and natural history. Marin Cureau de la Chambre, under whose direction the experimental study of human anatomy got under way in Paris in the 1640s, was an old friend of Bernier.⁶⁶ Furthermore, he had assisted at the physiological experiments of Jean Pecquet during his studies in medicine at Montpellier, and later on he was on good terms with Joseph de Tournefort, one of the major pioneers in the field of plant classification.⁶⁷ It is thus clear that Bernier was keenly interested in these new lines of inquiry in adjacent fields.⁶⁸ His racial classification does not, of course, follow logically from them, but it surely fits in with these emerging discourses in the life sciences.

ANCIENT AND MODERN IDEAS ABOUT RACE

Bernier did not have to invent racial prejudice as such: it undoubtedly predated the seventeenth century. However, modern racist *theory*, which

conceived of itself as a branch of natural history, has been largely an eighteenth, nineteenth and even a twentieth-century phenomenon. The case of Bernier is of such interest because he stands precisely at the transition point between the old and the new discourse on race.

Fifteenth-century Spanish anti-semitic ideas linked theology and lineage so that the Jews were turned from a people into a race based on biological descent.⁶⁹ This type of racialism remained an offshoot of Christian intolerance, but the Iberian cult of the purity of blood that resulted from it continued its fateful course during the conquest of America, as witnessed by the proverbial expression *todos blancos son caballeros* ('all whites are gentlemen').⁷⁰ A racial mind-set was also facilitated by the lumping together of all the inhabitants of the Americas as 'Indians'.⁷¹ However, the racist elements in sixteenth-century thought should be situated in their proper context. In the famous Spanish debate about the question whether the American 'Indians' were to be considered 'natural slaves' in the Aristotelian sense, the advocates of enslavement argued their case almost wholly in terms of religion (or the lack thereof), 'rude manners', supposed cannibalism, and lack of organized political life of the native Americans, and not in terms of race. Likewise, the opponents of genocide and slavery chiefly invoked religion and natural law.⁷² Prior to the eighteenth century, the label most frequently applied to the Americans was that of 'savages', defined by the lack of a settled life, organized politics and religion, as well as by nudity, cruelty, and in many cases cannibalism.⁷³ The concept of the 'savage' had a long prior history within Europe, and it could usefully be associated with familiar examples from antiquity, such as Herodotus's Scythians and Tacitus's Germans.⁷⁴ Eventually, this would result in an evolutionary theory of humanity in which the Americans were compared with an early and rude stage of European society: an explanation of American 'inferiority' without any necessary ties to race or colour.⁷⁵ The 'olive-coloured' skin of the Americans was often mentioned in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but the notion of a 'red race' is a later, eighteenth-century development, largely confined to North America.⁷⁶ As we have seen above, Bernier still used the term 'olivâtre', and he thought the colour distinction between Europeans and Americans not significant enough to speak of a separate race.

In the case of the Africans the salience of Renaissance racial prejudice is far more obvious. The association between blackness, sin, inferior culture, and slavery was fully in evidence in the sixteenth century if not before.⁷⁷ In the course of the seventeenth century, European opinion about Africans hardened into a body of racist belief that comes extremely close to later varieties of biological racism. By the 1670s the French slave trade was rapidly expanding and in 1685, a year after the publication of Bernier's 'Nouvelle Division de la Terre', the *Code Noir* inscribed racial prejudice against Africans in French law.⁷⁸ Bernier's treatment of sub-Saharan Africans in the language of slavery was thus fully consistent with mainstream French opinion.

The case of Asia is more complicated. This was the part of the world where the Europeans encountered highly-developed states, empires, nations and civilizations which were not so easily relegated to the status of 'inferiors' let alone 'savages'. Sixteenth-century accounts of Japan, China, and India displayed amazement and admiration rather than belief in European superiority.⁷⁹ This way of looking at the 'amazing orient' continued into the next century, and in Bernier's time there was a mounting interest, especially in France, in the civilizations of China, Japan, India and Siam.⁸⁰ Bernier himself was among those who gave a less flattering picture of the Oriental civilizations, and his work was of considerable importance for the making of the stereotyped image of 'Oriental despotism'. Nonetheless, he never spoke of Asiatics as naturally inferior. As we have seen, the Turks and the South-Asians were included in his 'first race'. Although Bernier's remarks about the flat noses and 'pig-like' eyes of the East-Asians were certainly not complimentary, and he considered them a separate race, they were, in his opinion, 'truly white'. Just like the 'red race', the 'yellow race' was an eighteenth-century invention, unheard of in Bernier's time.⁸¹

