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WOMACK, William Randall, 1933-
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY THEMES IN THE HISTOIRE
PHILOSOPHIQUE ET POLITIQUE DES DEUX INDES
OF GUILLAUME RAYNAL. [Portions of Text in
French].

The University of Oklahoma, Ph.D., 1970
Language and Literature, modern

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1971

THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY THEMES IN THE HISTOIRE PHILOSOPHIQUE ET
POLITIQUE DES DEUX INDES OF GUILLAUME RAYNAL

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

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Norman, Oklahoma

1970

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY THEMES IN THE HISTOIRE PHILOSOPHIQUE ET
POLITIQUE DES DEUX INDES OF GUILLAUME RAYNAL

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am pleased to have this opportunity to express my gratitude to Dr. Seymour Feiler, professor of Eighteenth-Century French Literature and director of this dissertation. His prompt and courteous attention to my efforts and his wise suggestions have made my task much easier. I also wish to thank the other members of my committee, Dr. Lowell Dunham, Dr. Besse Clement, Dr. John Alley, and Dr. Melvin Tolson, for their time and patience in reading rough typescripts and for giving numerous helpful suggestions and greatly appreciated encouragement.

Finally, I take this opportunity to recognize the contribution made to this effort by my wife and children, who have graciously tolerated a part-time husband and father for many long months. They too can proclaim, "We are the Jasons. We have won the golden fleece."

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EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY THEMES IN THE HISTOIRE PHILOSOPHIQUE ET
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Histoire philosophique et politique des établissemens et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes, by the abbé Guillaume Raynal, was for twenty crucial years, 1770 to 1790, one of the most widely read, and possibly most influential literary works in France and Western Europe. The prestige of the work is attested to by the fulsome praise it received from Raynal's illustrious contemporaries the French philosophes. Of the numerous allusions to Raynal's work during the period 1770-1790, one quotation sums up the favorable and unfavorable reaction of contemporary criticism.¹ Grimm's Correspondance Littéraire in July 1774 greeted a new seven volume octavo edition of the Histoire philosophique with this superlative accolade, "Depuis L'Esprit des lois, notre littérature n'a produit aucun monument plus digne de passer à la postérité la plus reculée, et de consacrer à jamais le produit de nos lumières et de

¹For additional comments on Raynal by his contemporaries see index in Vol. 16 of Grimm's Correspondance Littéraire.

See also article "Un économiste ignoré: l'abbé Raynal" by Combes de Patris in Revue des Etudes Historiques (REH), No. 78: pp. 695-708, 1912, in which author shows prestige Raynal enjoyed among his contemporaries.

notre industrie." Grimm, in the same paragraph, balances this praise with some blunt and undiplomatic criticism of the Raynal style that the author himself should have appreciated, "Mais quelque admirable qu'il soit pour le fond, avouons-le, c'est un ouvrage mal fait, trop fait quant aux détails, trop peu quant à l'ensemble, fatigant et pénible par les efforts même que l'auteur a voulu faire pour le rendre amusant."¹

While colleague Grimm mixed highest praise for the content of the Histoire philosophique with honest criticism of its awkward and pompous style, Edmond Scherer, with benefit of a century's hindsight, balanced his scathing criticism of content and style with the highest estimate of the work's influence and importance in European history. Pointing to the interminable digressions, to the eloquent orations put in the mouths of savages, to the flamboyant declamations addressed to the oppressed peoples of the earth, Scherer pronounces the Histoire philosophique "le plus plat et le plus burlesque des livres." Those passages in which the emotional Raynal, tears staining his manuscript, reached the height of eloquence, those passages most appealing to the eighteenth-century readers are, to Scherer at least, "les plus ridicules." But, adds Scherer, whatever post-revolutionary readers may think of the work, "Je suis persuadé que l'Histoire philosophique des deux Indes a eu plus d'influence sur la Révolution française que le Contrat social lui-même."²

¹Grimm, Diderot, Raynal, Meister, et al., Correspondance Littéraire (16 vols.; Paris: Garnier Frères, 1879), Vol. X, pp. 454-455.

²Edmond Scherer, Etudes sur la littérature au XVIII^{ème} siècle (Paris: Levy, 1891) pp. 275-278.

Bibliographical evidence indicates that Raynal's Histoire des deux Indes was as popular as it was prestigious. Hans Wolpe estimates that between 1770 and 1789 there were thirty authorized and forty pirated editions of the Histoire.¹ This would indicate that it ranked with Rousseau's Nouvelle Héloïse and Voltaire's Candide as one of the three most widely read books in France in the years just preceding the Revolution. It was a work that enlivened conversation in intellectual Paris salons, but its revolutionary contents were not unknown in more humble quarters. It was also read with mixed emotions at Number 10 Downing Street, at the Imperial palace in Potsdam, at Monticello, Virginia. At the height of his fame, while temporarily exiled from Paris by the scandalous success of the Histoire, Raynal made the philosophe's grand tour of Europe, à la Diderot and Voltaire, and was received in audience by Frederick of Prussia, Catherine of Russia, and the Speaker of the British House of Commons.

Raynal's work, once read, discussed, praised, and denounced around the civilized world, has fallen into nearly total oblivion. It is not, of course, necessary to quote any authority to demonstrate the present day obscurity that surrounds Raynal and his work. The obscurity is obvious to any student of French literature. But, it would be appropriate to see how quickly and thoroughly oblivion settled around him after the French Revolution, and to give due credit to those scholars who have attempted, with limited success, to resurrect his memory.

¹Hans Wolpe, Raynal et sa machine de guerre (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), p. 8.

Raynal first fell from favor with the radical left. Unlike the major philosophes, Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, who died with the ancien régime still precariously intact, Raynal lived long enough to see his revolutionary preachments put into practice. The spectacle revolted a man who was as much middle-class commerçant as he was radical polemicist. In May of 1791, he addressed a letter to the National Assembly, cautioning the people's representatives against democratic excess. Some of the more intemperate members would have had the old man's head, had not Robespierre rushed to the floor to calm their outrage. He reminded them that the people considered Raynal one of the fathers of the Revolution and implied that his seemingly conservative letter was merely the result of an innocent senility.¹ Confused, embittered, and totally impoverished by the Reign of Terror, Raynal died a natural death in the spring of 1796.

The totalitarian Napoléon Bonaparte, who always considered himself a child of the great revolution, pronounced himself an admirer of Raynal, and is even said to have had a copy of the Histoire philosophique in his baggage during the Egyptian expedition.² But the darkness settles quickly on Raynal and his work after the Bourbon restoration. Jean François de la Harpe in his sixteen-volume Cours de Littérature devotes only a few sentences to Raynal, in which he does him the signal honor of lumping him with Diderot as one of the bloody villains

¹Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve, Nouveaux Lundis (13 vols.; Paris: Michel Levy, 1870-1875) Vol. XI, pp. 325-326.

²Wolpe, Raynal, p. 8.

most responsible for the Revolution.¹ As is evident from the above paraphrase, La Harpe, who had always been an anti-philosophe, wrote his work in keeping with the spirit of unbridled reaction that accompanied the Restoration. Raynal's reputation, in addition to bearing the burden of his many and manifest weaknesses as a writer, also suffered from the fact that he was one of the most influential radicals of the pre-revolution.

In 1868 Sainte-Beuve devoted several pages to Raynal, including a good description of the National Assembly's reception of his famous letter. In his opening paragraph, Sainte-Beuve notes Raynal's fall from fame but adds that such disgrace is not entirely warranted.

Raynal est loin de mériter l'oubli et l'espèce de mépris où il est tombé. Il est plus facile de dédaigner et de railler sa grande Histoire philosophique que de la lire entier, et cependant on en tirerait encore profit.²

Raynal's name does not appear again until Sir John Morley's monumental Diderot and the Encyclopaedists in 1878. Morley devotes a chapter to Raynal and the tenor of his remarks may be deduced from the title, "A Literary Immortal Vanished."³ While Diderot had been re-discovered, while voltairien had become a common adjective, while Rousseau's fame had grown, their colleague and peer had been forgotten. Pointing to the universal fame of the Histoire philosophique in the late eighteenth century, Morley adds that it is doubtful that today (1878)

¹Jean François de la Harpe, Cours de Littérature (16 vols.; Paris: Amable Costes, 1813), Vol. XIV, pp. 136-137.

²Sainte-Beuve, Nouveaux Lundis, XI, p. 312.

³John Morley, Diderot and the Encyclopaedists (2 vols.; London: MacMillan, 1923) Vol. II, pp. 193-218.

there are a hundred persons living who have ever read two chapters of the work that once was called the "Bible of Two Worlds."¹ Today, there are certainly fewer than a hundred such persons.

In 1891, Edmond Scherer, in his previously cited work, devoted a chapter to Raynal.² In 1913, Gilbert Chinard mentions Raynal as one of the sources of exotisme américain in eighteenth-century French literature.³ The first monograph on Raynal or his work appeared in 1906, a dissertation for the Sorbonne, as far as we can determine unpublished, by Emile Salone, entitled Guillaume Raynal: Historian du Canada. As can be seen from the title, this work dealt with an extremely narrow aspect of Raynal's broad subject. Salone's primary source material would be found in only two "books" of the fourth volume in a four-volume edition.

The first monograph that attempted a thorough study of Raynal was likewise a Sorbonne dissertation, Anatole Feugère's Un Précurseur de la Révolution: l'abbé Raynal (1715-1796).⁴ He published simultaneously a thèse complémentaire entitled Bibliographie critique de l'abbé Raynal.⁵ Feugère's works were, and remain, the only definitive studies of Raynal, his life, works and bibliography. This major work was printed in one

¹ Ibid., p. 193.

² Scherer, Etudes, ch. 8.

³ Gilbert Chinard, L'Amérique et le rêve exotique dans la littérature française au XVII^{ème} et au XVIII^{ème} siècles (Paris: Hachette, 1913), pp. 389-398.

⁴ Anatole Feugère, Un Précurseur de la Révolution: l'abbé Raynal (1713-1796) (Angoulême: Imprimerie Ouvrière, 1922).

⁵ Anatole Feugère, Bibliographie critique de l'abbé Raynal (Angoulême: Imprimerie Ouvrière, 1922).

hard-back edition of 459 pages in 1922. Today it is as difficult to find a copy of Feugère as it is to find a complete set of Raynal. The various chapters of Feugère's dissertation were printed separately as articles in scholarly journals, prior to the appearance of the 1922 edition. A complete list of the titles may be found in Volume IV of Cabeen's Critical Bibliography of French Literature.¹

After a lapse of thirty-five years, there appeared a third monograph, L'Anticolonialisme au XVIII^{ième} siècle: Histoire philosophique et politique des deux Indes by Jeanne Monty.² An intensive study of one aspect of Raynal's multifaceted work, it points out that Raynal was the greatest single arsenal of the anticolonial sentiment vaguely diffused throughout eighteenth-century France.

The final monograph on Raynal, appearing in 1957, is the Wolpe work previously cited. It bears the extended title L'histoire des deux Indes et ses perfectionnements. By means of parallel columns Wolpe studies variations in the texts of three major editions; the original 1770 six-volume octavo published at Amsterdam, the 1774 seven-volume octavo published at The Hague, and the 1780 four-volume quarto, first to bear the author's name and portrait, published by Pellet at Geneva. Wolpe actually had before his eyes a 1781 ten-volume octavo by publisher Pellet, but it reproduces faithfully the newly revised text of the 1780

¹George R. Havens and O. F. Bonds, The Eighteenth Century, Vol. IV of A Critical Bibliography of French Literature, ed. by D. C. Cabeen (4 vols.; Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1947-1951).

²Jeanne R. Monty, L'anticolonialisme au XVIII^{ième} siècle: Histoire philosophique et politique des deux Indes (Paris: P.U.F., 1951).

edition, the author's final revision. By comparing the three texts and their evolution, Wolpe attempts to show that the Histoire philosophique, despite its encyclopedic contents, its confused organization and wordy style, has nevertheless the organic unity of an "oeuvre littéraire," which fact explains in part why it was read with pleasure in the eighteenth century, and why it can still be read with pleasure by readers of similar taste today.

Finally, Will Durant, quite recently, 1965, attempted to resurrect Raynal for a more general and English-speaking public. In volume nine of his History of Civilization, he summarizes the radical thought of the Histoire philosophique and its vigorous impact on public opinion in France in the immediate pre-revolutionary period. He makes clear that any literary or political historian who presumes to discuss the opinion-molding precursors of the French Revolution, without giving due credit to the easily overlooked Raynal, is guilty of a sin or scholarly omission.¹ A glance at any history or anthology of eighteenth-century France will confirm that this sin is regularly committed.

A list of other nineteenth and twentieth century references to Raynal and his work, and a list of articles that have appeared very sporadically in scholarly journals over a period of nearly two centuries are included in the bibliography of this paper. It should be pointed out that nearly all the articles deal with one of two subjects; either the sources of various anecdotes, facts and fancies in the Histoire

¹Will Durant, The Story of Civilization, Vol. IX: The Age of Voltaire (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1965), pp. 693-696.

philosophique, or the long-running and never-to-be-resolved dispute over what parts, if any, of the Histoire philosophique Diderot or others wrote under the general editorial direction of Raynal.

It is appropriate at this point to indicate how the present work will improve or expand upon the published studies just mentioned. This paper has as its inspiration a sentence in Feugère's pioneering study in which he said that the Histoire philosophique was the "somme des idées du 18ième siècle."¹ This paper will attempt to show that the Histoire philosophique, like the great Encyclopédie and the dictionnaires of Bayle and Voltaire, does indeed contain, in its own confused and encyclopedic fashion, all those themes, subjects and preoccupations that have come to be synonymous with eighteenth-century French literary and philosophical thought.

Research naturally is centered on a thorough reading of the Histoire philosophique, a laborious but not unpleasant task. Among thousands of facts and figures, searched out are those innumerable digressions and declamations wherein Raynal embroiders on some typical eighteenth-century theme. One must read Raynal carefully, for his philosophical ideas are scattered everywhere in that mass of prose. A title sentence may announce a description of the flower buds of the coffee tree, or a discussion of the proper diet for snails. But that same discussion may contain a diatribe vilifying the pope or a ringing call for revolution and regicide.

¹Feugère, Raynal, p. 102.

Raynal's subject is the European discovery, exploration, conquest, and settlement of Asia, Africa and the Americas. The mass of detailed information is staggering, including descriptions of flora and fauna, and endless speculation on natural phenomena from hurricanes to earthquakes. The political and commercial aspects of his history are likewise complete. He begins his discussion of French colonies in Asia with a description of ancient Gaul. His discussion of Spanish colonies begins with the aboriginal inhabitants of the Iberian peninsula. His description of Africa before the coming of the Europeans includes ancient Egypt and the beginnings of civilization. In short, Raynal's work is indeed the commercial and political history that its title proclaims. It is easy to point to the lack of modern scholarly scruple, the inconsistencies and inaccuracies, the obvious inventions and second-hand anecdotes, but one cannot deny that he thoroughly covered his subject, which ranged from botany to business law.

Despite the massive coverage of his basic subject, the reader still comes away with the impression that his factual material is merely a framework upon which Raynal hung what he really wanted to say; that is his enthusiastic sermonizing on all the themes dear to the eighteenth century. Raynal's great wealth of historical, economic, and scientific facts and fancies, entertaining and instructive as they are, are not the subject of this paper. We will be concerned only with Raynal's thought and opinion, which we will attempt to analyze, not merely to find inconsistency and contradiction, inevitable in a man as verbose and opinionated as Raynal, but to see if there does not run through them the basic themes of the period with a persistent conflict between the emotional and the

rational, the ideal and the practical. And through the abbé Raynal, we seek a better understanding of eighteenth-century France, of that European intellectual revolution which called itself the Enlightenment and which is honored with that title till this day. As Morley, Scherer and others have pointed out, despite the fact that it aged poorly, one cannot deny that the Histoire philosophique struck a responsive chord with the mentality of the eighteenth century. Many, no doubt, were enchanted by the purely factual content of the work, especially since it concerned exotic places and things, but many also gladly read the provocative theories and opinions with which Raynal padded his factual framework. What better way to obtain a deeper understanding of eighteenth-century thought than to study closely one of the century's favorite polemicist? For this reason we propose to examine a work that has been largely neglected for 190 years.

As has been previously noted, Anatole Feugère in his 1922 monograph studied not only the Histoire philosophique but also Raynal's life and minor works. Raynal's literary career began in 1737, in which year he served as editor of the Nouvelles Littéraires. His work in that position now comprises the first one and one-half volumes of Grimm's Correspondance Littéraire. In 1747 he published a pamphlet history of the Dutch Stathouderat, in 1748 a similar Histoire du Parlement d'Angleterre, in 1750 Anecdotes littéraires, and in 1753 Anecdotes historiques. From 1750 to 1754 he served as editor of the Mercure de France. After a hiatus of nearly twenty years, there appeared in 1770 the massive Histoire philosophique, the work of a lifetime. Raynal's minor works are minor in every sense of the word, in size, interest and importance. They attracted

scant attention at their appearance and are of less interest today. Feugère, in his definitive work, did little more than list them. Raynal's fame during his lifetime, and his claim to our attention today, rest solely within the Histoire philosophique.

The subject of this paper lies somewhat, but not entirely, within chapter VII of Feugère's work, a chapter entitled Les idées "philosophiques et politiques" de l'"Histoire des Indes." This paper can at greater length and in finer detail study a great volume of material than Feugère had to summarize in one chapter. Feugère would no doubt be pleased that his interest in the shadowy Raynal is shared. He gave his blessing in advance to any research that might follow his pioneering effort when he wrote, "Il ne faut pas oublier que c'est un droit absolu pour tout écrivain, comme c'est un devoir impérieux pour tout écrivain, de s'appuyer sur les travaux de leurs prédécesseurs. Leur originalité n'a rien à y perdre."¹

Wolpe's study of textual variants was not a study of Raynal's thought in relation to the intellectual climate of the eighteenth century as this paper attempts to be. Wolpe said, "Nous ne faisons pas ici l'étude de la pensée de Raynal, mais de ses modifications telles que nous les révèlent les variants du texte."² This paper overlaps in one chapter Monty's monograph on anti-colonialism in the Histoire philosophique. It is not necessary to show, as Monty has done, that Raynal was the leading, or at least most prolix, anti-colonialist. But a study

¹ Ibid., p. 202.

² Wolpe, Raynal, p. 90.

of Raynal's thought cannot ignore a subject, which, in sheer volume alone, outweighs other themes of the Histoire philosophique.

Finally, we should say that, during research on this paper, we used a set of the 1780 four-volume quarto edition of the Histoire philosophique by publisher Pellet of Geneva. As was noted in Wolpe's study, this edition represented the author's final intervention. No other edition would have been so appropriate for the preparation of this paper. We were fortunate that the University of Oklahoma Bass Collection of rare books contains a set of these magnificent volumes, and we are grateful that they were put at our disposal.

Before moving to the first substantive chapter, there could be no better point of departure for our future deliberations than the paragraph with which Feugère summarized his chapter on the philosophical and political ideas of the Histoire philosophique. "Malgré l'incohérence de ce livre une doctrine s'en dégage--Haine de l'ancien régime fondé sur l'alliance du trône et de l'autel--Anticléricalism irreligieux et révolutionnaire--Les religions sont l'oeuvre de l'imposture et de la crédulité--Le clergé salarié par l'état--Tolérance de l'état envers toutes les religions sauf le catholicisme--Applogie des jésuits--La liberté politique, le droit à la révolte et au régicide."¹

¹ Feugère, Raynal, p. 264.

CHAPTER II

ANTI-COLONIALISM

Literary historians often overlook anti-colonialism when discussing the various preoccupations of eighteenth-century writers. Voltaire's cryptic and **nonchalant** dismissal of Canada as "quelques arpents de neige" is supposed to sum up the philosophe's lack of concern.¹ Professor Havens, with only one sentence, describes Montesquieu and other eighteenth-century thinkers as being vaguely anti-colonialist.² But the very popularity of the Histoire philosophique, a history of colonialism with an anti-colonial bias, would testify to a certain widespread interest in the subject. Monty's monograph described in Chapter One, is the first devoted purely to eighteenth-century anti-colonialism. It should help to restore that theme to its proper place in the studies of that period.

Raynal, by the very nature of his subject, has much to say on this theme, more than any other eighteenth century writer. He has so much to say in fact, so many disparate things, that his thought on this subject, as on any subject, virtually defies analysis. Chinard forewarned of this difficulty in 1913 when he noted that the contents of

¹Voltaire, Candide, Ch. XXIII.

²George Havens, Age of Ideas (New York: Holt, 1955), p. 109.

the Histoire philosophique were like an encyclopedia, without the saving grace of organization, and flatly declared, "Il est impossible d'en faire l'analyse, pas plus qu'on ne peut analyser le Dictionnaire de Bayle ou l'Encyclopédie."¹

Raynal presents special problems other than the sheer volume of material. Attempting to bring order to Raynal's thought is, in effect, a task that Raynal never attempted himself. He was not a systematic thinker. He thought on at least three distinct levels, probably without being aware of it himself. But the recognition of this trichotomy of thought is the first step in any attempt to describe Raynal systematically. In the case of colonialism, his voluminous material on this subject can, with some pushing and shoving, be fitted into three categories: what happened and why; what should have happened; and, given the actual situation, where do we go from here?

In the category of "what happened," Raynal is at his emotional, romantic, eloquent best, or worst, depending upon one's taste. Here are those hair-raising word canvasses of carnage, slaughter, stupidity and perfidity on an unimaginable scale. Here also are the ringing denunciations of imperialist malefactors, the fervent pleas for an avenger to arise from the ranks of the oppressed and purge the earth with fire and sword, (feu et fer). Here also are some valid insights into the underlying causes of such calamities.

The category of "what should have happened" is somewhat impracticable in that Europeans obviously cannot turn the calendar back

¹Chinard, Amérique et le rêve exotique, p. 390.

to the fifteenth century and do it over again. But it is withal an unemotional, rational attempt to lay down a theoretical basis for colonial practice. The third category, "where do we go from here" is pragmatic and prophetic. Taken out of context, paragraphs from this category would read as if they were written by an arch imperialist, hungry for empire and eager to take up the white man's burden.

As previously noted, it is doubtful that Raynal realized that his comments on a single subject could give such disparate impressions. He may pen a paragraph of the most fiery denunciation of the colonial system in principal and practice, and follow this with pages of detailed instructions on how the metropole can strengthen its hold on a certain colony and make it more secure and profitable. Or, going to the level of pure chauvinism, he can grind out pages of advice to the ministry at Versailles, advising it to protect some possession from voracious British rivals, or, better still, how to pluck some unprotected pearl from the imperial British crown. All this without transition sentences to indicate a shift in his level of thinking; all this, moreover, interlarded among hundreds of pages of purely factual and statistical information.

In general, European discovery and conquest of new and old worlds has been, in Raynal's opinion, a tragedy unparalleled in the history of man, considering the sum total of genocide, slavery and oppression that has resulted. The European explorer is usually pictured as a satan arriving, unexpected and unwanted, in the noble savage's paradise. Despite the pious words on the explorer's lips, it soon becomes apparent that he brings only disease, vice, slavery and death. In his most negative mood, Raynal declares that the European never brought anything of

any value to the Hottentot nor any other savage. "Quelle obligation vous aura le sauvage, lorsque vous lui aurez porté des arts sans lesquels il est satisfait, des industries qui ne feroient que multiplier ses besoins et ses travaux, des loix dont il ne peut se promettre plus de sécurité que vous n'en avez?"¹ The European might as well discard any hypocritical talk of spreading civilization and the Christian religion. He comes only to pillage, exterminate and enslave.

Encore si, lorsque vous avez abordé sur ses rivages, vous vous étiez proposé de l'amener à une vie plus policée, à des moeurs qui vous paroissoient préférables aux siennes, on vous excuseroit. Mais vous êtes descendus dans son pays pour l'en dépouiller. Vous ne vous êtes approchés de sa cabane que pour l'en chasser, que pour le substituer, si vous le pouviez, à l'animal qui laboure sous le fouet de l'agriculteur, que pour achever de l'abrutir, que pour satisfaire votre cupidité.²

When one reflects that the Europeans, who were the object of Raynal's castigation in the above passage, are today the Africanner masters of South Africa, and that the Hottentots, object here of Raynal's commiseration, are today virtually extinct, but whose blood survives in the so-called "cape-colored," then Raynal's words take on a more ominous and prophetic tone than he perhaps could have realized.

For his outraged descriptions of colonial atrocities, Raynal finds ample material in that amorphous mass of anecdotes and outrages known to history as the leyenda negra, the Spanish conquest of Central and South America. The first pitched battle between Spaniards and Indians occurred in 1495, hard on the heels of Columbus' initial landfall.

¹Guillaume Raynal, Histoire philosophique et politique des établissemens et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes (4 vols.; Genève: Jean Leonard Pellet, 1780), Vol. I, p. 205.

²Ibid.

According to Raynal's sources, which he never identifies, the innocent and crudely armed natives of the island of Hispania suffered three hundred thousand deaths in one day's fighting. The survivors were promptly enslaved and delivered to the tender mercies of their new masters, Spanish convicts who were expelled from the mother country to be the first settlers.¹ Spanish depredations fill many pages of Raynal's work. He illustrates generously with numerous anecdotes, everything from Cuauhtemoc who declared Cortes' fiery stake to be no bed of roses, to the Cuban chief Hatuey, who, tied to a stake, told a priest he had no desire to go to heaven if there were any Spaniards there.² Raynal regularly uses "les dévasteurs du nouveau-monde" as a synonym for Spaniards. The sum total of Spanish atrocities leads Raynal to ask God the anguished question, "O Dieu! Pourquoi as-tu créé l'homme?"³

Raynal distinguishes degrees of evil among the various colonial powers. Spain and Portugal, as could be imagined, are the favorite targets of his wrath. The Dutch, severely castigated for their actions in South Africa (as we have already seen) actually get off the lightest. The Dutch were only as cruel as necessary for maximum commercial profit. Unlike the Spanish and Portuguese, they never killed for blood lust, nor for military glory, and, best of all, they never resorted to violence to spread Christianity.⁴ In some passages Holland appears as the instrument of a revengeful Providence, punishing the Portuguese for their innumerable

¹Ibid., p. 19.

²Ibid., III, p. 259.

³Ibid., p. 124.

⁴Ibid., I, p. 232.

crimes. "Le tems arrive enfin, où les Portugais expieront leurs perfidies, leurs brigandages et leurs cruautés."¹

But even the best colonialists were extremely bad. Raynal, like other philosophes, was a great admirer of the English, but this admiration did not obscure the fact that the British colonial system was an injustice and an atrocity. To make his point, Raynal describes a famine which raged across Bengal in 1770; rivers choked with cadavers, roadsides covered with dead and dying. As three million natives perish, the English manage quite well with the private stores in their walled citadels. Raynal then puts into the mouth of an imaginary Hindu an eloquent reproach to his British masters. The result is Raynal's description of British, and by extension European, colonialism. It is primarily a massive larceny.