To sum up: Bernier's picture of the Africans largely conformed to an already existing racial prejudice. The case of the Lapps was probably not very different: the contention that the people of the Far North were close to animals can be traced back to ancient Greece and is still present in Diderot's Encyclopedia where the Eskimos are depicted as 'les sauvages des sauvages'.⁸² The Americans, however, are classified as savages but not as a separate race: Bernier seems unable to make up his mind about their place in the grand scheme of humanity. The South Asians are likewise included in the 'first race', even though they are not quite white. The East Asians, on the other hand, are pictured as 'truly white', but nonetheless a separate race.

Bernier, we may conclude, launched the idea of a division of humanity into races, but his races are peculiar constructs with ill-defined contours and boundaries. Bernier's races are not the clear-cut biological concepts of eighteenth-century natural history, and yet his classificatory scheme is something more than the sum of existing prejudices. In the end, it is not so much the specific description of the different 'races', but rather the very act of a natural-historical classification of mankind that constitutes the crucial novelty of Bernier's representation of humanity.

CONCLUSION

Broadly speaking, Bernier's work fits into an intellectual trend we may characterize as a double transition: from sacred history to natural history, and from a division of the world into innumerable nations and tribes to a division of humanity into a limited number of races. The case of Bernier further shows that a racial classification of the world's population could be envisaged as an intellectual option as early as the 1680s, and, what is perhaps more important, that as an intellectual innovation it was tied up with a

number of other major changes in thinking about religion, human history, and the natural world. The links between racist discourse, travel literature and the 'new philosophy' of the seventeenth century are readily apparent in Bernier's writings as well as in the story of his life.

It is true that the racial classification of humanity did not become a dominant trend in human science before the middle of the eighteenth century, or perhaps even later, but the intellectual origins of this dangerous idea, like so much else, must be sought in the seventeenth century.⁸³ Moreover, the discussion of Bernier's racist discourse in this article has shown that it was no isolated outburst of a traveller, but the work of a philosopher who was conversant with all the new intellectual trends of his time. Besides, the emergence of the first, tentative scheme of racial classification in the 1680s accords well with the general thesis that virtually all the major Enlightenment themes and theories first surfaced in this period.⁸⁴

Why did the discourse of racial classification originate in this period? The political background was provided by the upsurge of French colonial expansion and the slave trade which stimulated the interest in the nature of the 'others' in all climes and continents, as witnessed, among other things, by the growing fascination with travel relations in the second half of the seventeenth century. Furthermore, racial prejudice against Africans, even though it predated the seventeenth century, was certainly reinforced by the booming slave trade.⁸⁵ The white/black dichotomy would remain pivotal to all varieties of racial classification in the eighteenth century and beyond.

The crucial innovation of racial classification as the new foundation for a 'division of the world' was ushered in by four factors, two negative and two positive. The negative factors were: first, the loss of the intellectual credibility of sacred history as an explanatory framework for the history of humanity; and second, the impasse of Renaissance cosmography with its kaleidoscopic multiplication of ever more nations and tribes. The two positive factors were: first, the empirical turn of Gassendist philosophy which to some extent bridged the gap between the biological and the mental side of man, and also cleared the way for a synthesis between abstract, 'theoretical' equality and a pragmatic, empiricist appreciation of differential rationality (in this respect, the passage from Gassendism to Locke, and thence to the eighteenth-century 'science of man' is a gradual one); and second, the new spirit of classification which manifested itself in all areas of empirical inquiry from Bacon onwards, and which was especially powerful in natural history during the closing decades of the seventeenth century.

Taken together, these political, cultural and intellectual developments go far to explain why a Gassendist philosopher, physician and traveller could formulate the first racial classification of humanity in the 1680s. As we know today, this idea was to have a terrible history. Bernier himself, we may surmise, did not foresee what a ghastly career awaited his simple conceptual scheme.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

Abrégé in these notes refers to François Bernier, *Abrégé de la Philosophie de Gassendi*, Paris, Fayard, 1992, 7 vols; this edition follows the third (Lyon, 1684) edition, revised and augmented by Bernier himself.