Ce n'est donc que pour nous opprimer que vous êtes féconds en moyens? Les trésors immenses qu'une longue suite de siècles avoient accumulés dans cette contrée, vous en avez fait votre proie. Vous les avez transportés dans votre patrie; Vous avez augmenté les tributs, vous les faites percevoir par vos agens; Vous êtes les maîtres de notre commerce du dehors. Vos nombreux vaisseaux chargés des productions de notre industrie et de notre sol, vont enrichir vos comptoirs et vos colonies. Toutes ces choses, vous les ordonnez, vous les exécutez pour votre seule avantage. Mais qu'avez-vous fait pour notre conservation? Quelles mesures avez-vous prises, pour éloigner de nous le fléau qui nous menaçoit. Privés de tout autorité, dépouillés de nos biens, accablés sous un pouvoir terrible, nous n'avons pu que lever les mains vers vous, pour implorer votre assistance. Vous avez entendu nos gémissemens, vous avez vu la famine s'avancer à grands pas; alors, vous vous êtes éveillés. Vous avez moissonné le peu de subsistance échappées à la stérilité; vous en avez rempli vos magasins; vous les avez distribuées à vos soldats. Et nous, tristes jouets de votre cupidité, malheureux tour à tour, et par

¹ Ibid., p. 161.

vosre tyrannie, et par vosre indifférence; vous nous traitez comme des esclaves, tant que vous nous supposez des richesses; et quand nous n'avons plus que des besoins, vous ne nous regardez pas même comme des hommes. De quoi nous sert-il que l'administration des forces publiques soit toute entière dans vos mains? Où sont ces loix et ces moeurs dont vous êtes si fiers? Quel est donc ce gouvernement dont vous vous vantez la sagesse?.... Ah! Pourquoi le ciel a-t-il permis que vous ayez brisé la chaîne qui nous attachoit à nos anciens souverains? Moins avides et plus humains que vous, ils auroient appelé l'abondance de toutes les parties de l'Asie; ils auroient facilité les communications; ils auroient prodigué leur trésor; ils auroient cru s'enrichir en conservant leurs sujets.¹

This lengthy and florid indictment is even more damning when one recalls Raynal's profound admiration for the English people and British government. The English were the freest, most enlightened, most tolerant people on earth; hence the least oppressive colonial masters. The injustice of their system could not approach the calculated savagery of the priest-ridden Spanish and Portuguese, for example. A detailed description of the corruption and cruelty of Portuguese administration in Asia leads Raynal into a digression wherein he addresses an impassioned but pompous first-person declamation to his fellow Europeans.

Barbares Européens! L'éclat de vos entreprises...leurs succès ne m'en a point dérobé l'injustice. Je me suis souvent embarqué par la pensée sur les vaisseaux qui vous portoient dans ces contrées lointaines: mais descendu à terre avec vous, et devenu témoin de vos forfaits, je me suis séparé de vous, je me suis précipité parmi vos ennemis, j'ai pris les armes contre vous, j'ai baigné mes mains dans votre sang. J'en fais ici la protestation solennelle; et si je cesse un moment à vous voir comme des nuées de vautours affamés et cruels, avec aussi peu de morale et de conscience que ces oiseaux de proie; puisse mon ouvrage; puisse ma mémoire, s'il m'est permis d'espérer d'en laisser une après

¹Ibid., p. 388.

moi, tomber dans le dernier mépris, être un objet d'exécration!¹

Raynal's work and memory have become the object of universal indifference, crueller fate perhaps than the "mépris" and "exécration" that he invoked in his impassioned oath, an indifference inspired, primarily no doubt, by just such emotional and egocentric outbursts as the above. But, to give credit where credit is due, the twentieth century has taught us, or reminded us, that it takes a certain magnanimity of heart and mind even to realize that one's own culture or race is being unjust to another, foreign or "inferior" culture or race, and, having realized it, it takes a lot of courage to say it loudly and publicly.

When he works himself into a fine emotional froth while describing the atrocities of colonialism, Raynal is likely to record his own spur-of-the-moment reaction. One reaction is to engage in the wistful, but violence-tinged dream that it never happened at all, to dream that, by righteous force of arms, the garden of primeval innocence had remained undefiled. For example in the declamation that he addresses to the long since deceased Hottentots who met the first Dutch settlers, Raynal calls on the noble savage to fight these European monsters from the water's edge, lest he be devoured by them.

Fuyez, malheureux Hottentots, fuyez! Enfoncez-vous dans vos forêts! Les bêtes féroces qui les habitent sont moins redoutables que les monstres sous l'empire desquels vous allez tomber. Le tigre vous déchirera peut être; mais il ne vous ôtera que la vie. L'autre vous ravira l'innocence et la liberté. Ou si vous vous en sentez le courage, prenez vos haches, tendez vos arcs, faites pleuvoir sur ces étrangers vos

¹Ibid., p. 139.

flèches empoisonnées. Puisse-t-il n'en rester aucun pour porter à leurs citoyens la nouvelle de leur désastre. ... Ils disperseront vos cabanes; ils se jetteront sur vos troupeaux; ils corrompront vos femmes; ils séduiront vos filles. Ou vous vous plierez à leurs folles opinions, ou ils vous massacreront sans pitié. Ils croient que celui qui ne pense pas comme eux est indigne de vivre. Hatez-vous donc, embusquez-vous; et lorsqu'ils se couberont d'une manière suppliante et perfide, percez-leur la poitrine. Ce ne sont pas les représentations de la justice qu'ils n'écoutent pas, ce sont vos flèches qu'il faut leur adresser. Il en est tems; Ribeck approche.¹

Anyone who, while watching a movie or television, has ever cheered for the Indians as opposed to the cavalry, or for the "fuzzy-wuzzies" as opposed to the British army, will know how Raynal felt. But it was, after all, an exercise in emotional futility. Raynal was writing history and the Dutch colony at Capetown had already been an established fact for 120 years.

In another emotional reaction he looks to the future rather than the past, and calls for the oppressed people to rise up and throw off their imperial oppressors. The expected renewal of the monopoly of the British East India Company in 1780 provoked just such an outburst from Raynal. He addresses the British imperialists as "brigands privilégiés" and paints for their edification the picture of their doom.

Vous vous perdez, vous vous perdez, vous dis-je. Votre tyrannie touche à la fin ... elle finira. Croyez vous ... que la perte de vos criminelles richesses, et peut-être l'effusion de votre sang impur n'expieront pas vos forfaits? Si vous vous en promettez l'oubli, vous vous trompez. Le spectacle de tant de vastes contrées pillées, ravagées, réduites à la plus cruelle servitude, reparoîtra. La terre couvre les cadavres de trois millions d'hommes que vous avez laissés ou fait périr. Mais ils seront exhumés; ils demanderont vengeance au ciel et à la terre;

¹Ibid., p. 206.

ils l'obtiendront. Le tems et les circonstances n'auront que suspendu votre châtement. Oui, je vois arriver le tems de votre rappel et de votre terreur. Je vous vois traîner dans les cachots que vous méritez. Je vous en vois sortir. Je vous vois pâles et tremblans devant vos juges. J'entends les cris d'un peuple furieux rassemblé autour de leurs tribunaux.¹

Raynal, Jesuit educated anti-clerical deist, often becomes biblical when he wishes to become eloquent. The above diatribe, with opening of tombs, is an obvious redrawing of the terrible judgment day described in the Book of Revelation. Instead of Jesus Christ seated at the right hand of God, it is the oppressed and enslaved seated on the judgment throne. The meek shall at last have inherited the earth. But, when, where, and how shall these powerless Asians ever even account with the mighty British Empire? Raynal does not know and does not attempt to predict the date of these cataclysmic events. He merely announces as an *axiom*, what is really a thinly disguised wish; that, despite appearances to the contrary, the universe is just and justice will be done. "Non, non, il faut que, tôt ou tard, la justice soit fait."²

Having amply demonstrated that European colonialism had been a disaster for the peoples affected, the logical question for Raynal or his readers would be "Why?". Raynal admits that the conduct of normally civilized and Christian Europeans in newly discovered lands puzzles as well as appalls him. He cannot understand this universal reversion to barbarism that affects all Europeans in contact with helpless and technologically underdeveloped peoples. "Cette métamorphose de l'Européen

¹ Ibid., pp. 397-398.

² Ibid., p. 398.

expatrié est un phénomène si étrange, l'imagination en est si profondément affectée, que tandis qu'elle s'en occupe avec étonnement, la réflexion se tourmente pour en découvrir le principe, soit dans la nature humaine en générale, soit dans le caractère particulier des navigateurs, soit dans les circonstances antérieures ou postérieures à l'événement."¹

Raynal essays some possible explanations in the form of rhetorical questions. Could it be that when men who have been constrained to curb their appetites and whims, because they were raised in a civilized society, find themselves in a situation where they can give free vent to every passion and instinct, no matter how criminal or insane, they become more barbarous and bloodthirsty than a savage who has never known the restraints of civilization? Could it be that the adventurers, soldiers, criminals, religious fanatics, and ne'er-do-wells, who forsake hearth and home to seek their fortune in the wildernesses of Asia, Africa, and America, are not representative of the majority of Europeans who never set foot outside their native province?

But the most important cause of this mass murder and pillage, that we call European discovery and conquest, was one false principle, "cet atroce motif," which we may designate as the principle of the easiest, quickest, largest possible material gain. No conqueror or explorer ever looked upon a new land as a potential colony to be developed for the well-being of future generations of settlers and natives, not even for the long-range prosperity of the mother country. Instead, every explorer-conqueror looked upon the lands as a prey to be devoured

¹Ibid., III, p. 2.

immediately, a booty to be pillaged at once. Treasure, in its most liquid form, gold and silver, was sought with a passion that can only be described as insane. Even after the most readily accessible deposits of gold and silver were exhausted, whatever industry, agriculture, or commerce subsequently developed always had as its motive the amassing of the greatest possible fortune in the shortest possible time.

Raynal time and again makes the point that unorganized tribes, and even civilized nations such as the Aztec and Inca, could have been subjugated politically, if that were one's desire, without resort to large scale violence. The unprecedented slaughter that marked European contact with these new lands was not the inevitable historical process for spreading European civilization or technology over the globe. That could have been accomplished peacefully. The violence was the result of the blood lust of the soldiers, the fanaticism of the priests, and the insatiable greed of everyone concerned.

The greed factor, which Raynal apparently considers the predominant one among the basic faults of colonialism, takes many forms. The most obvious was the incredible gold madness, a madness that the American Indian, who took gold for granted, could never understand. Why were the Spaniards so single-minded in their pursuit of this relatively useless metal when they had a seemingly endless supply of the much more valuable iron? Raynal illustrates the gold fever with numerous anecdotes, including the one concerning the misfortune that befell the conquistador Valdivia. In a momentary interruption of the monotonous string of Spanish victories, there occurred a minor Indian triumph. Some Chilean natives managed to surprise Valdivia and massacre his contingent

of 150 men. Taken alive, Valdivia had forced down his throat a potion of melted gold while the enraged Indians shouted, "Abreuve-toi donc de ce métal dont tu est si altéré."¹ The furor of the Spanish was especially unbridled because the Crown exercised no control over the armed captains whom they dispatched to these distant lands. The Spanish Court took no interest in their activities beyond the demand for one fifth of all the gold or silver they could plunder. Raynal remarks that, obviously, "des ravages, des cruautés qu'on ne peut exprimer furent la suite nécessaire de ces principes abominables. La désolation fut universelle."²

After sufficient word canvasses of the carnage inspired by the gold madness, Raynal delivers himself of one of his personal castigations of his fellow Europeans.

Et vous, vous, pour avoir de l'or, vous avez franchi les mers. Pour avoir de l'or, vous avez envahi les contrées. Pour avoir de l'or, vous en avez massacré la plus grande partie des habitans. Pour avoir de l'or, vous avez précipité dans les entrailles de la terre ceux que vos poignards avoient épargnés. Pour avoir de l'or, vous avez introduit sur la terre le commerce infâme de l'homme et de l'esclavage. Pour avoir de l'or, vous renouvez tous les jours les mêmes crimes.³

The great historical irony of the gold madness was, as Raynal correctly understood, that the river of American gold pouring into Europe did not enrich the Europeans as they mistakenly thought. The Europeans mistook coin, which is an agreed upon sign of wealth, for wealth itself. As a result of the discovery of America, the amount of gold and silver in circulation in Europe increased greatly. But, there

¹Ibid., II, p. 254.

²Ibid., p. 167.

³Ibid., p. 201.

was no corresponding increase in the amount of goods and services produced by the European economies. The result was merely an increased supply of currency chasing a stable supply of goods: in other words, inflation.

Another aspect of the greed factor was the monopolistic nature of European colonialism. Students of history will recall that most colonialism, until the nineteenth century, was actually practiced by private corporations, such as the British East India Company and the Dutch East India Company. These corporations, whose stock was traded publicly, were given a monopoly on trade with a particular hemisphere for an extended period of time, ten to fifty years, renewable at the discretion of the government. These companies were endowed with sovereign powers; the power to equip armies and navies, make war and peace, exercise political control over all lands conquered or otherwise acquired. The original theory behind the exclusive trading privilege was that the hazards and expenses of trading with the newly discovered lands were so great that a company had to be assured a monopoly on all trade for an extended period of time to make the investment attractive. The various governments liked the conquest by proxy arrangement, because it gave them the impression that they were getting something (colonies and empire) for nothing since private investors paid the expenses. But, after a herculean study of corporation balance sheets and government budgets covering a period of two hundred years, Raynal comes to the conclusion that something for nothing was, as always, a chimera. Though it is true that many individuals made fortunes from the companies, sometimes through dividends on profits but more often through adroit trading

of the highly speculative shares, in the long run, the companies always incurred greater expenses than they could bear. The costs of wars and political sovereignty were too much for private investment. To keep grandiose schemes from collapsing entirely, governments had to lend the companies billions with little hope for repayment. The king's own soldiers and sailors inevitably had to assist the companies' mercenaries. What Raynal called "les dépenses de souveraineté" always came, in the final analysis, from the public treasury.¹

Worst of all, from a purely pragmatic point of view, the various governments never recovered in duties on exports and imports, nor by any other means of taxation, the monies that they advanced to the private trading companies. Speaking of European relations with Asia, Raynal says, "Il n'y a pas une seule acquisition ni grande, ni petite, qui, à l'exception du Bengale et les lieux où croissent les épiceries, ait pu à la longue payer les dépenses qu'a entraînées sa conquête, qu'a exigées sa conservation."² Or, for another example, "Dans la situation actuelle, les comptoirs françois dans l'Inde ne rendent pas au-delà de 200,000 livres, et coûtent plus de 2,000,000 livres chaque année."³

Such statements as these may have been what led Feugère to conjecture that Raynal's anti-colonialism was more pragmatic than altruistic.⁴ But, we have already seen, and will see further, that Raynal is much more the outraged humanitarian than the outraged tax-payer or

¹Ibid., I, p. 707.

²Ibid., p. 694.

³Ibid., p. 532.

⁴Feugère, Raynal, p. 148.

businessman. Even his principal objection to the monopoly companies was more theoretical than practical. He bitterly opposes the companies because of his instinctive belief in laissez-faire competition, because of his visceral hatred of exclusive privilege of any sort, in any matter from taxation to trade. What is permitted to one citizen must, as a self-evident principle, be permitted to all citizens. What is foreclosed to one must be foreclosed to all.

Another aspect of monopolistic thinking was mercantilism. Mercantilism was that policy which decreed that a colony could trade only with the mother country. Not only was a colony barred from trading with another European power, but, especially in the Spanish practice, the policy was carried to the absurd lengths of forbidding a colony to trade with another colony of the same mother country. This resulted in ridiculous situations wherein a colony was forced to import from the mother country some product which was not produced there, but which might be in oversupply in a sister colony near by. There were, of course, many exceptions designating specific products and specific colonies. And, more importantly, illicit trade in contravention of the rules usually equalled or excelled the unilateral trade with the metropole permitted by law. But mercantilism, with its emphasis on restrictions and exclusiveness remained the basis of all colonial trade policy. Students of American history will recall that it was repeated attempts by the British Crown to enforce just such trade restrictions that led to the Revolutionary War.

The mercantilistic policy was for Raynal "cet aveuglement étrange." This kind of thinking was unknown to such ancient colonizers

as Greece and Phoenicia, he declares. He is at a loss to explain a system so repugnant to common sense. He can only attribute it to the fact that European colonialism began in "un siècle de l'ignorance et de barbarie." He is reassured that it is simply a case of ignorance by the fact that the Spanish are the worst offenders in this regard.¹ Raynal objects to the system strenuously, not only because it violates his instinctive belief in laissez-faire competition and irritates his hatred of all exclusiveness, but because he rightly understood that any policy was shortsighted which did not exploit the inherent advantages of free trade and the resulting international division of labor.

In various places, Raynal denounced gold, monopoly companies, and mercantilism as being the basic faults underlying the European colonial system. We have lumped these together as the "greed factor." But Raynal, not hampered by any necessity to be systematic or consistent, could let his mind range freely. So, on other occasions, it is not some aspect of the greed factor that is singled out for special notice, but rather the factor of conquest, or the political sovereignty of one people over another people in a distant land. As one would say in twentieth century terminology, colonialism violates the principle of self-determination, the principle of political independence. In numerous passages Raynal points his accusing finger at foreign-rule as being the basic, inherent weakness of colonialism. For example, he analyzes several superficial abuses of the Dutch East India Company and follows with several pages of gratuitous advice, which, he says, would make the Company

¹Raynal, Histoire philosophique, II, pp. 314-315.

more secure and profitable. He adds significantly, however,

Après les améliorations que nous nous sommes permis de proposer, l'ordre se trouveroit rétabli pour quelque tems. Nous disons pour quelque tems, parce que toute colonie, supposant l'autorité dans une contrée, et l'obéissance dans une autre contrée éloignée, est un établissement vicieux dans son principe. C'est une machine dont les ressorts se relâchent, se brisent sans cesse, et qu'il faut réparer continuellement.

The key phrase here is obviously "vicieux dans son principe." Even the best colonial system presupposes foreign rule, so one starts inevitably with a system that is basically wrong.

Raynal illustrates the inherent contradictions of foreign rule with the example of the British in India. Having already agonized over the question of how the English, most enlightened people on earth, could make a mess of colonialism, Raynal thinks he perceives the answer.

Dominateurs sans contradiction dans un empire où ils n'étoient que négocians, il'étoit bien difficile que les Anglois n'abusassent pas de leur pouvoir. Dans l'éloignement de sa patrie, on n'est plus retenu par la crainte de rougir aux yeux de ses concitoyens. ... Dans des contrées où l'on est venu pour s'enrichir, on oublie aisement d'être juste.²

The description of the brutal suppression of a slave rebellion in Jamaica leads Raynal into a digression in which he says the military conquest of the New World was the first mistake or injustice from which all subsequent mistakes or injustices flowed inevitably.

Tels sont les progrès de l'injustice et de la violence. Pour conquérir le Nouveau Monde, il a fallu sans doute égorger les habitans. Pour les remplacer, il falloit acheter des nègres. ...il a fallu les prendre par force et les rendre esclaves.

¹Ibid., I, p. 245.

²Ibid., p. 389.

Pour les tenir dans l'esclavage, il faut les traiter durement
... etc.¹

We paraphrased earlier in this chapter the digression in which Raynal declared that the unprecedented violence that characterized European conquests was not the historically inevitable means to impose European political sovereignty on other peoples. Total political submission could have been had with a fraction of the blood that was actually shed. As Raynal says in the case of the highly organized Peruvian nation, "Vraisemblablement, ils se seroient trouvés, sans tirer l'épée, les maîtres de ce vaste empire, s'ils avoient montré de la modération, de la humanité."² But, Raynal goes even further and says that European sovereignty, that foreign rule "viceux dans son principe," was not the historically inevitable relationship that Europe had to assume with regard to these newly discovered lands. Europe could have engaged in a mutually beneficent exchange of goods and technology with these peoples while leaving them in a state of unfettered independence. Relations with Japan and China demonstrated that trade could be profitable without assuming the burden of political sovereignty. For an example of what might have been, "L'Indostan, quelque soit sa destinée, fabriquera des toiles. Nos marchands les achèteront, ils nous les vendront, voilà tout."³ Raynal does not need to add, however, that if a country retains its independence, its trading partners cannot impose upon it a unilateral trade monopoly.

¹Ibid., III, p. 563.

²Ibid., II, p. 136.

³Ibid., I, p. 696.

The European policy of conquest was based on more than the mistaken assumption that empire was prerequisite for trade, or that trade had to be monopolistic to be profitable, more even than the desire to plunder gold and other stores of liquid treasure. It was based on the European's unthinking assumption that it was his manifest destiny to rule the world, his right and duty to rule the world. Raynal rails time and again at the inherent imperialism and intolerance of European Christianity. He condemns the Europeans' policy of "claiming" land for their sovereign by virtue of the fact that they were the first to set foot there and their "taking possession" of an entire continent if they are the first to see the river which drains it. The fact that these lands were already possessed by the people who had lived there for milleniums was universally ignored. As Raynal notes wryly, "Personne en Europe n'étoit capable de penser, qu'il put y avoir quelque injustice de s'emparer d'un pays qui n'étoit pas habité par des chrétiens."¹ He asks Europeans how they would feel if another race landed on the shores of Europe and, seeing none of their own kind, claimed the continent for themselves and proceeded to make good their claim with fire and sword.²

Of course this European imperialism was based squarely on European intolerance. The assumption that all non-Christians were sub-humans who were incapable of owning the land they inhabited. Raynal describes the Spaniard's attitude toward the natives of Mexico as being the following: They did not have Spanish mores, so they had no mores;

¹Ibid., II, p. 11.

²Ibid., III, p. 366.

they did not have European civilization, so they had no civilization; they did not have the Catholic religion, so they had no religion.¹

Raynal takes an especial pleasure in pointing out the role that religion plays in European intolerance. He waxes especially wroth at the incredible arrogance of the pope in dividing the New World between Spain and Portugal. How could the pope give something that was not his to give? Connoisseurs of polemics will appreciate the blast that he directs at the pontif on this account.

Et c'est le chef de la plus sainte des religions qui donne à autrui ce qui ne lui appartient pas? Et c'est un souverain chrétien qui accepte ce don? Et ces conditions stipulées entre eux sont la soumission au monarque européen ou l'esclavage; le baptême ou la mort. Sur le simple exposé de ce contrat inoui, on est saisi d'une telle horreur que l'on prononce que celui qui ne la partage pas, est un homme étranger à toute morale, à tout sentiment d'humanité, à toute notion de justice. ... Pontife abominable... Prince stupide... etc.²

Having discussed the false assumptions that underlay European colonial policy and the disasters that resulted therefrom, we move now to the second part of this chapter, Raynal's theories of the true principles that should have governed colonial policy. In the middle of his second volume, after thousands of words on the subject, Raynal pauses to ask the basic question, "Les Européens ont-ils été en droit de fonder des colonies dans le nouveau monde?"³ Surprisingly, and in apparent contradiction to what he has said elsewhere, he answers his own question by announcing that the basic principle of colonialism is valid, being in

¹ Ibid., II, p. 31.

² Ibid., p. 126.

³ Ibid., pp. 249 et sub.

accord with both reason and equity, "La raison et l'équité permettent les colonies." But he immediately adds a caveat, "Mais elles (raison et équité) tracent les principes dont il ne devrait pas être permis de s'écarter dans leur fondation."

To describe the true principles, Raynal divides the globe into three theoretical divisions; "où la contrée est déserte, où elle est en partie déserte et en partie habitée, où elle est toute peuplée." Raynal sees no justification for European sovereignty over any country with aboriginal population. "Si elle est toute peuplée, je ne puis légitimement prétendre qu'à l'hospitalité et aux secours que l'homme doit à l'homme." Raynal has in mind the right of ships to take on fresh water and supplies, the right of caravans to peaceful passage. He cites China as an example of a country assez peuplé, and defends her right to prohibit absolutely all European settlement. He could have added that China, at that time, was in the fortunate position of being able to enforce the prohibition of unwanted European settlers.

At the other extreme, "Une contrée déserte et inhabitée est la seule qu'on puisse s'approprier. La première découverte bien constatée fut une prise de possession légitime." Significantly, Raynal cites no example for his theoretical empty country. In fact, with the exception of Antarctica and widely scattered tiny islands, there were no empty lands when Europe began its great age of discovery and expansion.

Although Europeans have appropriated some lands that were fully populated, India for example, the greatest crimes against reason and equity have been in that gray area that Raynal designated as "partie

déserte, partie occupée." Into this category, for example, would fall North and South America and all of Africa. Here Raynal defends colonialism only in the uninhabited parts. "La partie déserte est à moi. J'en puis prendre possession par mon travail. L'ancien habitant seroit barbare, s'il venoit subitement renverser ma cabane." In Raynal's utopian vision, the settler and native would dwell peacefully side by side. They would engage in mutually beneficial trade. The native would gladly trade his useless gold for the settler's valuable iron. The settler in turn would use the gold to buy supplies and luxuries from the mother country. In the long run, the native, seeing the advantages that accrued to the settler because of his industriousness (uncivilized men are universally allergic to work, as we understand it, according to Raynal), seeing the advantages of the settler's arts and technology, seeing, indeed, the advantages of the Christian religion properly practiced, would be won over to European civilization by force of example rather than by force of arms. The native would eventually petition the settler to be allowed to enter into his political union with the mother country, on the basis of their common humanity and their commonly shared homeland. And finally, the native would even call the white man blessed for having brought him his culture and civilization.¹

The most obvious weakness in Raynal's utopia is, of course, the same fault that invalidates all utopian schemes. It ignores the realities of human nature. In order for Raynal's system to work, every European settler would have to be as philosophe as Raynal himself. Moreover, Raynal, and his century, lacked the basic insights of modern

¹Ibid.

anthropology and sociology, though their writings laid the foundations for these sciences. Raynal obviously underestimates the trauma that inevitable accompanies the substitution of one culture by another, even when it is by peaceful attraction rather than by force of arms. A culture is an organic whole. Everything from the way people gather their food to the way they bury their dead is interrelated; every ritual and institution supports every other. When this edifice begins to crumble, as it does in contact with a superior technology, there are tragic consequences for the individuals involved. We see in our own country thousands of American Indians whose culture is irretrievably destroyed but who, with every inducement of reward and punishment, have not been able to adopt the modified European culture that has become dominant in this hemisphere.

Raynal likewise was oblivious to those ecological and demographic considerations that have come to weigh so heavily on our minds in the mid-twentieth century. He said, for example, that the settler and native should use in common those forests and rivers not actually inhabited by either. He added the significant caveat, "*à moins que leur usage exclusif ne soit nécessaire à sa subsistance.*" But, could it not be that all these seemingly uninhabited areas were, in the total ecological balance, necessary to the native's subsistence living? Nature, in her abhorrence of any vacuum, tends to fill every area with as many individuals of each species as the area will support. Thus, although the Americas were sparsely populated, this land was already providing subsistence to as many people as it could at their level of technology.

If there could have been more humanity, there would have been more humanity. Granted that the introduction of European technology makes possible a greater population, Raynal did not foresee that the European, who came already endowed with his technology, would begin to increase rapidly, filling what was to him a partial vacuum, and, almost immediately, impinging upon land that was necessary to the native's subsistence. Raynal's schemes were based on the assumption that the settler population would be as static as it was benign. He did not foresee, as indeed nobody foresaw, that the struggling settlements on Virginia and New England beaches in the early seventeenth century posed a threat to the survival of plains Indians, camping on the banks of the Missouri and Arkansas 2,000 miles away. Yet the increase of these feeble establishments rapidly filled this continent, destroyed the Indians' culture and very nearly exterminated their race.

But, it is easy to criticize utopias, especially with the benefit of centuries of hindsight. Moreover, Raynal's schemes were not a plan of action--European settlement was already an established fact. It was in effect a continuation of his indictment, a bill of particulars in reverse. By describing what Europe should have done, he was merely making more vivid the fact that she had in every case done just the opposite.