1 On the first stirrings of racialist thought in the anti-semitic ideology of the Spanish *Reconquista*, see Richard H. Popkin, 'The Philosophical Basis of Modern Racism', in Craig Walton and John P. Anton (eds), *Philosophy and the Civilizing Arts*, Athens Ohio, 1974, pp. 126–65; on the sixteenth-century origins of racism, see e.g. Dante A. Puzzo, 'Racism and the Western Tradition', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 25, 1964, pp. 579–86; Lewis Hanke, *Aristotle and the American Indians: A Study in Race Prejudice in the Modern World*, London, 1959; G. V. Scammel, 'On the Discovery of the Americas and the Spread of Intolerance, Absolutism, and Racism in Early Modern Europe', *International History Review* 13, 1991, pp. 502–21. For consensus that modern, 'scientific' racism only came into its own during the Enlightenment, see e.g. Richard H. Popkin, 'The Philosophical Basis of Eighteenth-Century Racism', in Harold E. Pagliaro (ed.), *Racism in the Eighteenth Century*, Cleveland and London, 1973, pp. 245–62; Giuliano Gliozzi, *Adamo e il Nuovo Mondo. La nascita dell'antropologia come ideologia coloniale: dalle genealogie bibliche alle teorie razziali, 1500–1700*, Firenze, 1977; Michael Banton, 'The Classification of Races in Europe and North-America, 1700–1850', *International Social Science Journal* 111, 1987, pp. 45–60; Dominique Tombal, 'Le polygénisme aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles: de la critique biblique à l'idéologie raciste', *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 71, 1993, pp. 850–74; Nicholas Hudson, 'From "Nation" to "Race": The Origin of Racial Classification in Eighteenth-Century Thought', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29, 1996, pp. 247–64; Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West*, Washington, Baltimore and London, 1996; Hannah F. Augstein (ed.), *Race: The Origins of an Idea, 1760–1850*, Bristol, 1996.

2 Useful information on Bernier is found in *Corpus. Revue de Philosophie* 20–21, 1992 (ed. Sylvia Murr).

3 A good exposition of Gassendi's thought, its theological background and the differences from Cartesianism is Margaret J. Osler, *Divine Will and the Mechanical Philosophy: Gassendi and Descartes on Contingency and Necessity in the Created World*, Cambridge, 1994; on the dissemination of Gassendism in Europe, see Sylvia Murr (ed.), *Gassendi et l'Europe*, Paris, 1997.

4 Complete titles can be found in H. Ternaux-Compans, *Bibliothèque Asiatique et Africaine*, Paris, 1841; a revised English translation was published in 1891, reissued as *Travels in the Mogul Empire*, New Delhi, 1972.

5 On Gassendi's and Bernier's influence on Locke, see Lisa T. Sarasohn, *Gassendi's Ethics: Freedom in a Mechanistic Universe*, Ithaca and London, 1996, chap. 8. Locke acquired and annotated all of Bernier's books on India, as well as the second (1678) edition of the *Abrégé de la philosophie de Gassendi*, see Gabriel Bonno, *Les relations intellectuelles de Locke avec la France*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1955, pp. 55–67, 80–7, 97–105; John Lough, 'Locke's reading during his stay in France', *The Library*, fifth series, 1953, VIII, pp. 229–58; like Bernier, Locke embraced the Acostean theory of the origin of the Americans, see William G. Batz, 'The Historical Anthropology of John Locke', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 35, 1974, pp. 663–70.

6 See Margaret T. Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, Philadelphia, 1964, p. 213.

7 See Jean Meyer, Jean Tarrade, Annie-Rey Goldzeiger and Jacques Tobie, *Histoire de la France coloniale*, Paris, 1991, chap. 5; Dirk van der Cruysse, *Louis XIV et le Siam*, Paris, 1991, chaps 6, 7.