The concluding section of this chapter deals with Raynal's suggestion for reforming the colonies as they actually existed in the eighteenth century, and his predictions for the future of the system. Here are those hundreds of pages of detailed advice to all the colonial powers of Europe, telling them how to strengthen a fort here, deepen a

port there, embellish a colonial city here, clear land for new plantations there. Here also Raynal shows himself a French patriot by his continual fretting and fuming that France is a second-rate, or should we say fourth-rate, colonial power compared to England, Holland, Spain and Portugal. Among the detailed instructions are some exotic and amusing bits of advice. He exhorts the ministers at Versailles, for example, to export thousands of French youth to Madagascar, where they each be required to marry a "Madecasse" maiden to help advance "le grand système de la civilisation."¹ Carried away with his good advice for colonizing Madagascar, Raynal trumpets the glories of the White Man's Burden in best imperialistic style.

Quelle gloire ce seroit pour la France de retirer un peuple nombreux des horreurs de la barbarie, de lui donner des moeurs honnêtes, une police exacte, des loix sages, une religion bienfaisante, des arts utiles et agréables; de l'élever au rang des nations instruites et civilisées, ... Quelle plus grande gloire que celle que je vous propose?²

Apart from these minutiae of advice and colonialist eloquence, Raynal does propose some broad and basic reforms of colonial practice. As could be supposed from previous discussion, the most basic of these reforms would be the abolition of the monopoly trading companies, and the substitution of free trade for mercantilism. In this broad vein, Raynal also proposes that every colony be allowed an elected legislature with complete autonomy in local government; civil and criminal codes, schools, public works; also autonomous courts of civil and criminal law to interpret and enforce the local law. He advocates abolishing direct

¹ Ibid., I, p. 416.

² Ibid., p. 419.

taxes to the metropole where the settlers are not represented in the government. ("No taxation without representation," the rallying cry of the American colonies.) To accomplish the great tasks of clearing and building, he advocates that the metropole assure an adequate supply of credit, and, carried away with the topic immediately at hand, he even advocates that the mother country take steps to assure an adequate supply of slaves.¹

After a thorough study of the statistics of trade, taxation and investment, Raynal comes to the conclusion that the metropoles never act in the best interest of their settlers abroad, but always in the short term interest of the metropole or some monopoly company chartered by the metropole.² He concludes, therefore, that the colonial system will be overthrown by the settlers themselves. They will revolt for national independence and new nations of transplanted Europeans will be born.³ Since he failed to mention them, one can assume that Raynal correctly foresaw that the rapidly diminishing aboriginal inhabitants would play no part in these colonial revolts and would have no share in the new political independence that would result. As for those countries of Asia and Africa, where native populations had not been overwhelmed by European settlers, Raynal hazarded no serious predictions, beyond the florid description of a cataclysmic judgment day. In fact, national independence for these lands under native sovereignty was quite far in

¹ Ibid., III, p. 495-499.

² Ibid., p. 436-438.

³ Ibid., p. 274.

the future and rather unthinkable in the eighteenth century. The so-called second wave of imperialism that brought European sovereignty to the interior of Africa did not occur until near the end of the nineteenth century, and the world-wide, mostly peaceful, revolution that brought independence and native rule to these lands did not occur until after the Second World War.

Raynal's discussion of colonialism ranges from denunciation of it as inherently vicious, through theories of proper colonial practice, to practical suggestions for reform of the existing system. But, withal, Raynal was a loud and persistent anti-colonialist. Moreover, his main objection to the colonial system was not pragmatic, though he did detail its unprofitability for all but a select few. His most consistent reaction was one of moral outrage and indignation. The subject of colonialism suited well his style of writing, with its emphasis on emotional shock. It suited well his didactic purpose, which was to teach his readers to hate instinctively all manner of oppression and arbitrary power. The closely allied subject of slavery also provides excellent ammunition for Raynal's booming cannon of outrage.

CHAPTER III

SLAVERY

Though other eighteenth century writers discussed and condemned slavery,¹ Raynal, as in the case of colonialism, was afforded the opportunity to say more on the topic than other writers, simply because of the nature of his overall subject. Slavery is an integral part of the history Raynal would relate. In fact, the revival, after a lapse of centuries, of slavery practiced on a large scale by Europeans is one of the most remarkable side effects of the discovery of the New World.

In his passion for thoroughness, Raynal, in one digression, traces the history of slavery from the beginnings of human society, as he perceived it, with special emphasis on the practices of ancient Greece and Rome. Raynal's primary interest, however, is slavery as it was practiced by Europeans in North and South America in the eighteenth century. That story began with the enslaving of Indians to work gold and silver mines. Not ten years after Columbus' initial landfall, Indians were being captured on the mainland of South America to replace slaves

¹Reader may wish to consult the following:

- a) Encyclopédie, art., "Esclavage."
- b) Rousseau, Discours sur l'inégalité, Bk. II, Contrat Social, Bk. I, ch. iv.
- c) Montesquieu, Esprit des Lois, Bk. XV, ch. v.
- d) Voltaire, Dictionnaire philosophique, art., "Esclaves." Candide, ch. xix.

dying in the mines of Cuba and Hispania. Raynal's emotions overwhelm him as he describes their pitiful condition.

Les uns et les autres étoient accouplés au travail comme des bêtes. On faisoit relever, à force de coups, ceux qui plioient sous leurs fardeaux. Il n'y avoit de communication entre les deux sexes, qu'à la dérobee. Les hommes périssoient dans les mines, et les femmes dans les champs que cultivoient leurs foibles mains. Une nourriture mal-saine, insuffisante, achevoit d'épuiser des corps excédés de fatigues. Le lait tarrissoit dans le sein des mères. Elles expiroient de faim, de lassitude, pressant contre leurs mamelles desséchées leurs enfans morts ou mourans. Les pères s'empoisonnoient. Quelques-uns se pendirent aux arbres, après y avoir pendu leurs fils et leur épouse. Leur race n'est plus. Il faut que je m'arrête ici un moment. Mes yeux se remplissent de larmes et je ne vois plus ce que j'écris.

Before his tears interrupted his work, Raynal had remarked bitterly that "la religion et la politique furent les deux voiles dont se couvrit cet affreux système." Religion because the Indian would not embrace Christianity unless enslaved, political because slavery reduced the chances of an organized resistance or revolt. As shabby as these two justifications may appear, they were in truth no more than hypocritical veils for the true motive. As Raynal said, the true motive was economic--the greed factor, in the beginning, the gold madness. The Apaches of northern Mexico were given a choice: enter the silver mines as slaves or be exterminated. They chose extermination and the Spaniards quickly obliged them, which leads Raynal to exclaim, "Grand Dieu, exterminer des hommes ... parce qu'ils ne vouloient pas êtres esclaves. Et nous sommes des peuples civilisés, et nous sommes chrétiens?"²

¹Ibid., II, p. 22.

²Ibid., p. 64.

Raynal specifically states on at least four occasions that it was the genocide of the American Indian that led inevitably, in a chain of horrors, to the African slave trade.¹ Blacks were first imported to replace Indians who died in droves in the mines. It soon became apparent, however, that blacks did not prosper in the mines better than Indians. But, as the most readily accessible lodes of gold and silver were exhausted in any case, an important discovery was made. The black, unlike the Indian, was adaptable to agricultural slavery. The Indian slave died, or committed suicide, in the open field nearly as readily as in the mine shaft; but the black did not. The black slave made plantation type agriculture not only possible, but highly profitable.

Thus began the slave trade which rapidly reached impressive proportions. Raynal says that slaves, like cattle in ancient times, came to be the medium of exchange in Africa. "Les têtes de nègres représentent le numéraire des états de la Guinée."² Raynal estimates that, in the last half of the eighteenth century, European slave traders annually took out of Africa eighty thousand head of negro slaves, of which number approximately seventy thousand arrived alive in the New World, ten thousand dying at sea. Raynal describes in vivid and action packed narrative how blacks are captured, marched to the sea, and transported in slave ships. He pauses to ask if the reader does not feel his soul filling

¹a) Ibid., p. 294.
 b) Ibid., pp. 410-411.
 c) Ibid., III, p. 252.
 d) Ibid., p. 263.

²All the west coast of Africa from the Sahara to the Cape of Good Hope was called "La Guinée."

with the same indignation that he feels in relating these horrible details.¹

Raynal concludes this portion of his discussion with a description of the blacks' condition once they are settled in the New World. He tries to equal the vividness and outrage he has already poured into his description of Indian slavery.

Rien n'est plus affreux que la condition du noir dans tout l'archipel américain. On commence par le flétir du sceau ineffaçable de l'esclavage, en imprimant avec un fer chaud sur ses bras ou sur ses mamelles le nom ou la marque de son oppresseur. Une cabane étroit, mal-saine, sans commodités, lui sert de demeure. Son lit est une claie plus propre à briser le corps qu'à le reposer. Quelques pots de terre, quelque plats de bois, forment son ameublement. La toile grossière qui cache une partie de sa nudité, ne le garantit ni des chaleurs insupportables du jour, ni des fraîcheurs dangereuses de la nuit. Ce qu'on lui donne de manioc, de boeuf salé, de morue, de fruits et racines, ne soutient qu'à peine sa misérable existence. Privé de tout, il est condamné à un travail continuel, dans un climat brûlant, sous le fouet toujours agité d'un conducteur féroce.²

Having seen how Raynal explained the origins and development of slavery as practiced in the eighteenth century and his descriptions of that institution, we now move to a consideration of Raynal's reaction to the phenomena he has described. As with the problem of colonialism, Raynal records three distinct reactions. One is the emotional, somewhat romantic, reaction that takes the form of an appeal for a black champion to arise from the ranks of the oppressed and lead his people to freedom over the bodies of their oppressors. This is the famous passage, which, according to Sir John Morley, Toussaint L'Ouverture painfully deciphered

¹Ibid., pp. 147-149.

²Ibid., p. 177.

before launching the slave rebellion that made him liberator and founding father of Haiti.¹

Où est il, ce grand homme, quella nature doit à ses enfans vexés, opprimés, tourmentés? Où est-il? Il paroîtra, il lèvera l'étendard sacré de la liberté. Ce signal vénérable rassemblera autour de lui les compagnons de son infortune. Plus impetueux que les torrens, ils laisseront partout les traces de leur juste ressentiment. ... Tous leurs tyrans deviendront la proie du fer et de la flamme. Les champs américains s'enivreront avec transport d'un sang qu'ils attendoient depuis si long-tems, et les ossemens de tant d'infortunés entassés depuis trois siècles tressailleront de joie, ... par-tout on bénira le nom du héros qui aura rétabli les droits de l'espèce humaine. ..."²

The above, filled with violence, righteous anger, allusions to a quickening of the dead, is obviously very similar to the previously quoted description of a judgment day for imperialists.

Raynal's second reaction to slavery is the rational, theoretical approach, in which he attempts, in a systematic way, to demonstrate that slavery is morally and reasonably indefensible. Just as Raynal began his systematic analysis of colonialism by dividing the globe into three theoretical regions, so he begins his analysis of slavery by distinguishing three sorts of human liberty.

La liberté naturelle, la liberté civile, la liberté politique: C'est à dire la liberté de l'homme, celle du citoyen et celle d'un peuple. La naturelle est le droit que la nature a donné à tout homme de disposer de soi, à sa volonté. La liberté civile est le droit que la société doit garantir à chaque citoyen de pouvoir faire tout ce qui n'est pas contraire aux loix. La liberté politique est l'état d'un peuple qui n'a point aliéné sa souveraineté et qui fait ses propres loix.³

¹ Morley, Diderot, II, p. 199.

² Raynal, Histoire philosophique, III, p. 204.

³ Ibid., p. 193.

Slavery is wrong precisely because it violates the first and most basic of the three liberties, the liberty to dispose of oneself. But, one may ask, by what authority do you assert the existence of an innate liberty of self? Raynal's reply is that the liberty of self is not an a priori supposition but rather a logical deduction from the facts of human nature. Man, according to Raynal, is a free moral agent, endowed with free will and choice, and equipped, moreover, with innate ideas of right and wrong, justice and injustice, upon which to base his decisions. It follows, therefore, that man would not be so endowed if it were his proper station to be the chattel property of another man. There is a basic contradiction in a creature so endowed being denied the basic liberty of self-disposal. We rightly enslave beasts of burden precisely because they do not possess these human characteristics. A Christian baptizes his slave, tacitly recognizing his humanity, yet affords him no more liberty of self than one affords a mule or an ox. Warming to his subject, Raynal clinches his argument with an eloquent flourish. God is my father, he says, I am his child, not his slave. How could I accord to another man a power that I refuse to God Almighty?¹

Having stated these "verités éternelles et immouvables," Raynal, still in an argumentative frame of mind, proceeds to list all the arguments that "écrivains ignominieux" have advanced in defense of slavery, and refutes them one by one. It might be worthwhile for our better understanding of the eighteenth century to see what some of pro-slavery arguments were, and Raynal's rebuttals. It is also interesting and

¹Ibid., p. 194.

instructive to note that some of the pro-slavery arguments sound embarrassingly like statements still heard in the twentieth century.

Some of the assertions and replies are paraphrased as follows:

- A) Slavery is in accord with "le droit du plus fort."
- R) The same law authorizes a slave to kill his master at the first opportunity.
- A) Slavery has been practiced universally.
- R) Universality of a practice has no relation to its propriety.
- A) Negroes were born for slavery. They are ignorant, sly, mean.
- R) Negroes are ignorant, sly, mean, because they are enslaved.
- A) The state sells slaves.
- R) The state has no right. The state cannot sell what it never owned, a human personality, a human life.
- A) Some slaves sell themselves.
- R) The liberty of self-disposal does not extend to enslaving oneself. The contract is too unequal to have any standing in law or equity. Furthermore, there is actually no exchange of value. The instant the seller accepts payment, both he and his payment become the property of the buyer.
- A) The slaves are happier in America than they were in Africa.
- R) A lie. Why do they die like flies? Why do mothers kill their infants? Why do they constantly plot escape or revolt?

Raynal saves a special scorn and sarcasm for the last assertion:

- A) Slavery is the only means whereby blacks can be led to eternal salvation through Christian baptism.
- R) "O debonnaire Jésus, eussiez-vous prévu qu'on feroit servir, vos douces maximes à la justification de tant d'horreurs?"¹

In like manner, Raynal, on another occasion, impatiently disposes of the theological explanation of the negroes' blackness, the

¹ Ibid., pp. 195-200.

assertion, still fervently believed by millions of fundamentalists, that negroes are the descendants of Cain, marked by God for having murdered his brother Abel. Raynal's reaction is, "Grand Dieu! Quelles extravagances atroces t'imputent des êtres. ... Sont-ce les démons qui te blasphément."¹ In the best eighteenth century fashion, Raynal explains negritude as being from natural causes, primarily climate.

In the proposals that Raynal made to reform colonial administration he included the recommendation that the metropoles assure their American colonies an adequate supply of slaves. The contradiction is more apparent than real. Raynal accepted without reservation the eighteenth century belief that only negroes could do agricultural labor in tropical climates. For example, his grandiose plans for the development of French Guiana include the assertion, "Pour obtenir de riches productions, il faudra recourir nécessairement aux bras nerveux des nègres."² Raynal thought Martinique could increase agricultural output by a third, "mais pour atteindre ce but, il faudrait un plus grand nombre d'esclaves."³ Thus, when discussing agricultural production, he could mention slavery with the same matter-of-factness as one speaking of livestock, but Raynal never conceded that this apparent necessity constituted a justification for slavery. He stated in volume one that "la servitude ... est toujours une dégradation de l'espèce humaine."⁴ And, summing up his work at the end of volume four, he would still declare that it would have been better

¹ Ibid., p. 124.

² Ibid., p. 361.

³ Ibid., p. 392.

⁴ Ibid., I, p. 211.

to leave the New World uncultivated, rather than commit the crime against nature that is slavery.¹

In Raynal's third reaction to the slavery question, as in the case of colonialism, he assumes the role of moderate, pragmatic reformer. Realizing that his calls for abolition were futile, no matter how eloquent or well reasoned, he proposes some immediate practical reforms in the institution as it actually existed. He bases his arguments on an appeal to the self-interest of the slave owners themselves. Pointing to the high death rate of valuable slaves, the frequent escapes, the high costs in time, money and fear expended to guard against, suppress, and repair the damages of slave rebellions, Raynal stresses the inefficiency of the present system. In a chapter entitled Comment on pourroit rendre l'état des esclaves plus supportable, he declares, "L'histoire de tous les peuples leur démontroit, que pour rendre l'esclavage utile, il faut du moins le rendre doux."² A healthy, happy labor force is more efficient and profitable than a labor force living at subsistence level, motivated only by fear and cruelty. Raynal proposes an across the board amelioration of the slaves' food shelter, and clothing. To motivate increased production, he recommends that the slave be allowed to share directly in some small portion of the profits that result from his labor. He foresees that, with these ameliorated conditions, there would be a slackening in the death rate and an increase in natural reproduction to the point where slave owners could rely solely on plantation-born slaves.

¹ Ibid., IV, p. 704.

² Ibid., III, p. 181.

This fact alone would bring an end to one of the most odious features of the present system, the capture and transportation of new slaves from Africa.

All of Raynal's suggested reforms are temporary measures, however, meant to improve the actual system only until it could be abolished entirely. Realizing that an immediate or violent abolition, even if it were possible, would not be in the best interests of either the slave owners or the slaves themselves, he proposes a plan for gradual abolition. All blacks should be bound to their masters as unsalaried apprentices for the first twenty years of their life. For five years they should be bound to work for the same master as paid laborers, then, at age twenty-five they would be free to remain or seek employment elsewhere. Admirable as this plan is, it apparently never occurred to Raynal that newly-freed blackmen would encounter any insurmountable vexations in a society where all wealth, land, all means of production would be owned by their former masters, all white. In the meantime, in anticipation of abolition, he suggested that Europeans persuade free Africans, in Africa, to raise those tropical crops--sugar, cotton, rice, and indigo--upon which European economies were now dependant and which were supplied only by slave labor in America.

It is perhaps worthwhile to note in passing that Raynal's recommendations for reform and gradual abolition of slavery were as universally ignored as were his suggested reforms of the colonial system. European colonialism was overthrown in all of North and South America by wars of national independence. The eventual abolition of slavery was likewise abrupt and violent in many countries and resulted in

situations to which neither former master nor slave could make a satisfactory adjustment.

In colonialism and slavery we have seen the eighteenth century's preoccupation with two great humanitarian concerns. To the extent that Raynal is an example, one notes the complexity of the century's reaction to these problems. Yet, there begins to emerge a certain pattern of thought in this complexity. We move now to another of the century's favorite topics, one where, by word and deed, eighteenth-century France probably had her greatest influence on the rest of the world; that is the subject of government.

CHAPTER IV

GOVERNMENT

There is no shortage of material on the subject of government in the Histoire philosophique, but this subject is, if anything even less coherently discussed than the subjects of colonialism and slavery. As is the case with other subjects, the bulk of the material is description and criticism of the then existing institutions. It was, of course, relatively easier to point out the palpable absurdities and abuses of the ancien régime than to offer corrective proposals. Much of the material takes the form of short one- and two-line critical asides dropped into a discussion of some other subject. For example, Raynal declares that kings rule in ignorance. They do not wish to hear the truth, and their subjects will not tell it to them.¹ Or, kings treat their subjects as Arabs treat their camels; double the load and halve the subsistence.² Or, "On sait qu'ou il y a des rois, il faut qu'il y ait des abus."³ And, a hereditary monarch acts as if, "les hommes pourraient être légués et possédés, aussi que des terres et des troupeaux."⁴

¹Raynal, Histoire philosophique, I, p. 97.

²Ibid., p. 293.

³Ibid., III, p. 263.

⁴Ibid., I, p. 488.

These sarcastic asides, scattered here and there in otherwise factual material, do much to sustain the reader's interest, and they undoubtedly tasted deliciously of forbidden fruit to eighteenth-century readers, but they do not form a coherent systematic criticism. They do show, however, a deep-seated, implacable hostility to monarchy as it was practiced in France. In a broader vein, Raynal's longer digressions may be divided into description and criticism of despotism in general, and description and criticism of hereditary absolute monarchy in particular.

A description of the Jesuit theocracy in Paraguay affords Raynal the opportunity to describe a despotism in action.¹ Feugère and Wolpe, with justification, have called the otherwise anti-Catholic Raynal an apologist for the Jesuits, but his description of their rule in Paraguay is as damning an indictment of absolutist society as one will encounter in any author. The Guaranis Indians, Raynal concedes, under Jesuit rule have enjoyed perfect equality, which is "le second des biens," But the price they have paid is total deprivation of liberty, which is "le premier." In the absolutist society, everything that is not prohibited is mandatory. There is no 'area of life left to individual choice. Life is inevitably gray and somber in such a state. Raynal asks, "Comment un peuple entier vivoit-il sans repugnance sous la contrainte d'une loi austère ... sans leur (les Guaranis) inspirer de la mélancolie et sans aigrir leur humeur?" Theocratic rule had the effect of turning an entire race into "des espèces de moines," not a happy state of affairs in Raynal's opinion. "Les devoirs étoient tyranniques. Aucune faute n'échappoit au

¹ Ibid., II, pp. 288-289.

châtiment Le tumulte et la licence étoient bannis de ses tristes fêtes. Les moeurs étoient trop austères." Enforced equality kills all initiative, "Un Guararis n'avoit aucun motif de surpasser un Guaranis." Even freedom from want is not an assurance of human happiness, "Ce n'est pas assez pour le bonheur de l'homme d'avoir ce qu'il lui suffit." And, most importantly, absolutism stifles all emotion, is contrary to human nature, "Un Guaranis passionné auroit été l'être le plus malheureux; et l'homme sans passion n'existe pas." All this explains why the Guaranis, despite perfect equality and freedom from want, showed no disappointment when their Jesuit masters were forcibly expelled by the Spanish Crown in 1786.¹

Where Raynal decried the internal rigidity of the despotic theocracy of Paraguay, eighteenth-century Japan offered him the opportunity to comment on a totalitarian society that seals itself off from all but minimum contact with the outside world.

On peut croire que ceux qui ont changé l'ancien gouvernement du pays en un despotisme le plus absolu de la terre, regardent toute communication avec les étrangers, comme dangereuse à leur autorité. Cette conjecture paroît d'autant mieux fondée, qu'on a défendu à tous les subjects de sortir de leur patrie. Cet édit rigoureux, soutenu de la peine de mort, est devenu la maxime fondamentale de l'Empire.

A closed society may be able to boast of certain accomplishments, but that is not to say that it would not accomplish more if it were an open society.

... on nous vante les Spartiates, Les Egyptiens, et toutes les nations isolées qui ont été plus fortes, plus grandes et plus stables dans l'état de séparation qu'elles s'étoient imposé.

¹ Reader is referred to Voltaire's Candide, Bk. I, chaps. xiv-xvi, for a satire of Jesuits in Paraguay.

(Mais), le genre-humain n'a rien gagné dans ces institutions singulières. L'esprit de commerce est utile à toutes les nations, en leur communiquant les biens et les lumières de chacune.¹

One is impressed by the extent to which Raynal's description of the absolutist or closed society, both in its internal and external aspects, is still applicable to such societies in the mid-twentieth century. One also notes a certain philosophical detachment and restraint in his remarks on despotism. Although based on two concrete examples, Paraguay and Japan, Raynal unemotionally kept his remarks on an abstract and universal level. The same cannot be said of his descriptions of the one governmental institution that he knew best and disliked most, hereditary absolute monarchy. Here, Raynal reverts to his old emotionally involved, personally outraged self. He not only sprinkles his text liberally with the one and two-line allusions to the subject that we have seen, but he also takes every opportunity to launch into protracted digressions. In some of these he attacks the institution in general and the assumptions that underlie it. In others, he singles out for comment some particularly grievous abuse or danger that seems to be endemic to the monarchical form of government. For the latter, Raynal makes good use of recent or contemporary events in France, familiar to all his readers, to illustrate his criticisms. For example, a summary of the disastrous string of wars, that had plagued France since the turn of the eighteenth century, leads Raynal to declare that the "politique," or foreign affairs, of a Republic are conducted in the best interests of

¹Raynal, Histoire philosophique, I, pp. 170-171.

the whole nation, whereas the foreign affairs, including wars, of a monarchy are conducted in the best interests of a dynastic family.¹

The incident of a courtisane, who betrayed an Indian prince to Portuguese invaders, leads to a digression on the baleful effects of royal mistresses. In an obvious allusion to the practices of Louis XIV and Louis XV, Raynal asks what the nation can expect when a woman can feel honored by being a royal prostitute. "La corruption des moeurs . . . , la déprédation du fisc, l'élévation des hommes les plus ineptes et les plus infâmes aux places les plus importantes." He follows with some gratuitous advice for Europe's kings.

Souverains, un homme de moeurs austères vous interdirait toute liaison illicite. Mais si vos pénibles fonctions sollicitent notre indulgence, du moins que votre vice soit couvert par de grandes vertus. Ayez une maîtresse, s'il faut que vous en ayez une. Mais qu'étrangère aux affaires publiques, son district soit restreint à la surintendance momentanée de vos amusemens.²

With Louis XIV again as the obvious example, Raynal points to the king's old age as another danger inherent in monarchy. In his first childhood, a king rules through a regency, but, in his second childhood, the senile monarch rules directly and personally. At this stage in his rule, he is easily misled by evil counselors, such as "une prude ambieuse," (Madame de Maintenon). "La longue imbécilité d'un monarque caduc, prépare à son successeur des maux presque impossibles à réparer."³

Another disadvantage of hereditary monarchy is that it is almost always associated with hereditary nobility. Raynal's rambling and loving

¹ Ibid., IV, pp. 541-552.

² Ibid., I, pp. 144-145.

³ Ibid., IV, p. 72.

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The incident of a courtisane, who betrayed an Indian prince to Portuguese invaders, leads to a digression on the baleful effects of royal mistresses. In an obvious allusion to the practices of Louis XIV and Louis XV, Raynal asks what the nation can expect when a woman can feel honored by being a royal prostitute. "La corruption des moeurs... , la déprédation du fisc, l'élévation des hommes les plus ineptes et les plus infâmes s'ensuivent de ces liaisons importantes." He follows with some gratuitous observations.

urs austères vous interdiroit
 tout... vos penibles fonctions sollicitent
 not... tre vice soit couvert par de
 gran... se, s'il faut que vous en ayez
 une... res publiques, son district soit
 rest... tantée de vos amusemens.²

With the obvious example, Raynal points to the king's old age as a danger inherent in monarchy. In his first childhood, a king rules through a regency, but, in his second childhood, the senile monarch rules directly and personally. At this stage in his rule, he is easily misled by evil counselors, such as "une prude ambieuse," (Madame de Maintenon). "La longue imbécilité d'un monarque caduc, prépare à son successeur des maux presque impossibles à réparer."³

Another disadvantage of hereditary monarchy is that it is almost always associated with hereditary nobility. Raynal's rambling and loving

¹ Ibid., IV, pp. 541-552.

² Ibid., I, pp. 144-145.

³ Ibid., IV, p. 72.

description of China includes a scathing attack on European aristocracy and the role it had traditionally played in national and local government.

Dans nos gouvernemens d'Europe, il (y a) une classe d'hommes, qui apportent, en naissant, une supériorité indépendante de leurs qualités morales. On n'approche de leur berceau qu'avec respect. Dans leur enfance, tout leur annonce qu'ils sont faits pour commander aux autres. Bientôt ils s'accoutument à penser qu'ils sont d'une espèce particulière, et surs d'un état et d'un rang, ils ne cherchent plus à s'en rendre dignes.