8 Hannaford, *Race*, pp. 187–95, 203.

9 'Nouvelle Division de la Terre, par les différentes Espèces ou Races d'hommes qui l'habitent, envoyée par un fameux Voyageur à M. l'Abbé de la Chambre, à peu près en ces termes', *Journal des Sçavans*, 24 Avril 1684, pp. 148–55. (Unless otherwise indicated all translations in this article are mine.) Some scholars have assumed that the 'Abbé de la Chambre' mentioned in the title is Marin Cureau de la Chambre, a medical doctor and pioneer of natural history (first conservator of the Royal *Jardin des plantes* and member of the *Académie Royale des Sciences* from its inception in 1666), who was an old acquaintance of Bernier (see *Lettres de François Bernier*, ed. H. Castonnet des Fosses, Angers, 1890, p. 5). According to Sylvia Murr, Bernier's essay was written in response to an essay by Cureau de la Chambre. On this

hypothesis, the essay was conceived in the late 1660s or the 1670s, and first presented in the so-called 'étrenes' ('presents presaging good fortune') text to Madame de la Sablière, the salonnière who hosted Bernier and a number of other men interested in natural science; Bernier became acquainted with her around 1672, well after his return from India. However, the 'letter' alluded to in the title must have been addressed to a son of Marin, Pierre Cureau de la Chambre (1640–1693), who was the only Cureau to become an 'abbé'. The 'étrenes' text and the article in the *Journal des Sçavans* are identical, except for a few minor passages. The 'étrenes' text has been reprinted by Sylvia Murr in *Corpus. Revue de philosophie* 20–1, 1992, pp. 280–3. In this article, I use the text published in the *Journal des Sçavans*. (Part of the information provided here was communicated to me in an e-mail message by Sylvia Murr for which I wish to thank her.)

10 See L. de Lens, *Les correspondants de François Bernier pendant son voyage dans l'Inde*, Angers, 1872, p. 4.

11 Bernier might have informed himself better on Lapponia: the issue of the *Journal des Sçavans* of 27 June 1678 contained a review of an *Histoire de la Laponie* published in Paris in that year. To judge by the review, the book presented a slightly more nuanced picture of the 'Lapps' than Bernier.

12 Gliozzi, *Adamo e il Nuovo Mondo*, p. 603, calls Bernier's discussion of women 'futile'; Hudson, 'From "Nation" to "Race"', p. 252, only mentions it in passing; and Hannaford, *Race*, p. 203, omits it entirely. Only Londa Schiebinger pays serious attention to it: see *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science*, Boston, 1993, pp. 126, 131.

13 One of Bernier's correspondents, the influential literary figure Jean Chapelain, implored him to find out as much as he could about the Oriental women: Letter to Bernier at Delhi, 13 November 1661, *Lettres de Jean Chapelain*, publ. by Ph. Tamizey de Larroque, Paris, 1883, vol. 2, p. 169.

14 Londa Schiebinger, 'The Anatomy of Difference: Race and Sex in Eighteenth-Century Science', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 23, 1989–90, pp. 387–405.

15 Originally, Bernier's essay was addressed to his patron, Madame de la Sablière, but the addressees of the published article were the mostly male readers of the *Journal des Sçavans*.

16 Article 'Mogol', *Encyclopédie*, vol. X, pp. 612–4 (De Jaucourt).

17 See Théodore Morison, 'Un Français à la cour du Grand Mogol', *Revue Historique* 156, 1927, pp. 83–97.

18 *Suite des Mémoires du Sr. Bernier sur l'Empire du Grand Mogol*, Paris, 1671, p. 11; elsewhere, he calls the Aga 'one of the most learned men of Asia', *Abrégé de la Philosophie de Gassendi*, Paris, 1674, vol. I, p. 138.

19 *Abrégé*, vol. III, p. 42.

20 *Suite des Mémoires du Sr. Bernier sur l'Empire du Grand Mogol*, The Hague, 1671, p. 179.

21 *Suite des Mémoires*, pp. 119–22.

22 *Suite des Mémoires*, p. 172.

23 *Suite des Mémoires*, pp. 163–4.

24 *Suite des Mémoires*, p. 129.

25 *Suite des Mémoires*, p. 147; Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, Book I, line 101. In seventeenth-century translations Lucretius's 'Religio' is usually translated as 'superstition', thus avoiding the impression that the Christian religion might be implicated by the logic of his critique. Lucretius, however, clearly refers to the dominant, official religion of the Greeks, and his analysis is about the evil consequences of belief in the supernatural in general. By quoting the Latin text Bernier avoids the issue.