He concludes with the parabolic, but unmistakable assertion, that such distinctions of rank are "unnatural," or, as it would be stated more simply later in the century, "all men are born equal." "Des distinctions chimériques attachés à la naissance ... (ont) rompu cette égalité primitive que la nature établit entre les hommes, et qui ne doit céder qu'aux talens et aux vertus."¹

In contrast, the institution of hereditary nobility does not exist in China. There one finds only the vraie noblesse of ability and virtue. Raynal's description of the Mandarins, and the role they play in Chinese administration, sounds suspiciously like an eighteenth-century utopia, a land where only philosophes have honor and authority.

A la place de ces distinctions frivoles, que la naissance établit entre les hommes, dans presque tout le reste de l'univers, le mérite personnel en établit de réelles à la Chine. Sous de nom de mandarins lettrés, un corps d'hommes sages et éclairés, se livrent à toutes les études qui peuvent les rendre propres à l'administration publiques. Ce sont les talens et les connoissances qui font seules admettre dans ce corps respectable. ... Il y a différentes classes de mandarins, et l'on s'élève des uns aux autres non point par l'ancienneté, mais par le mérite.²

¹ Ibid., I, p. 108.

² Ibid., p. 109.

Despite the ideal qualities of the Mandarin ruling class, Raynal assures us that a province chief is immediately and automatically suspended if any of his subjects complain. As remarkable as the Chinese Mandarin system undoubtedly was, one can safely assume that Raynal is both exaggerating its virtue and simplifying its operation. His purpose, however, was not, as one would assume, to describe for his readers conditions as they actually existed in far-away China, a subject about which he had little reliable information in any case. Rather, he paints a highly idealized picture to make the most vivid and unfavorable contrast possible with conditions as they actually existed in France, conditions with which Raynal and his readers were all too well acquainted.

Not all of Raynal's interventions critical of monarchy are so effective, however. In the midst of a detailed analysis of the accounts of the Danish East India Company, Raynal, à propos de rien, interrupts himself for a three-page denunciation of kings who erect statues to themselves. How he would like to chisel off those flattering lies and write the truth about these bloody tyrants. These statues seem to say, "Peuples, apprenez que je suis tout, et que vous n'êtes rien." Realizing that the readers' sense of logic may be disturbed by a lengthy digression on statues in the middle of Danish trade statistics, Raynal begs our pardon. "Et qu'on me pardonne cet écart. L'écrivain seroit trop à plaindre, s'il ne se livroit pas quelquefois au sentiment qui l'opresse."¹

¹ Ibid., pp. 558-560.

Even objective historians manage to insinuate, if only subconsciously, their opinions into factual texts, but the free-swinging interventions by Raynal are so blatant as to be nearly self-defeating.

In addition to sniping at the periphery of monarchy, Raynal found occasion to attack its most basic assumptions and attributes. The disastrous revocations of the Edit de Nantes illustrate the absurdity inherent in absolute monarchy. Raynal expresses amazement that the will of one man could occasion such calamities.

Et c'est la volonté d'un seul qui peut faire tant de malheureux! Il parle, et les liens civils et moraux se brisent! Il parle et mille citoyens révéérés par leurs vertus, leurs dignités, leurs talens, sont dévoués à la mort et à l'infamie.

As he often does in such digressions, he castigates not only the despot but his fellow citizens who obey such whims. "O peuples! O troupeau d'imbéciles et de lâches."¹

The patriotic Raynal, despite his anti-colonialism, was scandalized that the King of France could give Louisiana to the King of Spain, as simply as though he were making his cousin the gift of a horse or a dog. This outrage to Raynal's patriotism leads to a three-page digression in which he examines the theory of divine right of kings. He finds that the so-called divine right is an invention of the priesthood for their own benefit. "Cette maxime, imaginée par le clergé, qui ne met les rois au-dessus des peuples, que pour commander aux rois même au nom de la divinité, n'est donc qu'une chaîne de fer, qui tient une nation entière sous les pieds d'un seul homme." He contrasts this with

¹Ibid., IV, p. 110.

his own romantic ideal of monarchy, which is the "père du peuple" concept as exemplified by Henri IV. "Ce n'est donc plus un lien réciproque d'amour et de vertu, d'intérêt et de fidélité, qui fait régner une famille au milieu d'une société."¹

He returns to this same collusion theory in his final summary on government in which he says that divine right was "une collusion sacrilège entre l'autel et le trône," which associated God with the sword, lent secular despotism the support of superstition, and gave superstition the power of the state to enforce religious conformity.²

Raynal seemed to feel that divine-right monarchy was, at base, nothing but a variation on theocracy, in that they both clothe secular power with divine authority. They both tend to absolutism and despotism. We have already seen how the Jesuit theocracy of Paraguay was described as the epitome of despotism. In an aside from his description of Calcutta, Raynal calls "le gouvernement théocratique le plus mauvais des gouvernements." It is the worst precisely because "la main des dieux appesantit le sceptre des tyrans." The sanctity of the ruler demands blind obedience to his every whim. "Les ordres, du despote se transforment en oracles, et la désobéissance des sujets est qualifiée de révolte contre le ciel."³

That he was thinking of divine-right kings and not the Bramins of Calcutta is evidenced by the fact that he follows immediately with a

¹ Ibid., p. 116.

² Ibid., p. 695.

³ Ibid., I, p. 321.

paragraph of personal advice for ruling monarchs.

Je m'adresserai donc à tous les souverains de la terre, et j'oserai leur révéler la pensée secrète du sacerdoce. Qy'ils sachent que si le prêtre s'expliquoit franchement, il diroit, 'Si le souverain n'est pas mon licteur, il est mon ennemi. Je lui ai mis la hache à la main, mais c'est à condition que je lui designerois les têtes qu'il faudroit abbatre'."¹

In the same vein, Raynal, in his digression on the gift of Louisiana, had warned monarchs not to put all their theoretical eggs in one basket, i.e., the Bible. If priests can quote scriptures pleasing to royal ears, they can also find passages that subordinate the highest secular authority to the church. They can, as popes have done in the past, claim the power to depose Christian emperors and kings. But enough of looking to scripture for political theory. That exercise in futility and contention belongs to those unhappy centuries of religious fanaticism when men sought to base legitimate authority on "les ténèbres de l'ignorance et de l'erreur."

Raynal ends this particular digression with the assertion that, in this "enlightened century," one now knows that the ultimate justification for any government is the well-being of the nation. This idea, which Raynal develops in greater detail elsewhere, and to which Rousseau and Jefferson, among others, gave clearer expression, was revolutionary compared to the theory and practice of the time.

Le bien et le salut des peuples, voilà la suprême loi d'où toutes les autres dépendent, et qui n'en reconnoît point au-dessus d'elle. C'est là, sans doute la véritable loi fondamentale de toutes les sociétés.²

¹ Ibid., p. 322.

² Ibid., IV, p. 117-118.

Everyone, with even a superficial knowledge of the French Revolution, is amazed by that unparalleled explosion of human emotion and activity. The events of 1789-94 have been endlessly chronicled, analyzed, and romanticized. Still, the reflective student asks himself how such fury could be pent up in a whole nation, a fury which finally broke all bounds and carried this people simultaneously to exaltation and degradation. What did people think of their institutions, or more importantly, how did they feel about them emotionally, when they launched a revolution that steadily grew more radical, until it became the classic example of what happens when an ossified ancien régime cannot evolve and had to be overthrown violently? Nowhere have we been able to get a better feel for this pent up emotion than in the more intemperate outbursts of the abbé Raynal. When we read these lines and keep in mind that these feelings were shared by millions of his countrymen, the events of 1789-94 become entirely plausible, even inevitable.

One such outburst begins innocently enough as a digression from the description of the manner in which children are raised on the Celebes Islands and the great pains that parents take to assure that their children will not be selfish or spoiled. With one of those incredible leaps of mind at which he was so adept, Raynal launches into a comparison of the rearing of Celebes savages and the royal children of Europe. Of European, particularly French, royalty, he says,

La corruption s'échappe de tout ce qui les entoure. Elle attaque leur coeur et leur esprit par tous les sens à la fois. Comment seroient ils sensibles à la misère, qu'ils ignorent et qu'ils n'éprouvent point? Amis de la vérité, leurs oreilles n'ayant jamais été frappées que des accens de la flatterie? Admirateurs de la vertu, nourris au milieu d'indignes esclaves,

tout occupés à préconciser leurs goûts et leurs penchans? Patiens dans l'adversité, qui ne les respecte pas toujours, fermes dans les périls auxquels ils sont quelque-fois exposés, lorsqu'ils ont été énervé par la mollesse et bercés sans cesse de l'importance de leur existence? Comment apprécieraient-ils les services qu'on leur rend? Connoitroient-ils la valeur du sang qu'on répand pour le salut de leur empire ou pour la splendeur de leur règne, imbus du funeste préjugé quo tout leur est dû, et qu'on est trop honoré de mourir pour eux? Etrangers à toute idée de justice, comment ne deviendroient-ils pas le fléau de la portion de l'espèce humaine dont le bonheur leur est confié?

Fully aroused by his subject, Raynal closes with a ringing anaaphoric peroration in which he does not so much criticize the institution of monarchy, as let flow his bitter malice for the king as a person. This is the hatred of one individual human for another that makes regicide quite plausible.

Heureusement leurs instituteurs pervers sont tôt ou tard châtiés par l'ingratitude ou par le mépris de leurs élèves. Heureusement ces élèves, misérables au sein de la grandeur, sont tourmentés toute leur vie par un profond ennui qu'ils ne peuvent éloigner de leurs palais. Heureusement le morne silence de leurs sujets leur apprend de tems en tems la haine qu'on leur porte. Heureusement ils sont trop lâches pour la dédaigner. Heureusement les préjugés religieux qu'on a semés dans leur âme reviennent sur eux et les tyrannisent. Heureusement après une vie qu'aucun mortel, sans en excepter le dernier de leurs sujets, ne voudroit accepter, s'ils en connoissoit toute la misère, ils trouvent les noires inquiétudes, la terreur et le désespoir assis au chevet de leur lit de mort.¹

A diatribe of such animosity brings us to this question: just what was Raynal's attitude toward revolution and regicide? As we noted in the introductory chapter, Raynal has been credited with being, as much as any man, responsible for the French Revolution. Yet, he was dismayed by the Revolution itself. That apparent contradiction is not surprising to one who has read the *Histoire philosophique*, where the same

¹Ibid., I, pp. 180-181.

inconsistency runs throughout. Raynal does, time and again, call for violent revolution, both in sly one-line innuendos and in long emotional digressions. But on an equal number of occasions, he warns against the dangers of revolutions, of anarchy, and even the dangers of democracy. In other passages, he seems to say, rather sadly, that revolution, though bad, is inevitable when a despotic government leaves people no choice. We will show some examples of Raynal's opinion on the subject in the three categories described.

Raynal, like other philosophes, was enamored of chinoiserie. We have already had occasion to note that he admired and idealized China, even more than England and the American colonies, the other earthly paradises of the eighteenth century. He noted that the Emperor of China was often overthrown by a popular revolt. This did not mean, for Raynal, that the people of China were goaded by great misery. It meant merely that they were "assez éclairés" to protect their rights, and they were a good example for their European brethren. If an emperor should give in to that penchant for tyranny, so prevalent among sovereigns, "des secousses violentes le précipiteroient du trône." As a result, A Chinese Emperor,

... ainsi placé à la tête d'un peuple qui l'observe et qui le juge, ne s'érige pas en un phantôme religieux, à qui tout est permis. Il ne déchire pas le contrat inviolable qui l'a mis sur le trône.^{1,2}

¹Ibid., P. 107.

²Le Contrat Social was published in 1762. We shall see Raynal make free use of Rousseau's vocabulary, even while claiming not to agree with his ideas.

One of the most inflammatory calls for revolution is found, inexplicably, in a description of medieval Denmark, which is itself a digression from the discussion of Danish possessions in the West Indies. Raynal starts calmly enough in a philosophical vein. He notes the universality of a certain phenomenon. No matter where the philosopher's gaze may fall, on any civilized society, in any clime or age, he sees a remarkable state of affairs; the great masses of mankind are governed, oppressed, and exploited by a small privileged minority. The universality and lack of logic of such an arrangement leads Raynal to ask, "Qu'est-ce donc qu'un homme?" Does man really possess the dignity we suppose? Is his natural condition liberty or slavery? Though in an uncommonly pessimistic frame of mind, Raynal has posed a very basic question about human nature and the nature of society. Are oligarchical socio-economic systems an inevitable result of basic human nature? For once, Raynal has no answer for his own rhetorical question. He contents himself with a verbal lashing of the masses who refuse to find their salvation through revolution.

Peuples lâches! Peuples stupides! Puisque la continuité de l'oppression ne vous rend aucune énergie; puisque vous vous en tenez à d'inutiles gémissemens, lorsque vous pourriez rugir; puisque vous êtes par millions et que vous souffrez qu'une douzaine d'enfans, armés de bâtons, vous mènent à leur gré, obéissez. Marchez, sans nous importuner de vos plaintes et sachez du moins être malheureux si vous ne savez pas être libres.¹

On the subject of regicide specifically, Raynal can be sly, or he can be brutally frank. In his first volume, describing British Colonies in India, Raynal says, à propos to nothing in particular, that the

¹ Raynal, Histoire philosophique, III, p. 317.

death of Charles I was "instructive."¹ He returns more boldly to the same subject a thousand pages later and calls the beheading of Charles I and the deposition of James II good lessons for the other nations. "Un roi, traîné juridiquement sur l'échafaud, et un autre, déposé avec toute sa race par un arrêt de la nation, ont donné une grande leçon à la terre."²

The bitter denunciations of absolute monarchy reach their high point in an aside from his summary of the history of England. Again it is the unique and fascinating example of Charles I that triggers Raynal's chain of thought. Having reached that unhappy monarch's reign in his summary, Raynal asks the reader to pause and consider the universal evils of despotic government. But it soon becomes apparent that these lines, penned in the white heat of pent-up indignation, do not concern despotism in general, much less do they concern seventeenth-century England. It is transparently obvious that the subject is eighteenth-century France. As usual, Raynal terminates his emotional digression with a call for violent redress of grievances, a rebirth of liberty through bloodshed.

"L'expérience de tous le âges a prouvé que la tranquillité qui naît du pouvoir absolu, refroidit les esprits, abat le courage, rétrécit le génie, jette une nation entière dans une léthargie universelle." When an absolute monarch, "le grand phantôme sur lequel on ne porte ses regards qu'en tremblant," mounts his throne, then the citizens divide themselves

¹ Ibid., I, p. 279.

² Ibid., III, p. 509.

into two classes. There are those, who out of fear, flee the monarch's presence, and those, who out of ambition, compete for a moment of the monarch's attention. Raynal's description of the latter group, the noble courtiers, is particularly bitter.

Ils n'ont à la bouche que ces mots: Le roi; le roi l'a dit; le roi le veut; j'ai vu le roi; j'ai soupé avec le roi; c'est l'intention du roi. Ces mots ... finissent par être pris pour des ordres souverains.

He continues a catalogue of the evils engendered in all classes of society by absolute monarchy.

Le militaire ... ne devient que plus insolent. Et le prêtre ... achève d'abrutir les peuples. Le magistrat est peu de chose, ... il attend un signe pour être ce qu'on voudra. Le grand seigneur rampe devant le prince, et le peuple rampe devant le grand seigneur. La dignité naturelle de l'homme s'est éclipsée. ... autour de despot, de ses favoris, les sujets sont foulés aux pieds, avec la même inadvertance, que nous écrasons les insectes qui fourmillent dans la poussière de nos campagnes. La morale est corrompue. ... La masse de la nation devient dissolue et superstitieuse. ... On pense peu; on ne parle point, et l'on craint de raisonner. On s'effraie de ses propres idées. Le philosophe retient sa pensée, comme la riche-cache de sa fortune. ... La méfiance et la terreur forment la base des moeurs générales. Les citoyens s'isolent; et toute une nation devient mélancolique, pusillanime, stupide et muette. ... si le peuple n'est pas destiné au dernier malheur, c'est dans le sang que sa félicité renaît.¹

Raynal was not always so quick, however, to trumpet revolution as the best solution to the problem of government. He roundly denounces Russia as the most oppressive state on earth. The great mass of the people are outright slaves, called serfs, and even the so-called free classes are slaves in that any Russian subject can be deprived of life, liberty, or property at the whim of the Czar. Yet, noting that serfs,

¹ Ibid., pp. 514-516.

during the reign of Catherine II revolted in certain districts, and massacred their oppressors, Raynal, far from praising this as a struggle for liberty, cautiously warns against such precipitous action. "Cette agitation ... , fit comprendre qu'il falloit apprivoiser les ours avant de briser leurs chaines, et que de bonnes loix et des lumières devoient précéder la liberté."¹

He draws the same lesson from some obscure revolt in one of the principalities of pre-colonial Hindustan. "La plupart d'entre eux portèrent bientôt le vice et la licence à tous les excès qu'on doit attendre d'un peuple ignorant qui a secoué le joug des préjugés, sans mettre à leur place de bonnes loix et des lumières."²

The insistence on "bonnes loix" and "lumières" as a prerequisite to liberty, shows that, in his calmer, moderate frame of mind, Raynal was a cautious evolutionary rather than a revolutionary. He feared the anarchy that accompanies revolution and destroys not only a despotic government but everything else of value. He illustrates this by dredging up an episode from the history of Persia. The death of a tyrant is followed by a period of popular anarchy, turning a great empire into a cemetery, a shameful monument to man's destructive nature when unrestrained by government. But, he adds, revolt and anarchy are "les suites inévitables des vices du gouvernement despotique."³

Whatever Raynal's ambiguous attitude toward revolution may have been, of one thing he seemed certain; revolution was inevitable. The

¹ Ibid., I, p. 637.

² Ibid., p. 501.

³ Ibid., p. 307.

state is like a spring, he said, if you press it hard enough, it will break and injure the hand that presses.¹ He dropped a similar maxim into his discussion of the Mogul Empire of India. "Révolte: ressource terrible, mais la seule qui reste en faveur de l'humanité dans les pays oppressés par le despotisme."²

He made the same point vividly for French readers with a thumbnail sketch of the history of Cochinchina.³ Though the ostensible subject is Southeast Asia, this sad little story sounds suspiciously like a parable of France. At first Cochinchina is a utopia. The king is a father to his people. He sets an example with his simple virtues; he goes into the fields personally to encourage agriculture. When his country prospers, the king's courtiers corrupt him, call him "roi du ciel." He builds a palace, "d'une lieue de circonférence," (Versailles). He withdraws from his people who now seem inferior to him. "Il ignore et les maux et les larmes de ses peuples." Such a kingdom cannot last. It will be violently overthrown. "Ainsi périssent, ainsi périront les nations gouvernées par le despotisme."⁴

Raynal, typical of his century, seemed to be constitutionally predisposed to question the heretofore unquestionable, to examine critically the traditional, the established, the theoretically God-given. It is in this spirit that he recorded his consistently negative appraisal of the governmental practices of his day. Though he could be universal

¹ Ibid., II, p. 467.

² Ibid., I, p. 381.

³ Present day Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 445-446.

and philosophical on occasion, he certainly preferred to focus his attention on abuses associated with eighteenth-century France, where he could give vent to his personal animosity. While France and her Bourbon kings were his favorite subjects, he managed to write thousands of words about them without once calling them by name. By a variety of devices, as we have seen, he was always ostensibly talking about something else. But, the emotionalism, the criticism, the necessary deviousness are only one aspect of Raynal's thought on any particular subject. There is also the rational, theoretical approach to the same subject. In this case, governments are bad because they are based on false assumptions, false principles. Raynal and the eighteenth century naturally asked what the true, the valid principles of government were. Although he drops hints along the way, Raynal delays long into his work before coming to grips with theory. Discussing the revolt of the American Colonies, he asks if the Colonies had the "right" to secede from the mother country. To answer such a question, he says, we must consider the origin and nature of government. Bearing in mind that he plans a thorough discussion of this subject in a final summary, he contents himself here with a brief statement of his basic points. Society, in point of time, preceded government. Society, that is men living in community, formed governments to serve the needs of the community. Government is the creature, the servant of society. Thus, it follows that society can change its form of government when and how it chooses, to serve better its own needs. "Qu'il n'est nulle forme de gouvernement dont la prérogative soit d'être immuable."¹

¹ Ibid., IV, pp. 391-394.

This digression, which had to be added to editions after the events of July 1776, comes, as one can see, to the same conclusion as that voiced in the Declaration of Independence; governments are instituted by men to procure their rights, to serve their own interests. Raynal does not mention the American document in this passage nor credit it with having influenced his own thinking. But in another passage, he highly praises the Declaration of Independence and its authors. He wishes he had the eloquence of the ancients to express his enthusiasm adequately. Calling the United States "contrée héroïque," he says his only regret is that advanced age will not permit him to visit America. His fondest wish would be to be buried in that heroic soil. His dying breath will be a prayer for the prosperity of the United States.¹

Raynal's main discussion of political theory is in the closing pages of his final volume. The method he uses to attack the problem is familiar to students of the eighteenth century. He first states certain "facts" of human nature and behavior, specifically harking back to the origins of society as he perceives them, and from these facts he deduces the "true" principles and purposes of government. This is, of course, the method used by Rousseau in his first and second Discours, and, not surprisingly, Raynal comes to essentially the same conclusions as far as popular sovereignty is concerned. Despite the similarities, however, Raynal devotes his opening paragraph to an effort to differentiate himself, as far as possible, from his more illustrious contemporary. He never mentions Rousseau by name, but the allusion is obvious when he says

¹ Ibid., pp. 418-419.

that much of the contrast between the evils of society and the virtues of savagery has been idle and useless speculation. Idle speculation because it has contrasted society to a state of nature that never existed. These speculations have always begun with "une supposition d'un état sauvage, idéal et chimérique." They have falsely assumed man living in total liberty, total independence. Such an absolute freedom could only have been possible in total isolation, and, Raynal says, "Jamais les hommes ne furent isolés."¹

On the contrary, Raynal sees communal living as a distinguishing characteristic of the human species. Basic biological and physical facts concerning man and his environment have determined this communal phenomenon. Man is poorly equipped physically for survival on this planet. He lacks protective fur or scales. He is relatively slow afoot. The strength of his arm is modest, compared to other animals of similar size and weight. And, most importantly, the human infant is absolutely helpless and literally has to be carried for years in order to survive. The mother, in turn, is seriously handicapped by this burden and could not survive without a companion with both hands free for defense and food gathering. Thus, Raynal, concludes, men have always lived in society, in swarms or bands as do baboons and bees, and this society, as we have seen, has the same fundamental motivations that man shares with all other species: the need to reproduce and to survive.

Living in society gives rise to rules and regulations governing relations between individuals in the group. This is the beginning of

¹Ibid., p. 470.

government and the state. Since the purpose of society is supposedly reproduction and survival of the species, it follows that all legislation should have as its purpose to procure "une existence plus longue et plus heureuse pour la pluralité des hommes." Yet, a consideration of the operation of governments shows they never tend to procure the greatest good for the greatest number, but always the greatest good for a small elite, at the expense of the masses.

This is the same vexations paradox to which Raynal had alluded in an earlier digression.¹ He states it thus on this occasion, "D'où vient ce contraste singulier entre la fin et les moyens, entre les loix de la nature et celles de la politique?"² As on the previous occasion, Raynal makes no effort to answer his own question. He does a thumbnail sketch of the various governments of the world, ancient and modern, to show that what he says is true, but he does not answer the question as to why and how this is so. We can deduce from his other remarks, however, that he shared with Rousseau and others the conviction that the source of this cruel paradox was not a weakness or fault in basic human nature. People and the communities they had formed were good. Their basic motivations were, as we have seen, "natural" and "good," but the laws and institutions that people had created were almost universally bad. The eighteenth century continually chided God, all-good and all-powerful, for having created a manifestly imperfect universe. And while traditional theology never resolved the paradox of the problem of evil,

¹Ibid., III, p. 317..

²Ibid., IV, p. 471.

the philosophes never resolved the problem of how "good" people universally created "bad" institutions.

There is a tendency to confuse rather than clarify the philosophical dilemmas that plague their discussions of government and human nature. On another occasion, Raynal states,

Les bonnes loix se maintiennent par les bonnes moeurs; mais les bonnes moeurs s'établissent par les bonnes loix. Les hommes sont ce que le gouvernement les fait. ... Les nations de l'Europe auront de bonnes moeurs, lorsqu'elles auront de bons gouvernemens.¹

The inconsistency is obvious. Raynal stated that certain physical and biological facts determine human behavior, human nature, and the nature of society. The nature of man and society in turn should determine the form of his government and content of its legislation. Now, in an unconscious reversal of determinants, he says that legislation determines human behavior, even private morality not directly subject to legislative control.

It is today, of course, standard liberal doctrine that government does play a determining role in the nature of society, a much larger role than Raynal would ever have imagined. And, most people accept, to a limited degree, the idea that anti-social or criminal behavior can be the result of unjust social systems. This line of reasoning, carried to its logical extreme, does, of course, bring one to the conclusion that "men are what the government makes them," as Raynal stated. This extreme statement has been elevated to the position of dogma in Marxist states, the Soviet Union, for example, where the official line is that the Soviet

¹Ibid., p. 701.

State will create a new "soviet man," so far without complete success, however.

All this does not mean, of course, that there are not huge grains of truth in whatever Raynal, Rousseau or others say on any side of any question. So many self-assured, absolute statements, however, are bound to lead to inconsistencies and contradictions. But the polemicists and theoreticians of the eighteenth century showed great agility in avoiding the complete philosophical implications of what they said, either by muddling the question or by a nimble change of subject.

In his summary on government, for example, Raynal abandons his first line of theoretical reasoning to launch into an examination of enlightened despotism. It would be instructive to see what he had to say about this subject, if for no other reason that that it is such a facile cliché to say that the eighteenth century "believed in" or favored this form of government. Raynal meets this assertion head-on. "Cependant, vous entendez dire que le gouvernement le plus heureux seroit celui d'un despote juste, ferme, éclairé. Quelle extravagance!" Raynal fears an inevitable clash between the will of the enlightened despot and the volonté générale. He is much more forthright than Rousseau in admitting that the general will can be "wrong," but he agrees with Rousseau completely that, right or wrong, the general will must be supreme. The enlightened despot has no right to contravene the general will even when he is right and the people are wrong. "Le meilleur des princes qui auroit fait le bien contre la volonté générale, seroit criminel." The reason for this extreme position is simple enough. A despot who really knew best

might be succeeded by one who was not so enlightened or so generously motivated. "(Un successeur) sans être héritier de sa raison et de sa vertu, héritera surement de son autorité."¹

Raynal was not reticent in telling his readers what forms of government he did not like, especially the absolute monarchy. Also, we see now that the purpose of government should be the happiness and well-being of the mass of the people. Finally, we are led to believe that this would somehow be achieved if the volonté générale were the supreme authority in the councils of government. But what sort of system does Raynal propose that would meet these desired goals? What sort of executive, legislative, and judicial organs does he have in mind for his system? On this question of "how to make it work," on this practical level of constitution making, Raynal, like Rousseau before him, is strangely silent. What little he does have to say on this subject is strongly reminiscent of his predecessor, Montesquieu, as readers will quickly recognize.

Along the way, Raynal had dropped some observations that prefigure his final answer. For example, "Le gouvernement républicain suppose une contrée assez étroite pour le prompt et facile concert des volontés."² In a digression from the history of Russia, he frankly admitted that he knew of no viable alternative to hereditary monarchy, even as he was loudly decrying the manifest defects of that institution.

... toute nation veut savoir à quel titre on lui commande; et le titre qui la frappe le plus est celui de la naissance. Otez

¹ Ibid., pp. 490-491.

² Ibid., I, p. 121.

aux regards de la multitude ce signe visible, et vous remplissez les états de révoltes et de dissensions.¹

So, after so much revolutionary bombast in his own inimitable style and after some strained theorizing à la Rousseau, he finally announces anticlimatically, that the best form of government is a constitutional monarchy on the British model. The hereditary monarch has that intangible authority that holds a great nation together. The volonté générale, through the House of Commons, is supreme in the legislative branch. An independent judiciary assures an equal rule of law for all. A newtonian system of checks and balances, inherent in the three-fold division of power makes the system function.

Le gouvernement mixte des Anglais de ces trois pouvoirs qui s'observent, se tempèrent, se répriment, va de lui-même au bien national. Par leur action, par leur réaction, ses differens ressorts forment un équilibre d'ou naît la liberté.²

He hastens to add that the system only works because it continually informs and corrects itself through the operations of a free press. Freedom of press, speech, thought, and religion are not just fortunate by-products of good government. They are basic parts of the system, mechanisms essential to the success of the system. Finally, showing a common sense side of his nature, Raynal asks if the British government is perfect. His answer: Certainly not. It just happens to be the best yet devised.

In the previous chapters, we have noted that, in addition to the broad reforms he proposed, Raynal would offer volumes of minute advice

¹ Ibid., p. 635.

² Ibid., IV, p. 499.

for specific improvements of the existing institutions. This type of detailed advice is missing on the subject of government. The reason being, apparently, that he considered the ancien régime totally beyond salvation, or even temporary amelioration. Even so loquacious a man as Raynal was not going to waste his breath proposing band-aids for the thousand mortal wounds of Bourbon France. With mixed joy and misgiving, he considered revolution inevitable in his own country.

In summary, we would say that, on the subject of government, Raynal and the century he represents were revolutionary. But, lest one be misled, it was not his emotional diatribes vilifying the ancien régime, his passionate denunciations of despotism, nor his raucous calls for violence that make him revolutionary. He and his century were revolutionary because they taught the revolutionary doctrine that the state and the government were instituted by the people, for the people, to serve the people; that the people were not subjects of the state but masters of the state. We have seen Raynal make this point in lengthy emotional and theoretical digressions. We have not quoted all the little asides that he scatters throughout his text with the same point. "La loi supreme est le salut du peuple et non du prince."¹ "Les peuples n'(ont) établi un gouvernement qu'en vue de procurer le bien général."² This was the real revolution in western political theory, which inspired a revolution in political practice, for which all today are indebted to Raynal and the eighteenth century.

¹ Ibid., III, p. 514.

² Ibid., I, p. 284.

One final thought should be added to close this chapter.

Despite all that has been said, one might overlook the fact that Raynal, like Jefferson and other eighteenth-century liberals, had an essentially negative concept of government. Raynal would heartily agree that the government that governs least, governs best. He envisaged government as affording every man and his property the greatest possible freedom. Government would only referee a great game of individual free choices with fair and equal administration of law. Each individual would take his talents and property and strive to achieve the maximum well-being for himself. Out of all this individual striving and profit-taking would emerge miraculously the greatest good for the greatest number. It never occurred to Raynal that his ideal of minimum government could lead to the situation that he so passionately deplored, the exploitation and oppression of great masses of people for the benefit of a small elite. It did not occur to him that such unrestrained individualism could squander and mismanage the resources of the planet to the great detriment of all. He did not picture government intervening in the game, overruling individual choices and making collective decisions for the well-being of the whole community. In this regard, Raynal was no more and no less than a child of his century, the century of Adam Smith as well as of Rousseau and Jefferson, the century of the Industrial Revolution as well as the French and American Revolutions. Raynal's laissez-faire opinions will be examined in the following chapter on economics.

CHAPTER V

ECONOMICS

Raynal was unquestionably an expert on the international commerce of his day and its recent history. His work was significantly entitled a history of European "commerce" with the two Indies. Implicit throughout the work is the assumption of economic determinism in human history. European discovery, conquest and settlement of the two Indies, and the effect that these had, not only on the New World, but the Old World as well, were the turning point in world history. The discovery was the result of a search for trade routes, based ultimately on the profit motive. The conquest and settlement, as was noted in the first chapter, were likewise basically economically motivated, despite peripheral considerations of power politics and religious and cultural intolerance. Yet, though the economic factor stands at the center of his thought and work, and though his work is overly rich in the raw statistics of trade and investment, Raynal's Histoire philosophique is not a particularly rich source of economic thought and opinion. In this respect, the work is representative of its century. Unlike the subject of politics and religion, for example, upon which men had debated well-formed opinions for centuries, the dismal science of economics was just emerging, abetted

by such writers as Raynal himself. Thus the lack of thoroughness in his economic thought reflects the contemporary state of the discipline.

Chafing at the absurd tangle of monopoly and mercantilism that stifled international trade, and at the vestiges of feudalism that harassed internal commerce, Raynal joined other budding capitalists to declare his passionate belief in the efficacy of complete free trade and laissez-faire. He likewise shared with eighteenth-century physiocrats the belief that agriculture, and to a limited degree industry, but not gold and silver, were the true measure of a nation's wealth. He digresses frequently in his narrative to assert these beliefs, but, unlike other subjects, he does not back them up with a specific summary of economic opinion.

Raynal sees European economies as having progressed from a clerical dominated feudalism, through state controlled mercantilism, to individualistic capitalism. He makes his point, probably unconsciously, with a capsule history of Swedish gold mines. In the Middle Ages, the mines were owned by the Church. "Des mains du clergé, elles (les mines) passèrent en 1480, dans celles du gouvernement. Une révolution encore plus heureuse en a fait depuis l'apanage des particuliers."¹ It is significant that the step from state ownership to private ownership and capitalism is even "plus heureuse" than the original renaissance expropriation from the Church.

Raynal's belief in laissez-faire and free trade is based on the contention that the alternative systems, the only alternatives of which

¹Raynal, Histoire philosophique, I, p. 582.

he could conceive being feudalism and mercantilism, had failed. Of the medieval octrois, some of which were in force until the Revolution, he says, "Ces exèès furent poussés au point que quelquefois le prix des effets conduits au marché n'étoient pas suffisant pour payer les frais préliminaires à la vente." As a result, commercenand industry virtually "disappeared."¹

Raynal denounces the monopolies, restrictions and special privileges that characterized contemporary policies for violating the principles of liberty and equality in theory and for producing "devastation" in practice. "Les privilèges exclusifs ont ruiné l'ancien et le nouveau monde." Why? Because the monopolist must always work for his greatest short-term advantage to the long-range detriment of everybody concerned.²

It was not mere rhetoric when Raynal invoked theoretical principles of liberty and equality in his denunciations of economic restrictions. He gave his economic system some theoretical justification by implying that laissez-faire was merely the extension into the economic realm of the same concepts of liberty and natural right that are commonly invoked in a discussion of political life. "La liberté est le voeu de tous les hommes; et le droit naturel de tout propriétaire est de vendre à qui il veut et le plus qu'il peut les productions de son sol."³

¹Ibid., p. 401.

²Ibid., IV, p. 593.

³Ibid., III, p. 402.

Where he saw little progress on the political horizon, except in Great Britain and the United States, he did see some improvement in the economic thought and practice of his century of burgeoning capitalism, but he stressed that his ideas of unrestricted individualism internally also meant free trade externally. People within a country are at last realizing that an individual, by enriching himself, does not necessarily impoverish another, but, instead, creates new wealth that adds to the prosperity of the whole nation. If people have finally understood this as it applies to individuals within a state, why cannot they understand that the same principle applies to nations within the framework of world trade? Only the Dutch, the inventors of modern international commerce, have so far understood this, to their eternal glory. "Ils résolurent de faire valoir celles (les productions) des autres peuples; assurés que de la prospérité universelle, sortiroit leur prospérité particulière."¹

Raynal takes care to insist that freedom of trade should extend to money also. Money, he assures his readers, is just another commodity, subject to the laws of supply and demand, and should be traded accordingly. "... on ignoroit que ... (l'argent) est une denrée qu'il faut abandonner à elle-même comme les autres; qu'à chaque instant elle doit hausser et baisser de prix par mille incidens diverse; que toute police sur ce point ne peut qu'être absurde et nuisible."² At this point, of

¹ Ibid., pp. 278-282.

² Ibid., I, p. 265.

course, he was attacking the deep-seated fears and misconceptions that caused both individuals and states to hoard coin and place all manner of restrictions on its international circulation. He also attacked those vestiges of medieval opinion that had held that all interest was usury and therefore prohibited. In another aside he mentions a decision handed down, apparently recently, though he does not give the date, by the doctors of the Sorbonne, who usually spoke for the Church on such matters in France. They had held that dividends paid to stockholders were usury the same as interest paid on a loan, and therefore could not be condoned. For Raynal, who was undoubtedly an investor himself, the learned doctors' opinion was the epitome of blind stupidity.¹ He should have added that the Church's misgivings about interest and usury were almost universally ignored. Since the Renaissance, in fact, the papacy itself had been one of Europe's largest borrowers. Some years fully half of all papal revenues were needed to pay interest on debt.²

In combatting the age old fascination with gold and silver, Raynal assumed an apparently hopeless task; yet his basic idea is so universally recognized today, at least among students of economics, that it is a trite truism. His point was simply that money is not wealth but an agreed upon sign of wealth. "L'or et l'argent ne sont pas des richesses. Ils représentent seulement des richesses."³ True wealth is the goods and services produced by the nation's economy, a point not understood

¹ Ibid., p. 476.

² Leopold Ranke, History of the Popes, trans. by E. Foster (3 vols.; London: Henry G. Bohn, 1853), II, pp. 299-303.

³ Raynal, Histoire philosophique, II, p. 340.

at the time by the nations of Europe, especially Spain and Portugal, of whom he says, "Pour courir après des métaux, ... on négligeoit les biens réels, l'exploitation des terres, des manufactures."¹

Raynal included manufacturing, along with agriculture, as part of the nation's true wealth. In general, however, he could not bring himself to afford industry an equal footing with agriculture, a reflection, no doubt, of the fact that the Industrial Revolution was still in its infancy in France. He often repeated the physiocratic notion that the surface of the land and its products were the only sources of all wealth.² He criticized France's great seventeenth-century Minister of Finance, Colbert, for having incorrectly stresses the importance of industry over agriculture.³ On another occasion he said, "La population et la production des terres sont la juste mesure des forces d'un état."⁴ And for complete finality, he declared in a closing summary, "L'agriculture est la première et la véritable richesse d'un état."⁵ Always ready to draw some social or political conclusion critical of the ancien régime, he says that the peasantry, sole creators of the nation's wealth, should be the most privileged class in society. In eighteenth-century France, of course, the exact opposite was true.

¹Ibid., I, p. 148.

²Eighteenth-century French economic theoreticians were called physiocrates. They were led by physician François Quesnay (1694-1774), who coined the famous phrase laissez-faire. His basic ideas may be found in the Encyclopédie, arts., "Fermiers," "Grains."

³Raynal, Histoire philosophique, III, p. 336.

⁴Ibid., p. 405.

⁵Ibid., IV, p. 604.

Though he parroted physiocratic notions of the primacy of land and agriculture, it is doubtful that Raynal fully embraced, or fully understood, their complete doctrine. While advocating free trade, they held that commerce was an essentially sterile transportation of the goods that the land had produced and that it added no "value" to these goods. Raynal repeatedly stressed the mutual and universal benefits derived from the freest possible exchange of goods. He sensed, at least subconsciously, that commerce added what modern economists call "utility," a very real form of value, to the goods that it transported. A bushel of wheat where it is not needed is worthless, a nuisance in fact. The same wheat in a hungry city is more valuable than gold.

The one economic question to which Raynal devotes by far the most attention is the question of private property. He not only defends its economic efficiency but even its sacred and inviolable nature. Inasmuch as private property was not under attack in the eighteenth century, either by the government, or, with one notable exception, by other philosophes, one wonders at Raynal's obsession with this subject. Against whom or what was he reacting? It is obvious throughout the Histoire philosophique that Raynal had read J. J. Rousseau, and, for reasons of professional jealousy or others, he seemed impelled to seek out and magnify all possible areas of disagreement between himself and Rousseau. One is tempted to believe, therefore, that this spirited defense of private property against unnamed enemies is primarily a reaction to the second Discours, wherein Rousseau assigned private property the villain's role in the entire pageant of human history.¹

¹Rousseau, Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité, Pte. II.

In his description of the utopian and mythical Bisnapore, vaguely located somewhere on the Indian sub-continent, Raynal says that property, like liberty, was "sacred."¹ He drops an aside into a digression on the backwardness of feudalism. "Le génie s'éteint lorsqu'il est sans espérance, sans émulation; et il n'y a ni espérance, ni émulation où il n'y a point de propriété."² In his utopian schemes for a model French colony in Madagascar, he sees the introduction of private property, an institution unknown there, according to Raynal, as one of the principal benefits the natives would receive from their colonial experience. He adds, "Avec le tems, toutes les peuplades de Madagascar auroient librement adopté une innovation, dont aucun préjugé ne peut obscurcir les avantages."³ (Underlining added for emphasis.)

The fact that private property was unknown among many noble savages, whom he generally had to admire in contrast to their European oppressors, gave Raynal considerable theoretical difficulty, as one could imagine. His dilemma is most painfully obvious in the description of the Spanish conquest of Peru. Having already described the Inca nation as an empire of "sublime virtue," in contrast to the villainy of the Spanish invaders, he takes note of the fact that the Incas were completely ignorant of private property. They held all land in common. No family worked the same field two years in succession. There was no possession or inheritance of land whatsoever. Despite the fact that the

¹Raynal, Histoire philosophique, I, p. 352.

²Ibid., p. 403.

³Ibid., p. 416.

system functioned, Raynal hastens to add that the concept of communal property has been "universellement réprouvé par les hommes éclairés," who realize that private property is the foundation of all arts and progress. (Rousseau would certainly agree that private property is the foundation of all arts and "progress.")

Raynal recognizes that the example of the Incas, which he has dutifully described, may give aid and comfort to the rousseauistes, or, as he terms them, "quelques spéculateurs hardis, qui ont regardé les propriétés, et surtout les propriétés héréditaires, comme des usurpations de quelques membres de la société sur d'autres." He explains the paradox of Peruvian happiness and propertylessness by saying that the system succeeded only because of a well-developed sense of community, because all classes of society--nobles, priests, and warriors alike--closely identified their welfare with the welfare of the whole society. (Could Raynal not have realized that he left himself open to the most obvious counter assertion: That it was precisely the community property system which engendered the almost idyllic brotherhood that made the system function; or, stated conversely, that private property is incompatible with such community spirit, such utopian unity of purpose?) Even so, Raynal asserts, one must admit that "Les Péruviens ne s'élèvent jamais au-dessus de plus étroit nécessaire. On peut assurer qu'ils auroient acquis les moyens de varier et d'étendre leurs jouissances, si des propriétés foncières, commercables, héréditaires avoient aiguisé leur génie."¹ Maybe so! But would they have retained that simple virtue

¹ Ibid., pp. 142-143.

and honesty, that peaceful unity of purpose that Raynal had to admire? Or would they not have developed those characteristics of avarice and incessant strife that he, like Rousseau, so deplored in his fellow Europeans?

Painfully aware of his predicament, Raynal, as we have seen, can only have recourse to the assertion that private property, and the resulting private initiative, are economically more efficient and productive than any pre-civilized or utopian communism. By so doing, he rather clumsily side-steps the basic theoretical question. While heaping scorn on Rousseau by implication, he consistently refuses to confront the main thrust of Rousseau's argument, which had nothing to do with the comparative productivity of private versus communal property. Rousseau's thesis was simply that private property was a corrupter of private and civic morality, the origin of class division and oppression, of domestic strife and foreign wars, all of which Raynal heartily deplores. Conversely, Rousseau maintained that property destroys all those pristine virtues that Raynal himself (as we shall see in chapter seven) and not necessarily Rousseau, so lyrically admired in the unclothed savage.

We have still to consider Raynal's most extreme statement of the laissez-faire creed, his most uncompromising defense of the private property concept. No author has ever carried these ideas more completely to their logical extreme and defended them with such absolute finality. Both by the ideas expressed and by the absoluteness of the vocabulary employed, this statement is a non plus ultra of its kind. To launch his digression, Raynal seizes upon a recent incident in Portugal, in which the government had forced landowners to plow up their vineyards to

increase the wheat acreage. This, says Raynal, was "un attentat contre le droit sacré et imprescriptible de la propriété." He expresses here his essentially negative concept of government mentioned in the summary to the previous chapter. The only proper function of government, he asserts, is to assure domestic tranquility and international security; in short, to protect property. While government's only proper function, its "duty" in fact, is to protect property, it has no "right" to control the use of property. A property owner is "le maître et maître absolu. ... il peut user ou même abuser à sa discretion." If the government can proscribe the abuse of property, it can prescribe its use, in which case "toute véritable notion de propriété et de liberté sera détruite." If government can control the negligent or abusive use of property in the name of "general" or "public" good, then the owner is not a true owner, but merely the administrator of a certain property for society, a notion that Raynal finds utterly repugnant. In the use of property, the government must leave the individual the liberty to be "un mauvais citoyen," if that is his choice, not only because this is the property owner's sacred right, but also because, through the miraculous workings of the laissez-faire system, the person who abuses his property will soon be "sévérement puni par la misère." Raynal's only example of this automatic retribution is the simplistic and completely unsatisfactory one of a man throwing his money out the window.¹ This is, of course, as unrealistic as it is beside the point. Throwing money out a window is not what one means by abuse of property and Raynal knew it.

¹ Ibid., II, pp. 455-456.

Despite the disingenuousness of his "example," perhaps Raynal sincerely believed that the laissez-faire system was so self-correcting that any anti-social use or abuse of property could only be temporary. Perhaps he sincerely disbelieved that a person could enrich himself and his heirs indefinitely by using his property in a manner detrimental to society. Since he lived in a thinly populated, non-polluted, lightly industrialized country, where the economy was hampered by innumerable absurd restrictions, Raynal's extreme views are perhaps understandable. What is not understandable is that two hundred years later, in a completely revolutionized context, these same views can still be taken seriously by anyone.

Even Raynal had more moderate second thoughts, as he did on most subjects. He showed some inkling of social awareness in one routine defense of private property. He points out that the wealth of the nation is the sum total of each individual's wealth; therefore government should protect private fortunes and encourage individual prosperity. He adds significantly, however, that the individual should not forget that without an organized society, his fortune is worth nothing.¹ Unfortunately his digression stops with this observation. He did not draw the obvious conclusion that since society in effect creates the value of private property, it has an interest, indeed some "rights" in the way that property is used.

If Raynal could be dogmatic in the defense of private property, he would go to any extreme to condemn an exclusive privilege, especially

¹Ibid., I, p. 254.

one that was essentially feudalistic. When these two obsessions collide, something has to give. So it is that the sacred rights of property do not extend to the hated game preserves of the French aristocracy, which were, in truth, a ludicrous anachronism and a grievous abuse in eighteenth-century France. Having read already the extreme statement in volume two, the reader is understandably incredulous when, à propos the game preserves, Raynal declares that "some people" have said that property owners have "le droit de disposer de leur propriété à leur fantaisie." "Some people" indeed! Raynal himself has said it repeatedly and in no uncertain terms. Now, however, in a nearly complete about-face, he bares all his doubts and second thoughts.

Je demande à présent si le droit, sacré sans doute, de la propriété n'a point de limites? Si ce droit n'est pas dans mille circonstances sacrifié au bien public? Si celui qui possède une fontaine peut refuser de l'eau à celui qui meurt de soif?¹

Consistency may be an admirable trait in a thinker, but it is just such inconsistencies as this that make the opinionated Raynal bearable, even enjoyable.

Private property may have been Raynal's obsession, but the economic question, with heavy moral overtones, that obsessed the eighteenth century was the interminable problem of luxury. Was it or was it not good? Was it an integral part of civilization and progress, or was it a dangerous inequality that could undermine organized society and the state itself? The eighteenth century was hopelessly divided on this question. Every author had an opinion and these opinions varied greatly. On one extreme was the austere Rousseau, denouncing all the arts and sciences

¹ Ibid., III, p. 538.

of civilization,¹ all personal vanity and private property.² Montesquieu defined luxury as primarily inequality, luxury being any non-essential possessed by one individual or class and not by another. He admitted that it could be dangerous for private morality and for the stability of the state, but it had some value in that it encouraged initiative and excellence.³ Diderot likewise took a moderate position. Luxury was dangerous when the inequalities were too great, but it played a positive role in creating prosperity for all classes of society.⁴ At the other extreme was the irreverent Voltaire who glorified all the sybaritic pleasures luxury could offer.⁵

These differences in eighteenth-century opinion are faithfully reflected in the Histoire philosophique. As was so often the case, Raynal's first instinctive or emotional reaction to a problem seems to put him in the same camp with Rousseau, which, if he realized it, would distress him greatly, but he balances his anti-luxury digressions with some thoughts to the contrary that put him safely on both sides of the question. In general, he stresses that luxe is an enervating and corrupting factor in society. For example, the Portuguese were undone by their own success in India. "Alors les richesses, qui étoient l'objet et le fruit de leurs conquêtes, corrompirent tout. Les passions nobles

¹Rousseau, Discours sur les sciences et les arts.

²Rousseau, Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité.

³Montesquieu, Esprit des lois, Bk. VII, ch. 1: "Du luxe."

⁴Diderot, Encyclopédie, art., "Luxe."

⁵Voltaire, Poem: Le mondain.

firent place au luxe et aux jouissances, qui ne manquent jamais d'énerver les forces du corps et les vertus de l'âme."¹ Likewise, the Dutch colonists at Batavia (Indonesia), after years of hardship, could finally afford some luxuries, and "Ce goût (du luxe) corrompt les mœurs. ... Les vices qu'entraînent les richesses croissent encore plus que les richesses mêmes."² The nouveaux riches Spanish colons of sixteenth-century Mexico are castigated for their "luxe effréné."³ In contrast, he praises the simple virtues of the Bermuda colony, "aucun poison du luxe n'a coulé dans tes veines."⁴

Luxury has played a large and invidious role in the history of mighty empires, according to Raynal. It brought about the downfall of the Byzantine Empire. "Les Grecs s'abandonnèrent à cette vie oisive et molle qu'amène le luxe."⁵ It contributed to the fall of Rome; "... l'embonpoint du luxe est une maladie qui annonce la decadence des forces."⁶ Riches from booty and tribute undermined the ancient Persian Empire and led to its conquest by rude foreigners.⁷ Thus has history consistently shown that soldiers who have tasted luxury are loathe to risk their lives in battle.⁸ Finally, he criticizes luxury in his own time and place for

¹ Raynal, Histoire philosophique, I, 98.

² Ibid., p. 239.

³ Ibid., II, p. 78.

⁴ Ibid., III, p. 569.

⁵ Ibid., I, p. 76.

⁶ Ibid., p. 74.

⁷ Ibid., p. 275.

⁸ Ibid., IV, p. 431.

restraining the growth of population. Upper-class families have learned that, by delaying marriage and otherwise controlling childbirth, they can enjoy more material possessions, more luxuries.^{1,2}

The number and tenor of the above citations show that Raynal had at least as many misgivings about luxury as Montesquieu, if not Rousseau. With Raynal, however, there is always the other side of the coin. In one digression, he is reminiscent of Diderot when he recognizes that all higher culture is possible only where sufficient numbers of people are free of the necessity of earning a living and enjoy certain amenities of life above and beyond the basic necessities. "Par-tout les beaux arts sont les enfans du génie, de la paresse et de l'ennui."³ On another occasion he sounds even Voltairian. To live at the subsistence level, he declares, with no superfluities, no luxuries, is contrary to human nature, and no civil law, no religious teaching will ever suppress human nature. "Comment réduire l'homme à se contenter de ce peu que les moralistes prescrivent à ses basoins?" He continues to make the common-sense point previously made by Voltaire:⁴ That one man's luxury is another's necessity; that the luxury of one generation will be the necessity of the next. "Comment fixer les limites du nécessaire, qui varie avec sa situation, ses connoissances et ses désirs?"⁵

¹ Ibid., p. 630.

² Raynal's fears of "depopulation" will be discussed in the following chapter.

³ Ibid., I, p. 640.

⁴ Voltaire, Dictionnaire philosophique, art., "Luxe."

⁵ Raynal, Histoire philosophique, I, p. 678.

Though some might deplore his lack of consistency, it is precisely these dichotomies in Raynal's opinions, and his determination to express his every thought, that make the Histoire philosophique a uniquely rich and faithful reflection of eighteenth-century French opinion. These traits are obvious also in his discussion of the one overriding pre-occupation of the eighteenth century: Europe's re-examination of her ancient religious heritage.

CHAPTER VI

RELIGION

If one were to ask a non-specialist what he normally associated with the terms eighteenth century, Enlightenment, Age of Reason, his answer would almost certainly reflect that century's preoccupation with the question of religion. When one thinks of the enlightenment, one thinks automatically of deism, of the mechanistic universe, of the great battle against religious intolerance, or, conversely stated, the great battle for religious liberty. The century's reputation is, moreover, well deserved, for, in truth, it not only attacked an established church, but undermined the very foundations of Judaeo-Christian belief. There had been no scarcity of religious ferment and strife in Europe since well before the Reformation, certainly there had been too much religious war, but the religious debates of the eighteenth century were something new. This was not a continuation of the struggle between Christian sects, but a war between a two-thousand-year-old tradition and belief, and a strange new world of non-belief or greatly modified belief. The eighteenth century was the century in which the intelligentsia of the Western World lost forever its ancient and childlike faith.

This revolution in western thought is generously reflected in the writings of Guillaume Raynal. His material on this subject will be

discussed in the following categories: First, his criticism of contemporary religious beliefs, institutions and practices; secondly, his theories concerning the origin and purpose of religion; thirdly, proposals for reform of the church and advice on church-state relationships; and finally, Raynal's statement of personal belief.

In the area of criticism, Raynal made good use of all the exotic lands and cultures that passed under his pen to criticize contemporary European institutions and practices. One use of such material was to describe, with tongue-in-cheek, absurd beliefs and practices of a pagan religion, which the reader would recognize immediately as being nearly identical to some of Christianity's most sacred traditions. For example, he describes the "superstitions" of the Aztecs.

Les mexicains invoquoient des puissances subalternes comme les autres nations en ont invoquées, sous les noms de génies ... d'anges La moindre de ces divinités avoit ... ses images, ses fonctions, son autorité particulière, et toutes faisoient des miracles. Ils avoient oune eau sacrée ... les pèlerinages, les processions, les dons faits aux prêtres étoient de bonnes oeuvres.¹

On certain days, the priests made a statue of dough which they placed upon the altar. There, it was miraculously transformed into a god. Then, in a "unique superstition" found nowhere else in the world, "Une foule innombrable de peuple se rendoit dans le temple. Les prêtres découpoient la statue. Ils en donnoient un morceau à chacun des assistants, qui le mangeoit et se croyoit sanctifié après avoir mangé son dieu." Raynal adds facetiously, "il vaut mieux manger des dieux que des hommes," but sometimes the Mexicans did both!²

¹ Raynal, Histoire philosophique, II, p. 34.