26 See Geoffrey Atkinson, *Les relations de voyages du XVIIe siècle et l'évolution des idées* (1924), Geneva, 1972, p. 170.

27 See M. N. Pearson, 'The Thin End of the Wedge: Medical Relativities as a Paradigm of Early Modern Indian-European Relations', *Modern Asian Studies* 29, 1995, pp. 141–70, esp. 165–7.

28 *Histoire de la dernière révolution dans les Etats du Grand Mogol*, Paris, 1670, pp. 131–2. Elsewhere, Bernier observes that the Mughal employed European gunners in their artillery, but the implied assertion that the Indians were inept in such matters is historically incorrect, for the Mughal commanders were extremely skilful in their deployment of artillery, an art they had acquired from the Turks before their invasion of India in the early sixteenth century, see Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund, *History of India*, London and New York, 1998, pp. 184–6.

29 See Franco Venturi, 'Oriental Despotism', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24, 1963, pp. 133–42; Lucette Valensi, 'The Making of a Political Paradigm: The Ottoman State and Oriental Despotism', in Anthony Grafton and Ann Blair (eds), *The Transmission of Culture in Early Modern Europe*, Philadelphia, 1990, pp. 173–203; Michael Curtis, 'The Oriental Despotic Universe of Montesquieu', *Princeton Papers in Near Eastern Studies* 3, 1994, pp. 1–38. For Anquetil's criticisms of Bernier, see Abraham-Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron, *Législation Orientale*, Amsterdam, 1778, pp. 135–54.

30 See Sylvia Murr, 'Le politique "au Mogol" selon Bernier', in J. Pouchepadass and H. Stern, *De la royauté à l'état: Anthropologie et histoire du politique dans le monde Indien*, Paris, 1991, pp. 239–310.

31 *Histoire de la dernière révolution*, p. 6.

32 Bernier and Tavernier met at Patna in January 1666, *Les six voyages de Jean-Baptiste Tavernier*, seconde partie, Paris, 1681, p. 69; see also Murr, 'Le politique "au Mogol" selon Bernier', p. 245.

33 *Six voyages . . .*, première partie, Paris, 1682, pp. 444–5; see also *Suite des voyages de Mr. Tavernier*, Paris, 1679, vol. 2, pp. 16, 22.

34 See Leonara C. Rosenfield, *From Beast-Machine to Man-Machine: Animal Soul in French Letters from Descartes to La Mettrie*, New York, 1968, pp. 10, 111–3; Osler, *Divine Will and the Mechanical Philosophy*, pp. 63–77; Sarasohn, *Gassendi's Ethics*, pp. 69, 127–31. In some respects Gassendi's position resembles later varieties of a vitalistic materialism, but his reluctance to adopt a purely mechanistic conception of non-human life was firmly rooted in his theology, see Jacques Roger, *The Life Sciences in Eighteenth-Century French Thought*, Stanford, 1997, pp. 109–28.

35 See Sylvia Murr, 'Gassendi's Scepticism as a Religious Attitude', in Richard H. Popkin and Arjo Vanderjagt (eds), *Scepticism and Irreligion in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, Leyden, New York and Cologne, 1993, pp. 12–30; Murr, 'Bernier et Gassendi', in Murr (ed.), *Gassendi et l'Europe*, pp. 81, 107–9; Gianni Paganini, 'Bonheur, Passions et Intérêts: l'Héritage des Libertins', in Henri Méchoulan and Joël Cornette (eds), *L'Etat Classique: Regards sur la pensée politique de la France dans le second XVIIe siècle*, Paris, 1996, pp. 71–92.

36 See J. S. Spink, *French Free-Thought from Gassendi to Voltaire*, London, 1960, p. 161.

37 *Abrégé*, vol. III, p. 49.

38 *Abrégé*, vol. V, p. 303.

39 *Abrégé*, vol. VI, pp. 166, 217–23.

40 *Abrégé*, vol. VI, p. 344.

41 *Abrégé*, vol. V, pp. 313–9.

42 *Abrégé*, vol. V, pp. 345–6; further on Bernier discusses the modern opinion that women contribute to the formation of the foetus by their 'oeufs' (*Abrégé* vol. V, pp. 363–4). The theory of the female 'eggs' was reviewed in 1672 by the *Journal des Sçavans*, supplements of 15 and 22 March 1672.