² Ibid., p. 35.

Using pagan superstitions to ridicule Christianity by implication was, of course, the same device used so skillfully by Diderot in a famous Encyclopédie article.¹ The irrepressible Raynal is not always as clever as Diderot, however. He gives away his game because he cannot suppress the desire to point out exactly what he is doing. For example, he lists much that is fabulous, unimaginable and absurd in human and divine history as recorded in Hindu Scripture, then adds, "Quelque fabuleuses que ces annales nous paroissent ... il n'y a point d'objections contre les époques des Indiens qu'on ne puisse retorquer contre les nôtres." While on the subject of the Hindu Vegas, he takes impish pleasure in pointing out that these sacred writings, dating back from the earliest times, do not mention the most memorable event in the history of man, the flood.² (The obvious counter assertion would be that the fact that they do not mention the flood is proof enough of their invalidity.)

All of these parallels between pagan and Christian belief have as their purpose to show that to a neutral observer, to an interplanetary visitor such as Micromégas for example, all earth's religions are equally absurd. Raynal quotes certain Caribbean Islanders as saying that they would not accept Christianity "de peur que leurs voisins ne se moquâssent d'eux."³

His description of the Budsoïste sect of Japan is a thinly veiled allusion to medieval Catholicism. He describes them as ascetic,

¹Diderot, Encyclopédie, art., "Christianisme."

²Raynal, Histoire philosophique, I, p. 40.

³Ibid., III, p. 19.

monastic, flagellant, in short fanatics whose practices are all contrary to human nature. He draws a contrast with the Shintos of that same country who made a virtue of life's pleasures, including sex. It is obvious from his description where Raynal's preference lies.¹

This brings one to a second method of using pagan religions to criticize Christianity. Instead of showing that paganism and Christianity are equally ridiculous, Raynal depicts some paganisms as being absolutely superior in belief and practice. In addition to Shintoism, the most obvious example would be Chinese Confucianism. "Chez ce peuple de sages, tout ce qui lie et civilise les hommes est religion, et la religion elle même n'est que la pratique des vertus sociales."²

Another method Raynal employs is to criticize certain abuses of superstition or religion in general, but it is clear that what he says applies to European Christianity in particular. One such abuse is intolerance. "L'intolérance, toute affreuse qu'elle nous paroît, est une conséquence nécessaire de l'esprit superstitieux." It becomes clear in extended remarks that superstition is synonymous with religious belief, and, as long as there are religions, intolerance is inevitable. "Il faut, ou dire que toute croyance est absurde, ou gémir sur l'intolérance comme sur un mal nécessaire." To show that he was thinking of Christianity in particular, he cites as an example the incident in which St. Louis

¹Ibid., I, pp. 131-133.

²Ibid., p. 103.

gave Joinville permission to kill on the spot anyone overhead in blasphemy.¹

Intolerance and fanaticism lead to that most terrible of crimes, religious war. Raynal illustrates by describing Afghan pagans who for years slaughtered Persian Moslems. The Afghans eventually accepted Islam also, and in retrospect their wars with Persia seemed absurd. He draws from this episode some general conclusions.

Car telle est la nature des opinions religieuses; qu'elles sanctifient le crime qu'elles inspirent, et que ce crime efface les autres forfaits qu'on a commis. Le fanatique dit à Dieu, "Il est vrai, Seigneur, que j'ai empoisonné; que j'ai assassiné; que j'ai volé; mais tu me pardonneras, car j'ai exterminé de ma propre main cinquante de tes ennemis."²

One may assume that Raynal, as he wrote the above lines, was thinking less of distant Afghanistan than of Western Europe, especially France, where religious wars were recent history.

By describing pagan religions, exotic religious wars, Raynal could criticize indirectly European Christianity. This type of criticism, typical of the eighteenth century, is effective. Like a roman à clef, it allows the reader the satisfaction of divining the real identity of the protagonists behind the fictional masks. Raynal, however, was not always so circumspect. He more frequently criticized the Church openly and by name. On the twin abuses of intolerance and fanaticism, he naturally singled out the Spanish Inquisition as the most notorious example

¹ Ibid., IV, pp. 308-309.

² Ibid., I, p. 307.

of obscurantism gone berserk. He addresses the inquisitors with such ungentle terms as "monstres exécrables ... infâmes que vous êtes, prêtres dissolus, moines impudiques Pour appaiser Dieu, vous brûlez des hommes! Êtes-vous des adorateurs de Moloch?" He also points out that it was human sacrifice that filled the Spanish priests with such righteous wrath against the religion of the Aztecs.¹

Not even the United States, object of Raynal's sincere admiration, was spared in his denunciations of religious intolerance. He decries Puritan fanaticism. "... toute l'Europe fut étonnée d'une intolérance si révoltante."² He illustrates by recounting with a straight face the wildly unbelievable yarn of one heroic Polly Baker.³ He describes the notorious Salem witch trials and asks his readers, "Vous sentez vos cheveux s'agiter sur votre front? Vous frémissez d'horreur?" He then reminds them that they recently did the same in France.⁴

The revocation of the Edit de Nantes, once cited as an example of royal absolutism, is cited again as an example of religious intolerance. The Huguenots, he declares, posed no threat to the tranquility of the state and were, in fact, among the king's most valuable and productive subjects. Their persecution, therefore, can only be ascribed to "l'orgueil sacerdotal" and to "l'ambition pharésienne."⁵

¹ Ibid., II, p. 59.

² Ibid., p. 231.

³ An article on the Polly Baker anecdote: Max Hall, "Hoax upon hoax, or too many inventions for Ben (Franklin)," European Quarterly, XVI, (1960), 221-228.

⁴ Raynal, Histoire philosophique, IV, pp. 232-242.

⁵ Ibid., p. 108.

Another specific criticism that Raynal levelled at the Catholic Church, and one that seems indeed odd today, was the charge that the Church impeded the growth of the population. Such is the irony of history that the Church today is again under attack on the population question, but for exactly the opposite reason. Raynal was not alone in the eighteenth century in his fears of depopulation. The highly respected Montesquieu shared fully this presentiment and devoted no less than eleven of the Lettres Persanes to a discussion of the problem and its possible causes.¹ As Raynal declares, "Il s'est élevé depuis quelques années un cri presque universel sur la dépopulation de tous les états."² Exactly why this essentially groundless fear of depopulation is never adequately explained. In any case, Raynal was not alone in placing much of the blame on the Church. He does so in a final summary on depopulation, and in an aside from his description of colonial Chile. Of Santiago, he says, "On compte quarante mille habitans dans cette cité, et le nombre seroit plus grand, sans neuf couyens de moines et sept de religieuses que la superstition y a érigés."³ Montesquieu made exactly the same accusation against Catholic monasticism and celibacy in one of the Lettres cited.⁴

Raynal, as noted above, devoted a final summary to the problem of depopulation, thereby placing it on a par with government, religion

¹ Montesquieu, Lettres Persanes, Lettres; CXII-CXXII.

² Raynal, Histoire philosophique, IV, p. 628.

³ Ibid., II, p. 257.

⁴ Montesquieu, Lettres Persanes, Lettre; CXVII.

and other major preoccupations. With his passion for thoroughness, he cannot avoid asking, in that final summary, the obvious question, "Mais on demandera si la grande population est utile au bonheur du genre-humain?"¹ This is undoubtedly the basic question and is certainly more important than idle speculation as to whether ancient Gaul sheltered more human inhabitants than eighteenth-century France. Although he was perceptive enough to raise the question, Raynal was not honest enough to attempt an answer. Instead, he dismisses it as "une question oisive," and, with some neat verbal tickery, confuses the question entirely. "Il ne s'agit pas en effect de multiplier les hommes pour les rendre heureux, mais il suffit de les rendre heureux pour qu'ils se multiplient."²

Another specific criticism of Christian belief and practice is that they are too compatible with governmental tyranny. This is not another allusion to the long and pernicious alliance between altar and throne already discussed in a previous chapter. The reference here is to certain characteristics of Christian belief: humility, obedience to authority, acceptance of suffering in this world for reward in the next, which make practicing Christians ideal subjects for a tyrant. Raynal illustrates with his history of Japan. By coincidence, Portuguese missionaries arrived there just as a new prince was subverting the old constitution and subjugating the country to a rigid absolutism. Raynal says of the Japanese,

Un nouveau courage ... vint les aider à souffrir. Ce fut le christianisme que les Portugais leur avoient apporté. Ce

¹ Raynal, Histoire philosophique, IV, p. 635.

² Ibid.

nouveau culte trouva, dans l'oppression des Japonais, le germe le plus fécond de prosélytisme. On écouça des missionnaires qui prêchoient : une religion de souffrances.¹

One of Raynal's bitterest criticisms of the Church takes the form of a sweeping indictment, in which he depicts the Church as an absolutely evil factor in European history, and in which he holds the Church uniquely responsible for all the backwardness and obscurantism that characterized, as far as Raynal was concerned, medieval and renaissance Europe. It was Raynal's contention, as previously noted, that the discovery of the two Indies, and subsequent developments, were the turning point in world history. Thus, in his first volume, he deems it appropriate to describe Europe as it was on the eve of the first Portuguese voyage of discovery. It is indicative of how Raynal thought that this description of fifteenth-century Europe is nothing but a long bitter criticism of the Church. This, in retrospect, is how the eighteenth century viewed its Christian-Catholic religious tradition.

Il étoit tems que la philosophie et les lettres arrivâssent au secours de la morale et de la raison. L'Église Romaine avoit détruit, autant qu'il est possible, les principes de justice que la nature a mis dans tous les hommes. Ce seul dogme, qu'au pape appartient la souveraineté de tous les empires, renversoit les fondemens de toute société, de toute vertu politique. Cependant cette maxime avoit régné longtems avec le dogme affreux qui permettoit, qui ordonnoit même de haïr, de persécuter tous les hommes, dont les opinions sur la religion ne sont pas conformes à celles de l'Église Romaine. Les indulgences, espèce d'expiations vendues pour tous les crimes, et si vous voulez quelque chose de plus monstrueux, des expiations pour les crimes à venir; la dispense de tenir sa parole aux ennemis du pontife, fussent-ils de sa religion; cet article de croyance où l'on enseigne que le mérite du juste peut être appliqué au méchant; les exemples de tous les vices dans

¹Ibid., I, p. 160.

la personne des pontifes, et dans les hommes sacrés, destinés à servir de modèle au peuple; enfin, le plus grand des outrages faits à l'humanité, l'inquisition: toutes ces horreurs devoient faire de l'Europe un repaire de tigres et de serpens, plutôt qu'une vaste contrée, habitée ou cultivée, par des hommes.

Telle étoit la situation de l'Europe.¹

Raynal returns to this same period in time in his summary of the history of Holland. He notes that the founding of the Dutch Republic coincides with the Renaissance. He digresses a moment to describe the Renaissance, but his description quickly becomes another criticism of the medieval Church.

Alors se préparoit en Europe une grande révolution dans les esprits. La renaissance des lettres, un commerce étendu, les inventions de l'imprimerie et de la boussole, amenoient le moment où la raison humaine devoit secouer le joug d'une partie des préjugés, qui avoient pris naissance dans les tems de barbarie.

Beaucoup de bons esprits étoient guéris des superstitions romaines. Ils étoient blessés de l'abus que les papes faisoient de leur autorité; des tributs qu'ils levoient sur les peuples; et surtout de ces subtiles absurdités dont ils avoient chargé la religion simple de Jésus Christ.²

The second portion of this chapter deals with Raynal's theories of the origin of religion. There are expressed or implied in the work two distinct theories on this subject. In his closing summary on religion, as in his closing summary on government, Raynal, in his rational-theoretical frame of mind, harks back to the dawn of human history, to some basic facts of the human condition and man's relation to the universe, to find the origins of the universal phenomenon of religious belief. The picture that emerges in this specific theoretical summary is quite different, in one important aspect, from the theory that emerges

¹ Ibid., pp. 21-22.

² Ibid., p. 155.

from the numerous asides and digressions that Raynal scatters throughout his text while in his usual emotional-critical frame of mind. The one factor that characterizes the scattered digressions on the subject, is that they consistently depict religion as a conscious fraud, an invention, a fabrication by a cunning priestly class to exploit the universal gullibility and superstitious nature of people. Raynal was not alone in the eighteenth century in holding that organized religion was essentially a fraud or priestly conspiracy. Other writers, especially Voltaire, expressed the same opinion.¹

For one example, Raynal cites the origin of the Hindu religion and its close connection with the caste system. This, he declares, proves that "La religion fut par-tout une invention d'hommes adroits et politiques, qui ne trouvant pas les moyens de gouverner leurs semblables à leur gré, cherchèrent dans le ciel la force qui leur manquoit, et en firent descendre la terreur. Leurs rêveries furent généralement admises, dans toute leur absurdité." Raynal continues that, with the growth of civilization and reason, intelligent men now have a choice of options; one can privately ridicule the old faith, or, from self-interest and pusillanimity, one can attempt to "concilier la folie avec la raison, recourant a des allegories dont les instituteurs du dogme n'avoient pas eu la moindre idée."²

While on the subject of India, he notes that the Sanskrit of the sacred Vedas is as unintelligible to the contemporary Hindu as the

¹Voltaire, Dictionnaire philosophique, art., "Religion."; Poem: Epitre à Uranie.

²Raynal, Histoire philosophique, I, p. 37.

Latin Vulgate is to a French peasant. Moreover, the Hindu priests have made it a point of doctrine that only they shall ever be initiated into the mysteries of this secret language. Raynal adds, "Tant il est vrai que l'esprit sacerdotal est par-tout le même, et qu'en tout tems le prêtre, par intérêt et par orgueil, s'occupe à retenir les peuples dans l'ignorance."¹

In a humorous example of conscious fraud, Raynal records that the prince of Tranvancor, India, crawled through a statue of a golden calf and, upon his emergence, proclaimed his own divinity. He was recognized as a bramin, and thenceforth dated his edicts from that miraculous experience of rebirth.²

The priestly conspiracy had, as one motive, the desire for power over the minds and thoughts of men. It had made "natural" phenomena miraculous to gain a monopoly over knowledge and understanding. "La théologie, qui a profité des frayeurs de l'enfance pour inspirer d'éternelles à la raison; qui a tout dénaturé, géographie, astronomie, physique, histoire, qui a voulu que tout fut merveille et mystère, pour avoir le droit de tout expliquer."³

Even more important, however, than the desire for intellectual and spiritual power, was the simple economic motive. Raynal could not help but point out that the priestly class always earned a living, and sometimes a very luxurious living, through the operations of the organized

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 317.

³ Ibid., III, p. 124.

religions that they founded. He illustrates, or insinuates his point, with the description of a certain Hindu temple in India.

Des pèlerins de l'Indostan y viennent chercher l'absolution de leurs péchés, et ne se présentent jamais sans une offrande proportionnée à leur fortune. Ces dons étoient encore si considérables au commencement du siècle, qu'ils faisoient subsister dans les douceurs d'une vie oisive et commode quarante mille personnes. Ces brames ... étoient tellement satisfaits de leur situation qu'ils quittoient rarement leur retraite¹

The universal alliance between altar and throne has likewise been at least partially economically motivated. Raynal cites the example of the King of Ashan, Bengal, who let the Brahmins foist their "superstitions" upon his subjects, at the expense of the people's "religion naturelle," on condition that he be allowed to share with the Brahmins a monopoly in the salt trade. Raynal concludes, "C'est ainsi que se sont introduites toutes ces religions factices, par l'intérêt et pour l'intérêt des prêtres qui les prêchoient et des rois qui les recevoient."²

Another explicit statement of the economic motive in religion's origin and practice is found in Raynal's discussion of Mohammed, whose inspiration, he says, was purely economic and political, rather than spiritual. Voltaire had already made exactly the same observation in one of his most successful plays.³ Of Mohammed, Raynal says:

¹ Ibid., I, p. 498.

² Ibid., p. 356.

³ Voltaire, Le fanatisme ou Mahomet. In one of the century's most interesting by-plays, Pope Benedict XIV, to whom the wily Voltaire had dedicated the play to confound his censors, heartily congratulated the author and gave him his warmest apostolic blessing for having exposed the founder of Islam as a fraud. Everybody, except the Pope, understood Voltaire's real point, the same as Raynal's; if one of the world's major religions is based on fraud, another can be also.

Mahomet ne fut pas l'envoyé du ciel; mais un adroit politique et un grand conquérant. Pour augmenter même le concours d'étrangers dans une cité qu'il destinoit à être la capitale de son empire, il ordonna que tous ceux qui suivoient sa loi, s'y rendissent une fois dans leur vie, sous peine de mourir réprouvés. Ce précepte étoit accompagné d'un autre qui doit faire sentir que la superstition seule ne le quidoit pas. Il exigea que chaque pèlerin, ... achetât et fit bénir cinq pièces de toile de coton, pour servir de suaire, tant à lui, qu'à tous ceux de sa famille, que des raisons valables auroient empêchés d'entreprendre ce saint voyage. Cette politique devoit faire de l'Arabie le centre d'un grand commerce, lorsque le nombre des pèlerins s'élevoit à plusieurs millions.¹

It should be pointed out that neither Voltaire nor Raynal sought to imply that Jesus Christ, whom they both admired, was a fraud, or that his motives were as suspect as Mohammed's, and, in any case, they did not consider Jesus the founder of the organized religions that were practiced in his name. Raynal's opinion of Jesus is found, oddly enough, not in his final summary on religion, but in his summary on government, in which he traces the rise of the Pope's temporal power, beginning with the life of Jesus. Of Jesus, Raynal says, "Dans une bourgade obscure de la Judée, au fond de l'atelier d'un pauvre charpentier, s'élevoit un homme de caractère austère."² He was revolted by the hypocrisy and vain ceremonies of his religion. He began to preach his ideas to the poor and ignorant. He was a "vertueux personnage," who lived and died in complete obscurity. In this thumbnail biography, there is no mention of virgin birth, miracles, or any other manifestation of Christ's divinity. Raynal says that while expiring on the cross, Jesus addressed his dying words to "Dieu, son père." Does Raynal accept the traditional assertion

¹ Raynal, Histoire philosophique, I, pp. 304-305.

² Ibid., IV, p. 524.

that Christ was the literal supernatural son of God, or does he mean only that he was the son of God as all men are the sons of the Creator? Raynal does not say, but he does make short shrift of the one Biblical assertion that has always been cited as the most compelling evidence of Christ's divine nature: that he arose from the dead. Raynal dismisses the resurrection as "Une doctrine qui révolte la raison."¹ In short, Raynal depicts a sympathique but completely demythologized Jesus; in capsule form, the historical Jesus of Ernest Renan nearly a century before Renan's work created a world-wide sensation.²

Continuing his summary of the Pope's temporal power, Raynal seeks to disassociate Jesus Christ entirely from the organized religions that bear his name. He compares point by point the humility, tolerance, poverty and passivity of Jesus with the arrogance, intolerance, wealth and militancy of the Christian, especially the Roman Catholic Church. In brief, he depicts the organized Church in Europe as having been, since its inception, a gross fraud and deception. He finds one thread, one unbroken tendency, that runs through all the complicated maneuvering of the Church hierarchy. From the fake Donation of Constantine to the latest papal bull, every action, every pronouncement has had as its purpose to increase the temporal wealth and power of the Church.³

In his critical-polemical frame of mind, therefore, Raynal consistently depicts religion as a conscious fraud, perpetrated by kings

¹ Ibid.

² Ernest Renan, Vie de Jésus (Paris: Michel Levy, 1863).

³ Raynal, Histoire philosophique, IV pp. 524-534.

and priests whose motives are always crassly materialistic. In a more theoretical-philosophical frame of mind, he turns his attention from organized religion to the universal phenomenon of religious belief. In these digressions, a different picture emerges. He develops his theory fully in a closing summary on religion, but some earlier digressions had prefigured his final remarks. This non-polemical explanation of the origin of religion has as its starting point a recognition of the fact that, as Voltaire so often said, "le mal inonde toute la terre."¹ It is the old problem of evil: how to reconcile universal concepts of good, justice, reason and order, which men are wont to identify with a benevolent and omnipotent creator, with the palpable evil, injustice, absurdity and chaos that characterize at least the human portion of creation. This applies moreover not just to man's relation to fellow man, but also to the apparent indifference of the physical universe to man. In an early digression, Raynal uses a series of rhetorical questions to define the problem of evil. His words and sentiments are strongly reminiscent of a famous lament by Voltaire, inspired by the disastrous Lisbon earthquake of 1755, and of an even more famous poem by a Persian tentmaker.^{2,3} Speaking of the creator and his universe, Raynal says.

Pourquoi sa sagesse y laissa-t-elle tant d'imperfections
apparentes? Pourquoi sa bonté le peupla-t-elle d'êtres sensibles
qui devoient souffrir, sans l'avoir mérité? Pourquoi le méchant
qu'il haït, y prospère-t-il sous ses yeux et le bon qu'il chérit

¹Voltaire, Histoire d'un bon Bramin.

²Voltaire, Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne.

³Omar Khayyam Rubaiyat.

y est-il accablé d'afflictions? Pourquoi les innombrables fléaux de la nature y frappent-ils indistinctement?¹

Subsequently, Raynal points out that the universality of evil gives rise to another universal phenomenon, superstition.

La superstition, ... est répandue chez tous les peuples sauvages et policés. Elle est née sans doute de la crainte du mal, et de l'ignorance de ses causes, et de ses remèdes. C'en est assez du moins pour l'enraciner dans l'esprit de tous les hommes. Les fléaux de la nature, les contagions, les maladies, les accidens imprévus, les phénomènes destructeurs, toutes les causes cachées de la douleur et de la mort, sont si universellement sur la terre, qu'il seroit bien étonnant que l'homme n'en eût pas été, dans tous les tems et dans tous les pays vivement affecté.

Raynal draws these two ideas together in his final summary on religion where he says that, if the earth had been a perfect and painless environment, there would have been no religions. Superstition, the mother of all religions, is man's attempt to explain evil, pain and death. What Camus called the absurdity of the universe seems too diabolical to be pure chance. Therefore, men have always attributed good and bad fortune to some conscious will.

Il (l'homme) rechercha les causes de sa misère. Pour expliquer l'énigme de son existence, de son bonheur et de son malheur, il inventa différens systèmes également absurdes.³

Raynal rapidly sketches the evolution of human thought from primitive polytheism, through manicheism, to monotheism. Christianity, which grew out of the monotheism of the Jews, has never divested itself of the more primitive manicheist idea of separate, but apparently equal,

¹Raynal, Histoire philosophique, I, pp. 32-33.

²Ibid., II, p. 334.

³Ibid., IV, p. 462.

good and evil spirits, Raynal declares. The fallen angel or devil of Christian theology seems to be holding his own in the age-old competition for men's souls. As Christianity emerged out of Judaism, another cardinal belief was incorporated into the religious tradition, the doctrine of immortality. It too, like earlier "superstitions" grew out of a need to explain an apparent absurdity. "Cependant on voyoit souvent l'homme de bien dans la souffrance, le méchant, l'impie même dans la prospérité, et l'on imagine la doctrine de l'immortalité."¹ The universal desire for justice, so often frustrated in this world, leads to belief in another world where accounts can be evened with appropriate rewards and punishment.

Raynal continues to chronicle the evolution of Christianity, without mentioning Jesus Christ in this summary. He notes that Christianity arrived in Europe at a most propitious time in history, just as the Roman Empire was beginning to wane, and when the Empire fell, the ancient paganisms fell with it. Taking advantage of the political and spiritual vacuum created by that most singular revolution in western history, the Christian Church soon emerged as the only unified, disciplined, literate and organized institution in a time of universal chaos. It rode to total victory on the swords of Constantine and Charlemagne.

The Church was truly catholic for long centuries, but certain inherent contradictions, absurdities and abuses in her doctrine and practice lead inevitably to dissension. When dissension grew into open and irrepressible rebellion, it was called the Protestant Reformation.

¹ Ibid.

"Le catholicisme tend sans cesse au protestantisme."¹ The evolution of the human spirit, continuous since primitive polytheism, will not stop with protestantism. In protestantism, each individual pastor or believer has substituted his particular and often absurd interpretation of divine will for the pope's universal and absurd interpretation of divine will. The contradictions of protestantism make further evolution inevitable. "Le protestantisme tend ... au déisme, le déisme au scepticisme."² Without saying where he personally stands on the scale, Raynal says that the logical end to this evolution is atheism, which he defines dispassionately as that frame of mind which attributes all phenomena to natural causes. Atheists are "une classe de philosophes qui ne sont ni atrabilaires, ni méchants, mais qui croient trouver dans les propriétés d'une matière éternelle la cause suffisante de tous les phénomènes qui nous frappent d'admiration."³

In this summary history of religious belief and Christianity, Raynal attempted to be just such a philosophe as he described in his definition of atheism. He tried to explain certain phenomena, religious belief and Christianity, by referring to basic natural causes, inherent in the human condition, and to coincidences of political and military history. He strongly suggests that there was never any supernatural or divine intervention in this natural and inevitable chain of events. Also missing in this chain of events are the conscious fraud and manipulation that played such a large role in all his scattered digressions on religion.

¹ Ibid., p. 468.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

The Histoire philosophique contains two digressions on the subject of religion that one might classify as suggestions for reform. One of these is addressed, modestly enough, to the Pope himself. Raynal notes that the Church in Mexico still collects the croisade (so called because the practice first started in medieval Spain to raise money for the crusades). The croisade absolved sin and pardoned in advance any sin that the purchaser might "plan" to commit. With this example before him, Raynal calls upon the Pope to reform dogmas and practices of the Church that are not compatible with truth and reason. "Simplifiez votre doctrine. Purgez-la d'absurdités. ... Le monde est trop éclairé pour se repaître plus long-tems d'incompréhensibilités qui répugnent à la raison." Even more damaging to the Church than her absurd doctrines, is the immoral and scandalous conduct of churchmen in seeking temporal power and riches. If churchmen had actually imitated Christ in humility and poverty, if they had gone about doing good, if they had really been a benefit to society, "Personne n'eût osé attaquer une classe d'hommes si utiles et si respectables, ... quelque absurdes qu'eussent été vos dogmes." Thus, reform of the Church's morals is even more important than modernizing dogma, but Raynal strongly urges both.¹

Raynal's advice to the Pope was probably offered more as still another criticism of actual Church practice and belief than as a serious suggestion for reform. He does, however, give some advice on church-state relations that he undoubtedly intended as serious suggestions for immediate reform. Raynal urges many times that the state be completely

¹ Ibid., II, pp. 310-313.

neutral, to the point of indifference, in all questions of religion, all questions of cult, of belief and non-belief. All cults, "dont les principes ne contrarieront pas l'ordre public" should be tolerated.¹ Raynal does not say what the state should do with those whose religious beliefs interfere with their duties as citizens, or those whose beliefs automatically made them intolerant of all other cults and therefore a continuous source of dissension within the body politic. (By eighteenth-century definitions, this latter group included, most significantly, the Roman Catholic Church, largest or only Church in France, and therefore a problem to be contended with in any utopian scheme or practical reform). By refusing to name exactly who cannot be tolerated by the state, and by refusing to say what the state should do with these intolerables, Raynal again avoids the complete implications of his theorizing, and he likewise avoids the absolutism and extremism of Rousseau. Confronted with this same problem in his theoretical work, Rousseau not only named names, but added that any citizen who could not subordinate his religion to a "profession de foi purement civile," and who could not admit the possibility of salvation in other cults, should be banished or killed.² Rousseau's extreme advice later served as a model for church-state legislation during the Revolution.