43 *Abrégé*, vol. VI, pp. 249–54.

44 *Abrégé*, vol. VII, pp. 219–20.

45 *Abrégé*, vol. V, p. 376.

46 Louis de la Forge, *Traité de l'esprit de l'Homme*, Paris, 1666, p. 354; on the status of the Tupinambu as 'arch-cannibals', see Frank Lestringant, *Le Cannibale. Grandeur et décadence*, Paris, 1994; on Poulain's egalitarianism, see Siep Stuurman, 'Social Cartesianism: François Poulain de la Barre and the Origins of the Enlightenment', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 58, 1997, pp. 617–40, esp. 620–2.

47 *Abrégé*, vol. VII, p. 286.

48 *Abrégé*, vol. I, p. 115; see also vol. IV, pp. 75–7; on the intellectual origins of this view, see John M. Headly, 'The Sixteenth-Century Venetian Celebration of the Earth's Total Habitability: The Issue of the Fully Habitable World for Renaissance Europe', *Journal of World History* 8, 1997, pp. 1–27.

49 *Abrégé*, vol. I, p. 44; Bernier believed that the 'monsters' reported by travellers in Africa and elsewhere represented the offspring of copulation by animals of different species; another explanation was that the power of the human imagination might in some cases deform the foetus, see *Abrégé*, vol. V, pp. 351–2.

50 *Abrégé*, vol. VI, p. 355.

51 *Abrégé*, vol. V, p. 31.

52 The Strait or Sea of Anian would be reached by Vitus Bering in 1727.

53 See Lee Eldridge Huddleston, *Origin of the American Indians: European Concepts, 1492–1729*, Austin and London, 1967, pp. 48–54, 118–28.

54 *Abrégé*, vol. I, p. 39.

55 See J. S. Slotkin (ed.), *Readings in Early Anthropology*, Chicago, 1965, pp. 42–3.

56 See Richard H. Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère, 1596–1676*, Leiden, New York etc., 1987.

57 Gliozzi, *Adamo e il Nuovo Mondo*, pp. 602–5.

58 *Suite des Mémoires du Sr. Bernier*, 1671, pp. 214–6.

59 The passage demonstrates Bernier's continuing reliance on questionable etymological evidence of the sort that had led Hugo Grotius a generation before to assume that the similarity of the Mexican suffix *lan* and the Germanic *land* proved the North-European origins of the people of Central America. See Huddleston, *Origins of the American Indians*, p. 120.

60 See the entry 'Classification' in Michel Blay and Robert Halleux (eds), *La science classique, XVIe-XVIIIe siècle. Dictionnaire critique*, Paris, 1998, pp. 457–64.

61 *Abrégé*, vol. I, pp. 48–9.

62 *The Petty Papers: Some Unpublished Writings of Sir William Petty*, ed. Marquis of Lansdowne, 2 vols, New York, 1967, vol. 2, pp. 21–34, esp. 30–1. The passage dealing with the subdivision of humanity is less than two pages, and stands isolated in the corpus of Petty's writings. The notes were probably written in 1677, see *The Petty-Southwell Correspondence, 1676–1687*, ed. Marquis of Lansdowne, New York, 1967, p. 43.

63 Frank Lestringant, *Mapping the Renaissance World*, Cambridge and Oxford, 1994, pp. 129–130.

64 See Henry Lowood, 'The New World and the European Catalog of Nature', in Karen Ordahl Kupperman (ed.), *America in European Consciousness, 1493–1750*, Chapel Hill and London, 1995, pp. 295–323; Scott Atran, *Cognitive Foundations of Natural History*, Cambridge, 1990, p. 161; Phillip Sloan, 'The Gaze of Natural History', in Christopher Fox, Roy Porter, and Robert Wokler (eds), *Inventing Human Science*, Berkeley and London, 1995, pp. 118–9.

65 See Paolo Rossi, *The Dark Abyss of Time: The History of the Earth and the History of Nations from Hooke to Vico*, Chicago and London, 1987, pp. 3–5.

66 See Harold J. Cook, 'Physicians and Natural History', in N. Jardine, J. A. Secord and E. C. Spary, *Cultures of Natural History*, Cambridge, 1996, pp. 91–105; E.-T. Hamy, 'Les débuts de l'anthropologie et de l'anatomie humaine au Jardin des Plantes', *L'Anthropologie* 5, 1894, pp. 257–75.