Despite his pleas for civil tolerance and neutrality in affairs of religion, Raynal did not advocate a rigid separation of church and state as it is understood in the twentieth century. So great was his

¹ Ibid., IV, p. 469.

² Rousseau, Contrat social, Bk. IV, chap. viii.

distrust for organized religion, he advocated that all cults be established and their expenses paid by the state, so as to make them subordinate to the civil government and dependent upon it for their continued existence. He did not concern himself with the impracticability of his suggestion, but contented himself with pointing out that the alternative system of relatively independent or disestablished cults had not worked satisfactorily. "Les maisons sans rente fixe, sont des magasins de superstition à la charge du bon peuple." The poorer they are, the more fanatic they become. Thus has come about "les saints, les miracles, les reliques, toutes les inventions dont l'imposture a accablé la religion." Moreover, churches dependent upon the state are less likely to be seditious, less likely to feel an allegiance to a foreign power. With consummate cynicism, he advises that the state pay salaries so modest that only a very few will be attracted to the clerical vocation. Finally, he hopes that the state, though paying the churchman's salary, will never be foolish enough to listen to him for advice.¹

This chapter has certainly made clear that Raynal had rejected the traditional Judaeo-Christian beliefs of his ancestors. Not only had he lost faith in the dogmas, but he was overtly hostile to many beliefs and most practices as being absolutely inimical to human happiness and welfare. One wonders then just what did Raynal personally believe. We have noted that, in discussing any subject, Raynal frequently addresses rhetorical questions to God, or calls upon God to be his witness in some portentous oath or assertion. These could be dismissed as unthinking

¹Raynal, Histoire philosophique, II, p. 462.

rhetorical devices, but numerous asides indicate that Raynal believed in at least a deistic creator of the universe. In one such aside from a discussion of Hinduism, he says that man should shed himself of belief in dual spirits of good and evil and recognize "l'être tout-puissant qui créa l'univers."¹ In another aside from a discussion of the Aztecs he says, "un être suprême, une vie à venir avec ses peines et ses récompenses ... (sont) des dogmes sublimes."² Though he personally evidenced no belief in an after-life, Raynal could call such a belief a "dogme sublime" because it was a relatively harmless and comforting myth. As he said of the Hindu belief in reincarnation, which he misunderstood as being a blessing rather than a curse, "Heureux encore les peuple dont la religion offre au moins des mensonges agréables."³ In another reference to God the Creator, he says,

L'unité de Dieu, sublime et puissante idée que toutes les religions doivent à la philosophie, et non au Judaïsme, comme on l'imagine. Le dieu des Juifs, colère, jaloux, vindicatif, ne fut qu'un dieu local, tel que ceux des autres nations.^{4,5}

One notes in the above quotation that Raynal gives philosophie credit for the sublime idea of monotheism. In his final summary on philosophie, he goes much further and advocates that it be enshrined as

¹ Ibid., I, p. 32.

² Ibid., II, p. 34.

³ Ibid., I, p. 58.

⁴ Ibid., p. 304.

⁵ Voltaire likewise continually disparaged the Jewish contribution to world religion. Reader is referred to:

Dictionnaire philosophique, art. "Religion."

Poem: Épître à Uranie.

the new religion for all mankind. He notes that the eighteenth century is "le siècle de philosophie," and adds,

Après tant de bienfaits, elle (la philosophie) devoit tenir lieu de la divinité sur terre. C'est elle qui lie, éclaire, aide, et soulage les humains. Elle leur donne tout, sans en exiger aucun culte. ... Elle consacre ses lumières et ses travaux à l'usage de l'homme. Elle le rend meilleur pour qu'il soit plus heureux. Elle ne haït que la tyrannie et l'imposure. ... Elle fuit le bruit et le nom des sectes, mais elle les tolère toutes. Les aveugles et les méchants la calomnient.¹

It has not been recorded what Raynal's reaction was when the Reign of Terror took him at his word and enthroned a Goddess of Reason in the cathedral of Notre Dame. In any case, this flight of fancy, mainly a jab at the anti-philosophe camp, is not a sincere statement of personal religious belief. The Histoire philosophique does contain one such statement. It appears, curiously enough, in the form of a long and eloquent prayer offered up by an unnamed Celebes Islander. The inhabitants of the Celebes, according to Raynal, worshipped only the sun and moon. They became confused by the conflicting claims of Moslem and Portuguese-Christian missionaries. The leader of the tribe went upon a high platform and addressed a lengthy prayer to "l'Être suprême." One assumes that he prayed in his own language, whatever it was, but quite remarkably, Raynal is able to quote (the whole prayer is enclosed in quotation marks) the prayer word for word, in what appears to be an excellent French translation. Even more remarkable for a stone-age savage, the prayer reads exactly like one that would be offered by an eighteenth-century philosophe. Raynal does not say, of course, how he acquired either the original or the French translation of this amazing oration,

¹Raynal, Histoire philosophique, IV, p. 686.

which reads as follows:

Grand Dieu, je ne me prosterne point à tes pieds, en ce moment, parce que je n'implore point ta clémence. Je n'ai à te demander qu'une chose juste; et tu me la dois. Deux nations étrangères opposées dans leur culte, sont venues porter la terreur dans mon âme, et dans celle de mes sujets. Elles m'assurent que tu me puniras à jamais, si je n'obéis à tes loix. J'ai donc le droit d'exiger de toi, que tu me les fasses connoître. Je ne demande point que tu me révèles les mystères impénétrables qui enveloppent ton être, et qui me sont inutiles. Parle, O mon Dieu! puisque tu es l'auteur de la nature, tu connois le fond de nos coeurs, et tu sais qu'il leur est impossible de concevoir un projet de désobéissance. Mais si tu dédaignes de te faire entendre à des mortels; si tu trouves indigne de ton essence d'employer le langage de l'homme pour dicter les devoirs à l'homme; je prends à témoin ma nation entière, le soleil qui m'éclaire, ..., et toi même, que je cherche dans la sincérité de mon coeur, à connoître ta volonté; et je te préviens aujourd'hui, que je reconnoîtrai, pour les dépositaires de tes oracles, les premiers ministres de l'une ou de l'autre religion que tu feras arriver dans nos ports. ... Si, dans le bonne foi qui me guide, je venois à embrasser l'erreur, ma conscience seroit tranquille; et c'est toi qui seroit le méchant.

Raynal records that the Moslem missionaries reappeared first and the Celebes Islanders embraced Islam with a tranquil conscience.¹

There are several interesting points of eighteenth-century thought in this remarkable prayer. First, one notes that, the queenly science of theology, and all of the scholasticism's endless debates concerning the nature of God, are dismissed as "inutiles." All man needs to know about God is what God wants man to do. Secondly, the prayer again uses the relativist point of view to puncture the absolutist claims of Christianity. It shows that to an outsider, a neutral observer such as a Borneo savage, all the major religions appear equally good or equally absurd. Thirdly, the prayer is an explicit, almost militant, statement of the eighteenth-century conviction that God would pardon a sincere

¹Ibid., pp. 181-182.

sceptic, an honest agnostic. The Celebes chieftain would be surprised to know that his sentiments are parallel to those expressed by Diderot in his Apologue du jeune Mexicain; that his words echo those used by Voltaire in one of his best poems, "Si je me suis trompé, c'est en cherchant ta loi."^{1,2}

In summary, we can say that Raynal's voluminous comments provide an excellent record of the revolution in religious belief, and to some extent the evolution of formal metaphysical philosophy, that marked the eighteenth-century. His thought shows unmistakable signs of that potent mixture of Cartesian rationalism, and Lockean empiricism that is characteristic of his century. A rational-empirical approach to the physical universe, and to such spiritual phenomena as religion itself, naturally put Raynal and his colleagues in sharp and hostile conflict with all the claims and pretensions of an established church, with all the assertions of revealed religion. On the scale of personal belief, Raynal seems to have been, as was Voltaire, a sincere sceptic and deist. His often expressed belief in a Supreme Being, Creator of the universe, may have been more a polite nod to the unknown than a deeply felt religious conviction, but he obviously did not follow his closest colleagues and contemporaries into complete materialistic monism.³ Raynal also shared with

¹Diderot, "Apologue du jeune Mexicain"; an excerpt from Entretien d'un philosophe avec la Maréchale de ***.

²Voltaire, "Priere"; the last stanza of his Poème sur la loi naturelle. Same idea is also expressed in "Prière à Dieu"; an excerpt from Traité sur la tolérance.

³Some of the most explicitly materialistic works of Raynal's contemporaries:

Voltaire, as we have seen, the same existentialist anguish over the absurdity of the universe and the human condition. He was in this respect a philosophical pessimist and, like Voltaire, at odds with those eighteenth-century optimists such as Pope, whose enchantment with the marvels of Newtonian physics lead him to declare, "whatever is, is right,"¹ and Leibnitz, whose misunderstood assertion that this is the best of all possible worlds provoked Voltaire to write Candide.² His pessimism also put Raynal again at odds with his old antagonist, the unhappy Rousseau, who morosely and stubbornly maintained that God and his creation were perfect, and that man was good, despite appearances to the contrary.³

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- a) D'Holbach, Le système du la nature.
 - b) Diderot, Entretien entre d'Alembert et Diderot, Le rêve de d'Alembert.
 - c) Helvetius, De l'esprit, De l'homme.
 - d) La Mettrie, L'homme machine.

¹ Alexander Pope, Essay on Man.

² Leibnitz, Theodicy.

³ Rousseau, Lettre sur la Providence, which was written in rebuttal to Voltaire's pessimistic Poème sur la désastre de Lisbonne. Also, Emile, ou l'Education, Bk. IV, "Profession de foi du vicaire savoyard."

CHAPTER VII

NOBLE SAVAGE

The idealization of the savage in western literature is at least as old as the Germania of Tacitus.¹ The subject had, of course, been completely forgotten for long centuries until the discovery and conquest of the two Indies in the sixteenth century naturally revitalized it. To Montaigne goes the honor for introducing the noble savage into modern European, and especially French, literature.² Even then, the subject was largely ignored for over a hundred years while neo-classicism, full of self confidence and admiration for the ancients ran its course. Obviously, however, a thought had been planted in the mind of France's intellectual community, where it was continually nourished by fresh accounts of travellers, conquerers and missionaries, for in the eighteenth century the noble savage burst full-blown upon the stage of French letters. He became, in fact, one of the century's favorite preoccupations. Like the question of luxure, the bon sauvage was a subject about which nearly every author expressed an opinion, and, surprisingly, there was a great deal of unanimity among these opinions. Eighteenth-century France, preoccupied with vertu, sick at heart with the moral, social, and governmental

¹Tacitus Germania, written about 100 A.D.

²Montaigne, Essais, Bk. I, chap. xxxi, "De cannibales."

degeneration of the ancien régime, was hopelessly enchanted by the simplicity, honesty, and courage that it perceived in the unclothed children of nature. Even Voltaire, who was strongly pro-luxury in that closely allied debate, had kind words for the savage's simple virtue, honesty and courage, while decrying his ignorance and brutish existence.¹ Voltaire also sent a fictional noble savage scurrying across eighteenth-century France, using the naive virtue of that protagonist to make a vivid contrast with the hypocrisy and decadence of contemporary French society.² Likewise Diderot, great cataloguer of all the arts and sciences of civilization, praised the savage and brutal state of nature of the primitive Tahitians in contrast to the artificial and unnatural laws and customs of his own society.³

In the popular mind, no eighteenth-century writer is more closely linked with the cult of the noble savage than J. J. Rousseau. Though it is true that Rousseau used an idealized state of nature as the starting point for his theories, he does not, perhaps, deserve his reputation as noble savagery's most eloquent or persistent champion.⁴ This chapter will show, I believe, that the noble savage had no more prolix nor lyrical admirer than Guillaume Raynal. In his first emotional-instinctive reaction, Raynal is hopelessly enamored of the savage and all his ways. Not only does he wax eloquent in praise of his many virtues, but he wistfully

¹Voltaire, Essai sur les moeurs, Intro., Pte. vii, "Des sauvages."

²Voltaire, L'Ingénu.

³Diderot, Supplément au voyage de Bougainville.

⁴Rousseau, Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité, Pte. I.

envies his freedom and happiness. Still, on this subject as on all others, Raynal is impossible to pin down. His remarks are replete with maddening contradictions and uneasy attempts at compromise. In the midst of a hymn of praise for the joys and virtues of the savage life, Raynal will interrupt himself, as if Rousseau had just looked over his shoulder, and rather peevishly state categorically that he has never preferred the state of nature over civilization. But this stark denial, unadorned with any of the lyricism and emotion that he poured into the opposite side of the debate, seems bare and unconvincing indeed. In other digressions, for no apparent reason, Raynal proceeds to denounce roundly the brutality of the savage life and defend the humanizing mission of civilization. It seems to be a case of Raynal's heart being in one place and his head in another. For once, he is aware of this dichotomy in his thought and feelings, and he is a little disconcerted by it.

Numerous small asides are devoted to the natural goodness of the savage and the superiority of his simple ways over the complications and deceptions of civilized society. Raynal says of the North-American Indians, "Ce sont les Espagnols eux-mêmes, qui nous attestent que ces peuples étoient humains, sans malignité, sans esprit de vengeance, presque sans passion."¹ Raynal remarks that modern man has forgotten the art of living day by day. This sane and sensible approach to life, which comes naturally to the savage, is foreign to civilized people, "qui ont éprouvé tous les maux du luxe et de la cupidité."² He bemoans the fact that

¹Raynal, Histoire philosophique, II, p. 13.

²Ibid., p. 377.

civilization has commercialized man's ancient tradition of hospitality to travellers, who now seek food and shelter for pay at inns and restaurants.¹ He notes that merchants are surprised by the complete honesty that they encounter in dealing with the natives of Chile and Paraguay. They should realize, says Raynal, that "Ce n'est pas au fond des forêts, c'est au centre des sociétés policées qu'on apprend à mépriser l'homme et à s'en méfier." He adds a personal lament, "O honte de notre religion, de notre police, et de nos moeurs."² Raynal also tells the undoubtedly apocryphal story of a native South African who was taken from his parents at birth, raised and educated by Europeans as a European. He worked for some years as a clerk in India. As a young man, he returned to Africa to visit the hut of his parents in the bush. He was so enthralled that he immediately took off his clothes, donned a loincloth and told his former colleagues that for the rest of his life he would never follow anything but the religion and customs of his ancestors. Raynal adds, "La vie oisive et indépendante, que ces sauvages mènent dans leurs déserts, a pour eux des charmes inexprimables. Rien ne peut les en détacher."³

One notes in the above quotation what a thin line there is between praising the superior joys of savagery and expressing the white man's prejudice that people of color are allergic to work. This thought is prominent in Raynal's first major digression on the subject of the

¹Ibid., p. 370.

²Ibid., p. 260.

³Ibid., I, 212.

bon sauvage, which comes early in his first volume. In it, Raynal poses the basic question: Is the noble Hottentot a better and happier man than his civilized brother? His answer is affirmative in both cases. He first describes, with obvious envy, the carefree existence of the Hottentot whose only duty is to take an infrequent turn guarding the communal livestock. He adds,

Hors le tems des pluies, l'Hottentot n'y entre jamais (dans sa cabane). On le voit toujours couché à sa porte. C'est-là, qu'aussi peu touché de l'avenir que du passé, il dort, il fume, il s'enivre.

... Mais sont-ils heureux, me demanderez-vous? Et moi, je vous demanderai, quel est l'homme si entêté des avantages de nos sociétés, si étrangers à nos peines, qui ne soit quelquefois recoutrné par la pensée au milieu des forêts, et qui n'ait du moins envié le bonheur, l'innocence et le repos de la vie patriarchale? Eh-bien! Cette vie est celle de l'Hottentot. Aimez-vous le liberté? Il est libre. Aimez-vous la santé? Il ne connoît d'autre maladie que la vieillesse. Aimez-vous la vertu? Il a des penchans qu'il saïsfait sans remords, mais il n'a point de vices. Je sais bien que vous vous éloignerez avec dégoût d'un homme emmaillotté, pour ainsi dire, dans les entrailles des animaux. Croyez-vous donc que la corruption dans laquelle vous êtes plongés, vos haines, vos perfidies, votre duplicité, ne révoltent pas plus ma raison, que la malpropreté de l'Hottentot ne révolte mes sens?

Vous riez avec mépris des superstitions de l'Hottentot. Mais vos prêtres ne vous empoisonnent-ils pas en naissent de préjugés qui font le supplice de votre vie, qui sèment la division dans vos familles, qui arment vos contrées les unes contre les autres? Vos pères se sont cent fois égorgés pour des questions incompréhensibles. Ces tems de frénésie renaîtront, et vous vous massacrerez encore. Vous êtes fiers de vos lumières; mais à quoi vous servent-elles? De quelle utilité seroient-elles à l'Hottentot? Est-il donc si important de savoir parler de la vertu sans la pratiquer?¹

One notes in the above quotation the thin line between praise of the noble savage and wide-ranging, emotional criticism of contemporary institutions and customs. Certainly, part of the noble savage's charm for Raynal, as for other eighteenth-century authors, was that he made

¹Ibid., pp. 202-205.

such a vivid and healthy contrast for purposes of criticism. He had also been the innocent victim of many of the absurdities and fanaticisms that Raynal most despised in European civilization. Raynal paints an idyllic picture of those gentle babes of nature, the South-Sea Islanders, who, according to Raynal, did not know even the use of fire nor the bow and arrow. He then shocks his readers by reporting that these helpless people were massacred by Spanish soldiers for refusing to heed the evangelism of Spanish missionaries.¹

He likewise contrasts the warm welcome afforded by astonished but kindhearted natives to Columbus, with the treachery that was in the discoverer's heart at the moment of first encounter. He addresses the reader directly,

Lecteur, dites-moi, sont ce des peuples civilisés qui sont descendus chez des sauvages, ou des sauvages chez des peuples civilisés? Et qu'importe qu'ils soient nus; qu'ils habitent le fond des forêts; qu'ils vivent sous des huttes; qu'il n'y ait parmi eux ni code de loix, ni justice civile, ne justice criminelle, s'ils sont doux, humains, bien faisans, s'ils ont les vertus qui caractérisent l'homme. ... Rappelons-nous ce moment de la découverte, cette première entrevue des deux mondes pour bien détester le nôtre.²

The second major digression on this subject grows out of a description of the aboriginal inhabitants of Lower California. One of several interesting points in this digression is found in the first paragraph, in which Raynal paints a completely idealized and unrealistic picture of Indian childhood, and specifically stresses the complete freedom of the Indian child. Readers will recall that in his summary on

¹ Ibid., II, p. 98.

² Ibid., p. 11.

government, Raynal criticized Rousseau for having assumed a state of nature where individual humans enjoyed complete freedom.¹

Point d'être plus libre que le petit sauvage. Il naît emancipé. Il va, il vient, il sort, il rentre, il découche sans qu'on lui demande ce qu'il a fait, ce qu'il est devenu. Jamais on ne s'aviserait d'employer l'autorité de la famille pour le ramener, s'il lui plaisait de disparaître.²

Raynal compares "la sévérité de notre éducation, sa durée, ses fatigues," with the perfect liberty of the "petit sauvage," who "n'entendit jamais (une réprimande) dans la bouche de ses parens."³

Raynal continues his digression but switches his attention from one end of the age spectrum to the other. He compares unfavorably the sad lot of the civilized pater familias, whose children impatiently await his death in order to divide an inheritance, with the happy lot of his savage and propertyless counterpart whose death is a boon to no one. Showing the effects of the generation gap, the childless, but middle-aged and notoriously loquacious Raynal, likewise growls at those young people who may be impatient with the monologued wisdom of their elders. He draws for their edification an idealistic picture of the greybeard savage and his fascinated audience.

Dans nos foyers, les pères âgés radotent souvent au jugement de leurs enfans. Il n'en est pas ainsi dans la cabane du sauvage. On y parle peu, et l'on y a une haute opinion de la prudence des pères. Ce sont leurs leçons qui suppléent au défaut d'observations sur les ruses des animaux, sur les forêts giboyeuses, sur les côtes poissonneuses, sur les saisons et sur les tems propres à la chasse et à la pêche. Le vieillard raconte-t-il quelques particularités

¹ Supra, chap. iv.

² Raynal, Histoire philosophique, II, p. 101.

³ Ibid.

de ses guerres, ou de ses voyages, ... le soir dans une nuit étoilée, à l'entrée de la cabane, leur trace-t-il du doigt le cours des astres qui brillent audessus de leur tête, ... la soumission pour ses conseils, la vénération pour sa personne en sont augmentés.¹

He continues to describe the grief of the savage family when an elder succumbs to old age, and the continuing veneration of the tomb of an ancestor. He compares this to the parallel occasion in our own cities where "les enfans sont livrés à tant de distractions que les pères sont promptement oubliés."²

Inasmuch as Raynal had no first-hand knowledge whatsoever of uncivilized societies and had to rely on the accounts of travellers and missionaries for such intimate details of family life, one can assume that this idealized and lyrically beautiful portrait of the savage and his family is largely the product of Raynal's own romantic imagination. It does, moreover, surpass anything ever written by Rousseau in idealizing and praising the noble savage. Some such thought must have occurred to Raynal himself at this point, for he suddenly interrupts himself, takes note of where his chain of thought has lead him, and with impatience and irritation denies that he has ever preferred savagery over civilization.

Ce n'est pas toutefois que je préférasse l'état sauvage à l'état civilisé. C'est une protestation que j'ai déjà faite plus d'une fois. Mais plus j'y réfléchis, plus il me semble que depuis la condition de la nature la plus brute jusqu'à l'état le plus civilisé, tout se compense à peu près, vices et vertus, bien et maux physiques.³

¹ Ibid., p. 102.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

For this time, as we see, he attempts a middle-of-the-road position, saying, in effect, that the advantages and disadvantages of civilization and savagery mutually balance each other.

A description of North America before the arrival of English settlers, leads Raynal into a four-page digression in which he again, and in a definitive fashion, examines the question of "comparaison des peuples policés et des peuples sauvages."¹ As with a previous digression, he uses the état sauvage as a starting point for a free-wheeling criticism of all aspects of the ancien régime, but, unlike some previous digressions, he does not attempt to balance his enthusiasm or criticism with a denial or fence-straddling statement of neutrality. This time he declares unequivocally for the advantages of savagery.

He opens his discussion by admitting that the philosophes know little about the origins of the North Americans, but, he hastens to add, as interesting as that question may be, it is idle speculation compared to the really important question, which is to determine "si ces nations, encore à demi sauvages, sont plus ou moins heureuses que nos peuples civilisés. Si la condition de l'homme brut, abandonné au pur instinct animal ... est meilleure ou pire que celle de cet être merveilleux, qui tire du duvet pour se choucher, file la soie pour se vêtir, etc."

To get to the bottom of this vexing problem, Raynal says we must decide once and for all what is really necessary to make a man "aussi heureux qu'il peut être." Contradicting his previous statement that a subsistence living, bereft of all luxuries, is contrary to human nature,²

¹ Ibid., IV, pp. 176-181.

² Supra, chap. v.

he now says that human nature teaches us that only the basic necessities of food, shelter, and clothing in cool climates, are necessary for human happiness. The savage, according to Raynal has these. Nature is a storehouse for all his needs, and, if a scarcity should develop, nothing is easier for the savage than to change his abode by as many miles as he feels necessary. Some may vaunt the advantages of civilization, its luxuries, the comforts of modern housing, the caress of modern clothing, the fine taste and variety of civilized food, the entertainments and divertissements that add interest and color to life, but, says Raynal, all these superfluties respond to an acquired taste, satisfy a secondarily developed need. The savage cannot miss something he does not desire, and he cannot desire something, the existence of which he totally ignores. "Il ne peut manquer ce qu'il ne désire point, ni désirer de ce qu'il ignore." Even more importantly, it is not valid to compare the comforts and luxuries of civilization with the deprivations of savagery because, (and here we come to one of the main points of the bon sauvage dispute) the great mass of humanity in civilized countries does not enjoy any of the comforts or luxuries of life. The great mass of French peasants, and artisans do back-breaking labor from dawn till dusk and still sleeps on straw, lives in miserable huts, wears rags in winter, and eats coarse and unappetizing food. The civilized man labors like a slave for a subsistence living, while a savage enjoys a subsistence living in near total idleness and diversion. Moreover, while the savage ignores the existence of luxury, the civilized masses have before their eyes daily the luxuries and comforts of the ruling classes, comforts which they can never obtain. His awareness of the existence of these luxuries is doubly

painful to the working man, for he knows that it is his labor that has created them. "Le peuple n'a que le spectacle de luxe dont il est doublement la victime."

For good measure, Raynal adds that the savage lives in complete equality and liberty, two conditions unknown in the civilized society of Western Europe. The savage finds it utterly incomprehensible that a mortal man can order any other man to do anything, says Raynal. He contrasts this with civilized society where everyman must daily fawn and crawl before whoever is above him in the socio-political hierarchy; where everyman's daily activities are controlled not by his own will but by the will of his superiors.

It should be pointed out here that postulating a condition of complete freedom and equality for all contemporary savage societies is not only an unrealistic exaggeration, but it again outdoes Rousseau, whom Raynal criticized for assuming a fleeting stage of complete individual liberty at the very dawn of organized society.¹ The comparison of savage and French working-class living standards, however, is an effective criticism of the ancien régime which prefigures the most radical phases of the French Revolution. In any case, realizing that he has discussed this persistent eighteenth-century problem at length for the fourth time, Raynal now seeks to lay the question to rest. "Après tout, un mot peut terminer ce grand procès." Ask a working man of Europe if he is happy, says Raynal. Ask a savage, unmolested by any European conquerer or settler, if he is unhappy. In both cases the answer will be a resounding

¹Supra, chap. iv.

"non!". With a note of complete finality Raynal adds, "La dispute est finie."¹

The dispute was not finished, however, not even within the pages of Raynal's own work. The Histoire philosophique contains three short asides and one longer digression that are plainly anti-bon sauvage. This inconsistency is noted as early as the first volume wherein Raynal designates Sweden of the early middle ages a pre-civilized society. He describes it in these unflattering terms. "Une contrée inculte et déserte, sans moeurs, sans police, sans gouvernement, ... peu éclairée, et qui ne faisoit point d'efforts pour sortir de son ignorance."² This aside is remarkable for its bland assumption that any society not civilized by Western European standards is "sans moeurs," and "sans police." This is not only contrary to modern anthropology, which is understandable, but contrary to Raynal's own often expressed opinion. Still on the subject of medieval Sweden, Raynal notes a miraculous transformation of the Swedish language with the coming of modern civilization. "Une langue, jusqu'alors barbare, eut enfin des règles, et acquit, avec les tems, de la précision et de l'élégance."³ Ignorant of modern descriptive linguistics, Raynal smugly assumed that any language without written rules of grammar was barbarian, and since he spoke neither medieval nor modern Swedish, he was not in a good position to judge any improvement.

¹Raynal, Histoire philosophique, IV, pp. 176-181.

²Ibid., I, 572.

³Ibid., p. 575.

Raynal's ambitious plans for the French colony of Guiana also contradict his admiration for the noble savage. Speaking of the unspoiled natives of the interior, he describes them as brutal, miserable, superstition ridden, and violent. He chastises them for their aversion to manual labor, (why work when tropical nature is a storehouse of the necessities of life?), and for their mistreatment of women.¹

Raynal's most amazing about-face on the bon sauvage question is found in the opening paragraph of his final summary on impots. In a disdainful dismissal of the whole noble savage versus civilization controversy, he calls savagery "une vie précaire," characterized by "des combats journaliers pour un coin de forêt, une caverne, un arc, une flèche, un fruit, un poisson, un oiseau, un quadrupède, la peau d'une bête, ou la possession d'une femme." He accuses all those who say otherwise, which would have to include himself, though he undoubtedly meant Rousseau, of misanthropic exaggeration, and ends his digression with a ringing defense of the artificialities of urban civilized society. "Que la misanthropie exagère, tant qu'il lui plaira, les vices de nos cités, elle ne réussira pas à nous dégoûter de ces conventions, ... de ces vertus artificielles qui sont la sécutiré et le charme de nos sociétés."²

This digression, which for some inexplicable reason, was included in the summary on impots, was Raynal's final word on the bon sauvage debate, but it is not an appropriate final paragraph for this chapter since it is obviously as pompously exaggerated to one extreme as earlier

¹ Ibid., III, pp. 358-359.

² Ibid., IV, p. 635.

digressions had been to the other extreme. This chapter should end with a previous digression in which Raynal not only attempted to find a golden mean in the noble savage dispute, but where he also, for once, was not so absolutely self-assured; where he admitted, for once, that he did not know the final answer. Raynal's chain of thought is triggered by his observation of the ease of childbirth among Brazilian savages and among uncivilized women in general, compared to the difficulty and danger of childbirth among leisure-class women of Europe. He notes that, in his own lifetime, upper-class women of France have felt the need to return to outdoor exercise and breast-feeding of their own children. (The effects of Jean Rousseau). Raynal calls these trends "utiles et sages innovations," a step back toward the state of nature. This leads him to some speculation and rhetorical questions. He admits that he does not know the final answer, but thinks that human nature demands that we find a happy median somewhere between savagery and the excesses of civilization.

L'homme ne peut s'écarter indiscrètement des loix de la nature, sans nuire à son bonheur. Dans tous les siècles à venir, l'homme sauvage s'avancera pas à pas vers l'état civilisé. L'homme civilisé reviendra vers son état primitif; d'où le philosophe conclura qu'il existe dans l'intervalle qui les sépare un point où réside la félicité de l'espèce."

For once also, Raynal shows an awareness of the difficulty of translating theory into practice. Who is wise enough to decide the "point" of maximum human happiness? Who should have the authority to constrain people to be happy.

Mais qui est-ce qui fixera ce point? Et s'il étoit fixé, quelle seroit l'autorité capable d'y diriger, d'y arrêter l'homme?¹

¹ Ibid., II. p. 368.

On balance, one could say that the weight of the evidence, despite blatant contradictions, puts Raynal in the bon sauvage camp. On the closely related subject of la nature, Raynal seems, with some contradiction, to take instinctively for the first time an anti-Rousseau position.

CHAPTER VIII

NATURE

The dichotomy in Raynal's thought and personality, so apparent in previous chapters, is likewise evident in his reaction to la nature. In general, barring complete indifference, there are three possible reactions to the phenomena of nature, whether the particular paysage be mountainous, swampy, forest or desert. One can see in virgin nature a spectacle of purely aesthetic value, a thing of beauty to which one reacts emotionally and, if one is so gifted, poetically. A second reaction is intellectual and dispassionate. It seeks out the metaphysical or philosophical implications of the physical universe, or ammunition to be used in the polemic wars with revealed religion. It sees nature as an intriguing collection of curiosities demanding a rational explanation, or as a convenient storehouse of natural causes with which to explain human behavior and institutions. A third reaction is pragmatic or utilitarian. It views the surface of the earth in its varied manifestations not as a thing of value in itself, but rather as potential economic resources. It looks behind the virgin panorama and attempts to picture how this spectacle can be related to the economic needs of man.

Raynal, as could be expected, records all three reactions. The utilitarian and philosophic moods seem to be his first and most persistent

reaction. The romantic poetic mood is relegated to the category of counterbalancing second thoughts. In general, as Raynal describes each newly discovered island or continent, he may praise the salubrity of its climate, the pureness of its air and water, its rich flora and fauna, but he usually does so with the explicit idea as to how these riches could be exploited to man's material benefit. He rarely rhapsodizes over the beauty of unspoiled nature as such. One begins to doubt that he sees any aesthetic value whatsoever in nature. In some asides nature appears as an ugly chaos that man should master. The works of man, that will rise out of this disorder, are, in contrast, depicted as things of beauty. "Des défrichemens! Voilà des conquêtes sur le chaos à l'avantage de tous les hommes!"¹

Although appalled by man's inhumanity to fellow man, by his cruelty and superstition, Raynal, at the same time, stands in awe of his indomitable spirit in exploration and conquest, and in the growing domination of his environment.

Homme, quelquefois si pusillanime et si petit, que tu te montres grand, et dans tes projets, et dans tes oeuvres! Avec deux foibles leviers de chair, aidés de ton intelligence, tu attaques la nature entière et tu la subjugues!²

Cultivation of the mangrove swamps of Dutch Guiana prokoes a brief exclamation of admiration for man the conquerer and, generalizing from what must have been a spectacular wilderness in its virgin state,

¹Raynal, Histoire philosophique, III, p. 358.

²Ibid., II, p. 111.

characterizes nature with two pejorative adjectives. "Le génie de l'homme, vainqueur d'une nature ingrate et rebelle!"¹

Two of Raynal's strongest personal obsessions converge to provoke his most extreme statement of an ugly, pragmatic, aesthetic ideal. These are his hatred for the private parks and game preserves of the French nobility and his admiration for a highly idealized China. In a long digression on the Chinese countryside, which contains a thinly veiled allusion to the royal gardens of Versailles, Raynal says,

On n'y voit que peu d'arbres, même utiles, parce que les fruits déroberaient trop de suc aux grains. Comme il y trouveroit-on ces jardins remplis de fleurs, de gazons, de buissons, de jets-d'eau, dont la vue, propre à réjouir des spectateurs oisifs, semble interdite au peuple et cachée à ses yeux, comme si l'on craignoit de lui montrer un larcin fait à sa subsistance? La terre n'y est pas surchargée de ces parcs, de ces forêts immenses qui fournissent moins de bois aux besoins de l'homme, qu'ils ne détruisent de guérets et de moissons en faveur des bêtes qu'on y enferme pour le plaisir des grands et le désespoir du laboureur.²

The Chinese do suffer a few trees to grow, he admits, but only on mountains not suited for other purposes, and, even there, only trees that are necessary to the economy. "On voit sur la plupart des montagnes, qui refusent la nourriture aux hommes, des arbres nécessaires pour charpenter des édifices, pour la construction des vaisseaux."³

Where others would see evidence of ugly poverty, the pressure of too great a population on the land, Raynal sees, or claims to see, a spectacle of pragmatic beauty, where the eye contemplates nothing but the works of man and is not offended by even "un arbre utile" unless

¹ Ibid., III, p. 292.

² Ibid., I, pp. 101-102.

³ Ibid., p. 101.

one's gaze is lifted to the mountain tops. In his determination to idealize cruel necessity and make a virtue of it, Raynal praises the Chinese for working seven days a week, every day of the year except New Year's. In his hatred of unproductive parkland and forest, he slips from ugly pragmatism into out-right anti-intellectualism. "Mais cette insensibilité pour une chose inutile ..., prouve peut-être le bonheur d'un peuple qui compte pour tout l'occupation et la curiosité pour rien."¹

A few pages later, however, he has some second thoughts about the desirability of pure pragmatism. He notes that the Chinese are, in his opinion, retarded in the beaux arts and belles lettres. He remarks that their society has been stable to the point of stagnation for several centuries, whereas in Europe there has been great change and "progress." The cause for this stagnation is related directly to the absence of useless trees. "Trop occupés des objets d'utilité, les esprits ne peuvent pas s'élancer dans la carrière de l'imagination."² He does not develop his thought, but Raynal seemed to have sensed, on reconsideration, that the "useless" beauty of forest and park, by inspiring imagination and giving repose to the soul, is actually an important ingredient of human progress, including economic progress. He could also have noted that the same poverty that necessitated the intense cultivation of the entire land surface also prevented capital accumulation for economic progress.

Only late in his second volume, confronted with the task of describing the majestic Andes Mountains, does Raynal rise above the

¹ Ibid., p. 107.

² Ibid., p. 114.

purely utilitarian to express some awe and appreciation for a spectacle of unspoiled nature.

A l'aspect de ces masses énormes qui s'élèvent à des hauteurs prodigieuses au-dessus de l'humble surface du globe, ... de ces masses, ici couronnées d'impénétrables et antiques forêts qui n'ont jamais retenti du bruit de la coignée, ... d'une majesté silencieuse et tranquille, qui arrête la nuée dans son cours et qui brise l'impetuosité des vents ... , a cet aspect dis-je, tout homme s'arrête avec étonnement, et le scrutateur de la nature tombe dans la méditation.¹

There follows a long "digression sur la formation des montagnes," which shows that Raynal, the scrutateur of everything, was more interested in the scientific and philosophical implications of the mountains than in their aesthetic value. Just as le bon sauvage had proved a useful weapon with which to castigate the ancien régime, so also the varied phenomena of nature would be used to refute certain tenets of revealed religion. Raynal's digression on mountain formation provides a fascinating glimpse at the emerging science of geology, as yet unnamed, but which, as Raynal rightly anticipated, would soon pose insurmountable problems for Biblical chronology and the universally accepted belief, in Christendom, that the earth had been instantaneously created in essentially its present form not more than six-thousand years ago. For several pages, Raynal paraphrases the theories of a pioneer geologist, Johann Lehman, a German scientist whose work as a consultant to mining companies had led him to publish his speculations concerning the history of the earth.²

¹Ibid., II, p. 197.

²Johann Gottlod Lehman, Versuch einer Geschichte von Flötz-Gebürgen (Berlin: Klüsterschen Buchhandlung, 1756).

Raynal does not, of course, footnote his sources, although he acknowledges that he is paraphrasing Lehman, he was undoubtedly referring

Lehman's theories, which Raynal supports enthusiastically, are nothing less than modern geology. He was among the first to recognize the sedimentary origin of much of the earth's surface.

C'est de ces dépôts continués pendant une longue suite de siècles que les couches de la terre se sont formées; et les masses énormes qui vous étonnent sont le résultat de ces couches accumulées. ... L'action imperceptible et continue des eaux a formé les montagnes.¹

Lehman also recognized the incredible time span this theory implied: "Le tems n'est rien pour la nature."²

Fascinated by the brilliant insight into the sub-aqueous origin of even elevated strata, Lehman, or Raynal, fails to mention that most mountain cores are non-sedimentary granites and other igneous residue of vulcanism. Lehman did, however, enunciate the brilliant and revolutionary concept of erosion. "L'action plus imperceptible et non moins continue d'une vapeur qui les (les montagnes) mouille et d'un souffle qui les sèche, les abat de jour en jour, et les réduira au niveau des plaines."³ Even more revolutionary was Lehman's speculation that the earth had already experienced more than one complete erosion cycle, that is sedimentation, mountain uplift, erosion and renewed uplift and erosion.

to the French translation of Lehman's work by his good friend and colleague Baron d'Holbach, Essai d'une histoire naturelle des couches de la terre, Vol. III of Traité de physique, d'histoire naturelle, de minéralogie et de métallurgie, trans. by B. d'Holbach (Paris, J. T. Heussant, 1759).

¹ Raynal, Histoire philosophique, II, p. 197.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., pp. 197-198.

"Alors le premier phénomène se renouvellera; et qui sait combien de fois les montagnes ont été détruites et reproduites."¹

The implications of repeated geo-erosional cycles for Biblical chronology were obvious. Raynal says that Lehman, whom he implies he had met personally, laid the Old Testament and his own work side by side and exclaimed modestly, "Respecte celui-ci, et daigne jeter les yeux sur celui-là."²

This digression on the history of the Andes Mountains is a valuable insight into the eighteenth-century origins of many of the natural sciences. It also illustrates again the philosophe's instinctive rejection of authoritatively revealed truth or mythology in favor of an empirically derived natural explanation for every phenomenon. Part of the eighteenth-century idea of progress was the unshakeable faith that the new natural sciences would one day provide complete answers for the enigmas of the physical universe. Raynal himself sensed that he was living on the verge of a scientific revolution. As he said in another aside, that which the philosophes have been able to discover so far is but "la goutte d'eau enlevée au vaste océan."^{3,4}

¹ Ibid., p. 198.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., III, p. 127.

⁴ Raynal's paraphrasing of Lehman was not his only digression on the subject of geology, fossils, earth history and Biblical chronology. Students of the history of science will find interesting material in the following citations:

- a) I, p. 25.
- b) I, pp. 28-29.
- c) II, p. 28.
- d) II, p. 81.

In their determination to find a natural or mechanistic cause for every phenomenon, the philosophes seized upon climate as a convenient and universal explanation for everything. Students of the eighteenth century will recall the fundamental role Montesquieu assigned to climate as a determinant of a people's laws and customs.¹ Rousseau likewise consigned warm countries to despotism and cold climates to barbarism and saw the best hope for democratic republics in the intermediate temperate zones.²

No one, however, carried this obsession with climate to a greater extreme than Raynal. He elevates climate to a position of omnipotence and makes it a substitute deity. Every phenomenon, not readily explainable otherwise, is easily explained by reference to climate, since, obviously, every corner of the earth has a climate of some sort. We have already noted how Raynal quite sensibly explained the African's color as a result of climate.³ More important, however, the temperament of entire nations is directly related to the average daily temperature. Warm countries are fecund in creative genius while the inhabitants of cool countries are apt to be moderate, reasonable, and endowed with discriminating taste.

Peut-être le génie, enfant de l'imagination qui crée,
appartient-il aux pays chauds, féconds en productions, en

e) II, p. 205.

f) III, pp. 4-5.

¹Montesquieu, Esprit des lois, Bk. XVI, chap. ii; Bk. XVII, chap. ii; Bk. XIX, chap. iv.

²Rousseau, Contrat Social, Pte. III, chap. viii.

³Supra, chap. 3.

spectacles, en événemens merveilleux qui excitent l'enthousiasme; tandis que le goût, qui choisit et moissonne dans les champs où le génie a semé, semble convenir davantage à des peuples sobres, doux et modérés, qui vivent sous un ciel heureusement tempéré.¹

Being ignorant of the germ theory of disease, Raynal naturally attributed every human malady to heat, cold, or insalubrious vapors.²

The case of the Arabian peninsula leads to the following generalization on the determining role of climate in the practice of religion:

Il ya a une vérité qui se prouve par l'étude de l'histoire, et par l'inspection du globe de la terre. Les religions ont toujours été cruelles dans les pays arides, sujets aux inondations, aux volcans; et elles ont toujours été douces dans les pays que la nature a bien traités. Toutes portent l'empreinte du climat où elles sont nées.³

Climate and other natural phenomena afford an easy explanation for the peculiarities of Japanese religion, including the Shintos' emphasis on sex.

Les grandes isles qui composent cet empire, placées sous un ciel orageux, environnées de tempêtes, agitées par des volcans, sujettes à ces grands accidens de la nature qui impriment la terreur, étoient remplies d'un peuple que la superstition domi- noit. Elle s'y divise en plusieurs sectes. ...

... On ne doit pas du moins juger avec rigueur les institutions ..., que le climat a dû sans doute établir en des régions où le ciel et le sol parlent si puissamment en faveur du voeu le plus ardent de la nature. Si c'est une vertu sous la zone tempérée d'étouffer les désirs qui portent les deux sexes à s'aimer, à céder à ce penchant est un devoir plus cher, et plus sacré, sous le climat brûlant du Japon.⁴

¹Raynal, Histoire philosophique, I, pp. 289-290.

²Ibid., III, p. 234.

³Ibid., I, p. 289.

⁴Ibid., pp. 131-133.

The truth of the matter is, of course, that the "climat brûlant" of Japan is as cold or colder than that of northern France, but such facts are beside the point. The importance of this digression is that it ascribes religious and sexual behavior to omnipotent natural forces, argues for relativity in moral standards, and effectively punctures the absolutist claims of European and Christian mores.

Raynal seemed to be particularly intrigued by the supposed relationship between climate and sexual behavior. When he could not explain adequately the declining birthrate of Jesuit-ruled Paraguay, he had recourse to climate. "Après tout, ce fut le climat qui arrêta surtout la population des Guaranis."¹ The equatorial climate of Central and South America is blamed for the widespread practice of homosexuality among robust American Indians. "Il faut en chercher la cause dans la chaleur du climat."² Inexplicably, the same warm temperatures are held responsible for the practice of concubinage among the Spanish colons despite the vigorous condemnation of the Catholic Church.

En vain les évêques anathématisent tous les ans, à pâques, les personnes engagées dans ces liens illicites. Que peuvent ces vains foudres contre l'amour, contre l'usage, surtout contre le climat qui lutte sans cesse et l'emportent à la fin sur toutes les loix civiles et religieuses contraires à son influence.³

In another aside, Raynal notes the futility of civil laws or religious teachings which contravene human foibles, "surtout ceux qui naissent de la nature du climat dont l'influence ne cesse point!"⁴

¹ Ibid., II, p. 284.

² Ibid., p. 25.

³ Ibid., p. 239.

⁴ Ibid., I, p. 46.

In like manner, the torrid climate of tropical America explains the slave-owner's passion for his female slaves.

Ceux qui ont cherché les causes de ce goût pour les négresses, qui paroît si dépravé dans les Européens, en ont trouvé la source dans la nature du climat qui, dans la zone torride, entraîne invinciblement à l'amour.¹

Climate also determines the quality of one's drunkenness according to Raynal.

L'ivrognerie est un vice grossier et brutal Ce désordre, quoique toujours blâmable, n'est pas également partout; parce qu'il n'entraîne pas les mêmes inconvénients dans toutes les régions. Généralement parlant, il rend furieux dans les pays chauds, et stupide seulement dans les pays froids.²

Perhaps Raynal's most extreme statement on the subject comes in a brief aside from a discussion of Russia. He says that Russia will probably never be civilized because of its climate. He then characterizes climate in general as "le climat qui dispose de tout," which has the effect of elevating it to a position of complete omnipotence, supreme determinant of every earthly phenomenon.³

With the exception of the lyric outburst that adorned his description of the Andes Mountains, one does not find anything but pragmatic or intellectual reactions to nature until deep into the third volume of the Histoire philosophique. There Raynal seemed to have had some second thought about man and nature in mid-sentence while describing the Barbados Islands. He notes that, when the English first arrived,

¹Ibid., III, p. 186.

²Ibid., II, p. 261.

³Ibid., IV, p. 486.

Barbados was covered with trees "gros et durs." He adds, "La terre fut bientôt libre de ce fardeau, ou dépouillée de cet ornement, car il est douteux, si la nature n'embellit pas mieux son ouvrage que la main de l'homme qui change tout pour lui seul."¹

This sentence seems to mark a turning point in Raynal's attitude, for his remaining references to nature are all poetic expressions of admiration for her virginal beauty, which, since the location was America, he could only picture in his mind's eye, but which he appreciated nevertheless. This explicit defense of nature against the depredations of man is something new for Raynal.

He remarks that the mountains of Jamaica are heavily wooded and adds,

Cette verdure perpétuelle, alimentée, embellie par une foule d'abondantes cascades, forme un printemps de toute l'année, et présente aux yeux enchantés le plus beaux spectacle de la nature.²

The virgin forests of North America, from Canada to the Mississippi and Ohio valleys, bring out the poet in Raynal as they would later do in Chateaubriand.

Tout dans cette région intact du Nouveau Monde, portoit l'impreinte du grand et du sublime. La nature y déployoit un luxe de fécondité, une magnificence, une majesté qui commandoit la vénération; mille graces sauvages qui surpassoient infiniment les beautés artificielles de nos climats. C'est-là qu'un peintre, un poète auroit senti son imagination s'exalter, s'échauffer, et se remplir de ces idées qui deviennent ineffaçables dans la mémoire des hommes.³

¹Ibid., III, p. 524.

²Ibid., p. 540.

³Ibid., IV, p. 9.

With these same beauties in mind, Raynal, a few pages later, rebukes the French colons of Canada for having "aucune sensibilité pour le spectacle de la nature."¹

Raynal's most explicit defense of nature is found in an eight-page digression in which he describes in loving detail the life and habits of the North American beaver.² Raynal finds the beaver, whom he calls the little "républicain," admirable for his engineering ability, his industriousness, and most of all because he has perfected the art of living in peace with his fellows and other species. Raynal notes that human greed and vanity are at that moment threatening the beaver with extinction. This leads him to exclaim, "O nature! Où est ta providence, où est ta bienfaisance d'avoir armé les animaux espèce contre espèce et l'homme contre tous."³

Taking note of man's seemingly single-minded determination to rule and ruin his earthly home, Raynal prefigures the most pessimistic fears of nineteenth- and twentieth-century conservationists when he predicts that soon every species of wild animal will have succumbed to "la jalouse et destructive domination de ce tyran de la nature vivante."⁴

On the subject of nature, as on others, Raynal's thought was sufficiently complex, and he expressed complete contradictions with such candor, that his work again reflects the whole spectrum of eighteenth-century opinion on the subject. One can see clear evidence of the

¹ Ibid., p. 131.

² Ibid., pp. 55-63.

³ Ibid., p. 61.

⁴ Ibid., p. 62.

emerging natural sciences and even prefiguration of the self-assured scientism of the nineteenth century. One can also see evidence of the pre-romantic cult of nature, usually associated with Rousseau and Bernardin de St. Pierre. And, finally, one can see the ugly utilitarian pragmatism that has characterized the economic development of the Western World for the past three centuries.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper has been to show that the Histoire philosophique of Guillaume Raynal, which, though nearly forgotten today, was widely read and highly esteemed during a critical period of Western history, does contain, in its own verbose and unorganized fashion, the whole spectrum of eighteenth-century French opinion of the philosophe persuasion. I believe that the main body of this paper has shown this to be true. Due to the universality of his interests and to the generous scope of his subject, Raynal examined and commented upon all the themes normally associated with the French Enlightenment. Moreover, due to a peculiar dichotomy in his personality, and due also to his loquaciousness and complete candor in expressing blatant contradictions, Raynal not only discusses every Enlightenment topic, but usually manages to express every shade of philosophe opinion about a particular topic. Though Raynal was basically a rational empiricist, as were his colleagues, he was also a genuine humanitarian whose sensibilities were readily susceptible to outrage. Moreover, he lived in a particularly onerous period of history. Thus he was an angry man, speaking for an angry class of philosophes and, at base, an **angry** mass of people. Therefore it is not surprising that his great catalogue of eighteenth-century opinion should be as emotional as it is rational.

Frequently overlooked in eighteenth-century studies, in addition to the entire anti-philosophe school, are the divisions, the latent unreason, within the philosophe camp itself. Learned opinion of the eighteenth century was never the rational-empirical monolith that is often implied by the terms Enlightenment or encyclopédistes. The eighteenth century was, after all, the century of the English garden, the noble savage, the cult of nature. It was the century which rejected the cold universalities of the classical theater for the warm sensibilités of the drame bourgeois. It was, in every sense of the word, the pre-romantic century.

We have noted that Raynal recorded three reactions to most subjects; that of the emotional polemical critic, the rational theoretician, the moderate practical reformer. Thus some passages from Raynal are in keeping with Voltaire's motto Ecrasez l'infâme. Other passages duplicate and expand upon the theoretical work of Montesquieu and Rousseau. Many passages, more than Raynal would have cared to admit, are full of the personal emotion, the violence-tinged extremism of Rousseau. And, finally, Raynal abounds in practical advice and proposals for moderate reform in the tradition of Montesquieu and Voltaire. By continuous cross reference of Raynal's opinions to the works of the leading philosophes we have attempted to achieve our second objection which was to obtain a better understanding of the entire French Enlightenment.

There are rewards in the reading of Raynal other than those expressed in the two stated objectives of this paper. It seemed to this reader that there was an especial affinity between the thought and personality of Raynal and that of twentieth-century America. Inasmuch as Raynal's

work embodies so well the eighteenth century, that is as it should be, for the United States, born in 1776, is more truly a child of the Enlightenment than any other nation. The intellectual climate of those years that witnessed our emergence as a separate people has made an indelible imprint upon our collective psyche, to such an extent in fact that America retains a great deal of its eighteenth-century flavor, more than do the principal homelands of the Enlightenment, France and England, where the century was only one among twenty of recorded history. An eminent outside observer of our country, Swedish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal, has noted, "There is no country on earth which has more of a common explicit morality. ... This is the old Enlightenment ideal: Dignity of the human individual, justice between people, liberty, equality of opportunity and brotherhood."¹ This may explain to some extent why Raynal seems a kindred spirit.

Professor Henry Steele Commager, in a recent article, noted that Jefferson and other molders of American opinion, held a peculiar eighteenth-century concept of history; that "history is philosophy teaching by example," that history and fiction are interchangeable as moral lessons. He adds that this didactic concept of history was shared by Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Abbé Raynal.²

The reader of the Histoire philosophique sometimes experiences the eerie sensation that Raynal has leaped the centuries and is addressing twentieth-century America as a modern commentator would do. A humorous example would be his description of Californians.

¹ Quoted by James Reston, Arkansas Gazette, Dec. 24, 1968, p.5.

² H. S. Commager, "The Americanization of History," Saturday Review, November 1, 1969, p. 24.

Les Californiens sont bien faits et fort robustes. Une pusillanimité extrême, l'inconstance, la paresse, la stupidité, et même l'insensibilité forment leur caractère. Ce sont des enfans, en qui la raison n'est pas encore développée.¹

One should hasten to add that Raynal was describing the aboriginal inhabitants of the Golden State, and not present-day citizens of Los Angeles and Orange counties.

A more serious example of Raynal's uncanny aptness to immediate conditions would be his description of Tonquin (North Vietnam).

Cette nation, . . . , vit dans une défiance continuelle de ses souverains et des étrangers; soit qu'il y ait dans son caractère un fond d'inquiétude; soit que son humeur séditieuse vienne de ce que la morale des chinois qui a éclairé le peuple, n'a pas rendu le gouvernement meilleur.²

Raynal also notes that every European nation that has intervened in Vietnam has come to grief. "Les Portugois, les Hollandois qui avoient essayé de former quelques liasons au Tonquin, s'étoient vus forcés d'y renoncer. Les Français ne furent pas plus heureux."³

In closing, I would say that Raynal composed his own best epitaph when he wrote,

Ce foible ouvrage qui n'aura que le mérite d'en avoir produit de meilleurs, sera sans doute oublié. Mais au moins je pourrai me dire que j'ai contribué, autant qu'il a été en moi, au bonheur de mes semblables, et préparé de loin leur sort. Cette douce pensée me tiendra lieu de gloire. Elle sera le charme de ma vieillesse, et la consolation de mes derniers instans.⁴

The principal conclusion of this paper would be that, with the obvious exception of Voltaire's works, the Histoire philosophique probably

¹Raynal, Histoire philosophique, II, p. 100.

²Ibid., I, p. 442.

³Ibid., p. 443.

⁴Ibid., IV, p. 706.

gives a more complete picture of eighteenth-century French opinion than the complete works of any other single author. As Sir John Morley has said, "Raynal's work was perhaps on the whole, the most vigorous and sustained of all the literary expressions that were given to the great social ideas of the century."¹

¹Morley, Diderot, II, p. 212.

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