67 See *Lettres de François Bernier*, par H. Castonnet des Fosses, Angers, 1890, p. 7; Murr, 'Bernier et Gassendi', p. 75.

68 See also his remarks on fossils: *Abrégé*, vol. II, p. 50.

69 See Popkin, 'Philosophical Bases of Modern Racism', pp. 126–8; Léon Poliakov, *Histoire de l'antisémitisme*, Paris, 1981, vol. I, pp. 146–97.

70 Puzzo, 'Racism', p. 583; Hanke, *Aristotle and the American Indians*, p. 14.

71 Juan Friede, 'Las Casas and Indigenism in the Sixteenth Century', in Juan Friede and Benjamin Keen (eds), *Bartolomé de las Casas in History*, DeKalb, Illinois, 1971, p. 134.

72 See Hanke, *Aristotle and the American Indians*, pp. 41, 47, 69.

73 See Olive Patricia Dickason, *The Myth of the Savage and the Beginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas*, Edmonton, 1984.

74 See for instance François Hartog, *Le miroir d'Hérodote*, Paris, 1991.

75 See Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology*, Cambridge, 1982.

76 See Nancy Shoemaker, 'How Indians Got to Be Red', *American Historical Review* 102, 1997, pp. 625–44; on the divergent trajectory of the language of race in Central America, see Vinicio Gonzalez, 'The history of ethnic classification in Central America, 1700–1950', *International Social Science Journal* 111, 1987, pp. 61–84.

77 See Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black*, Baltimore, 1971, chaps 1, 2; Richard G. Cole, 'Sixteenth-Century Travel Books as a Source of European Attitudes toward Non-White and Non-Western Culture', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 116, 1972, pp. 59–67; James Walvin, *Black and White: The Negro and English Society, 1555–1945*, London, 1973, chap. 1; William B. Cohen, *The French Encounter with Africans: White Response to Blacks, 1530–1880*, Bloomington and London, 1980, chaps 1–3; Sue Peabody, *There Are No Slaves in France: The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Régime*, Oxford and New York, 1996.

78 See Louis Sala-Molins, *Le Code Noir ou le calvaire de Canaan*, Paris, 1987.

79 See Donald F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe, vol. 2: A Century of Wonder*, Chicago and London, 1977, pp. 559–66.

80 Donald F. Lach and Edwin J. van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe, vol. 3: A Century of Advance*, Chicago and London, 1993, pp. 390–434; Virgile Pinot, *La Chine et la formation de l'esprit philosophique en France, 1640–1740*, Paris, 1932, chap. 1; Robert Shackleton, 'Asia as seen by the French Enlightenment', in Shackleton, *Essays on Montesquieu and on the Enlightenment*, ed. David Gilson and Martin Smith, Oxford, 1988, pp. 231–41; Van der Cruyssen, *Louis XIV et le Siam*.

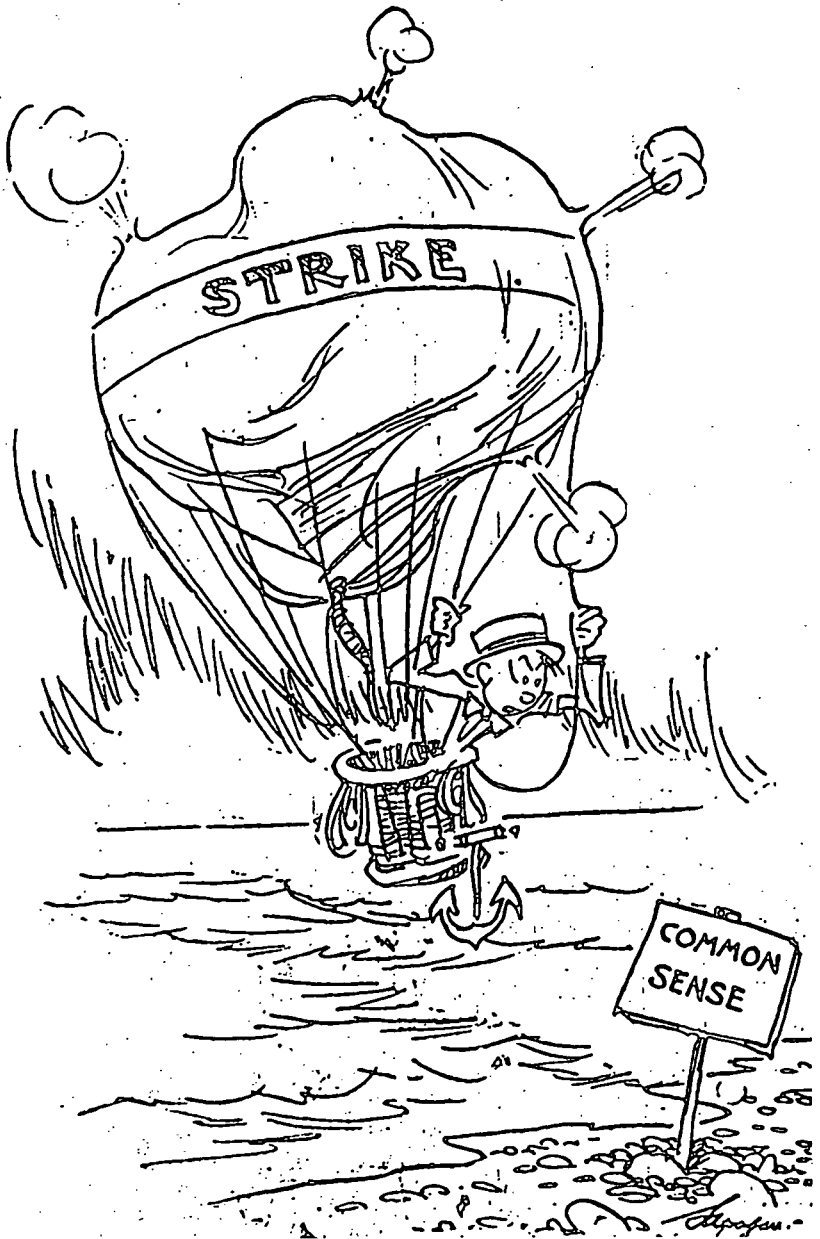
81 See Walter Demel, 'Wie die Chinesen gelb wurden: Ein Beitrag zur Frühgeschichte der Rassentheorien', *Historische Zeitschrift* 255, 1992, pp. 625–66.

82 Hartog, *Miroir d'Hérodote*, p. 33; article 'Eskimaux', *Encyclopédie*, vol. 5, p. 953; this view is also found in a treatise on the Amazons by Bernier's contemporary (also a medical doctor) Pierre Petit, *De Amazonibus Dissertatio qua an vere extiterint, necne, variis utro citroque conjecturis & argumentis disputatur*, Amsterdam, 1687, pp. 103–7 (first edn: Paris, 1685).

83 Therefore I cannot entirely concur with Nicholas Hudson who rather plays down the importance of these seventeenth-century intellectual trends in his otherwise enlightening discussion of the origin of racial classification, see Hudson, 'From "Nation" to "Race"', p. 252; Hudson rightly points to the powerful impact of Locke's anthropology on eighteenth-century human science, but he pays no attention to Locke's seventeenth-century context nor to Locke's indebtedness to Bernier, see notes 3 and 4 above.

84 Paul Hazard. *La crise de la conscience européenne, 1680–1715* (1935), Paris, 1961; but see also J. Mesnard, 'La crise de la conscience européenne, un demi-siècle après Paul Hazard', in *De la mort de Colbert à la révocation de l'édit de Nantes: un monde nouveau?*, Paris, 1984, pp. 185–98; Margaret C. Jacob, 'The crisis of the European mind: Hazard revisited', in Phyllis Mack and Margaret C. Jacob (eds), *Politics and Culture in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge etc., 1987, pp. 251–71.

85 However, the defence of slavery cannot by itself explain the origin of racism, as is maintained by Pierre H. Boule, 'In Defense of Slavery: Eighteenth-Century Opposition to Abolition and the Origins of a Racist Ideology in France', in Frederick Krantz (ed.), *History from Below: Studies in Popular Protest and Popular Ideology in Honour of George Rudé*, Montréal, 1985, pp. 221–42.



WILL HE LAND ON SOLID EARTH
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