NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETING

The second General Meeting of the Society for 1981 will be held in the Museum Education Building, North Terrace, Adelaide at

8.00PM MONDAY, 27TH APRIL, 1981

AGENDA

1. Apologies.

2. Minutes of Previous General Meeting.
   Minutes of previous General Meeting, held Monday, 23 March, 1981, to be confirmed. A copy of these minutes is attached.

3. New Members.
   The following new members have been elected to the Society:-

   Rosemary Ann BUCHAN
   Elissa LIPPEE
   Kirsten LIPPEE
   David William MOYLE
   Judith Anne SMITH

4. Papers and Journals.
   Papers and Journals from other Societies and Organizations will be tabled at the meeting.

5. Business.

6. Speaker.
   DR. L. SACKETT, Senior Lecturer, Department of Anthropology at the University of Adelaide, will give an address to the Society entitled:-

   "GOD AND HIS SAINTS IN CATHOLIC SRILANKA"

7. Supper.

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Lo! THE POOR INDIAN

by

DR. B.R. ELLIOTT

Lo! the poor Indian! whose untutor'd mind
Sees God in clouds, or hears Him in the wind;
His soul, proud Science never taught to stray
Far as the solar-walk, or Milky Way;
Yet simple Nature to his hope has given
Behind the cloud-topp's hill, and humbler Heaven,
Some safer world in depth of woods embraced,
Some happier island in the watery waste,
Where slaves once more their native land behold,
No fiends torment, no Christians thirst for gold.
To Be, contents his natural desire,
He asks no angel's wings, no seraph's fire,
But thinks, admitted to that equal sky,
His faithful dog shall bear him company.


Pope's Essay on Man (1732-4) was one of the great literary works of its age, no longer read with much interest. Why not? Probably because we read it, when we do, with the wrong kind of expectations. Even in its own day it had nothing new to say. What distinguished it, and still does, was the brilliance with which it brought together and summed up a whole body of thought and opinion which was already so familiar - one might even say, commonplace - that it amounted to a compilation of cliches; but one which struck every reader as being absolutely right, because it made him think, and he nearly always agreed with what it made him think. It was "what oft was thought, but n'er so well expressed". Novel ideas were not, on the whole, what the eighteenth century wanted to see; it assumed that in Europe at least, human thought had reached a rational consummation and what was needed was not novelty but order. The great and universal discovery of the age could be summed up in a word: nature. Nature was a simple fact. All that man, as a rational creature, had to do was merely to grasp it.

The Greeks, and no doubt certain others before them, had known about nature. But the ages which followed after the classical turned their attention increasingly to what we may call spiritual matters. For a millennium or so the world - the European world - followed a civilising course which may have enriched man's emotions. But (valuable as that experience was) it was achieved, to some degree, at the expense of his character as a rational thinker. The Dark and Middle ages, succeeded in giving an extraordinary priority to what we call faith, but then came the enormous change in values (or reorganization of them) known as the Renaissance; and after that, with the Reformation and a growing respect of (or revival of?) rationalism, we find a gradual decline of faith, along with a growing interest in mental process - a new assertion of individual intelligence. With the seventeenth century begins a new liveliness in debate on many topics, a new eagerness to pursue knowledge for its own sake. Not only does nature reassert its interest, but there arises
an increasing eagerness to look closely at the limited human aspects of it. In England John Locke wrote his *Essay on the Human Understanding*, a book which is beautiful to read but baffling to comprehend; important because it sets the mind of man right at the centre of the idea of nature itself. That was a new and vital way to consider what life was about. Milton's *Paradise Lost* is in its way another testimony to the same shift of interest, though his method of showing it was more conventional. The poem was written, he declared, "to justify the ways of God to man". The modern reader is likely to find at least as much questioning as justification in the epic. The poet takes for granted that his contemporary reader will expect to be reassured on theological points, since he believes, or believes he believes, that the universal creation is a theocentric phenomenon whose whole importance is comprehended in the mystical bond between God and man. But what Milton himself understood, whether theoretically or rationally, is fairly obviously not quite what that contemporary reader did. For one thing, he is too interested in various aspects of fresh scientific speculation to be quite as orthodox as he looks. Yet neither is he in a state of rational rebellion; he represents a most interesting transitional phase. Sir Isaac Newton also represented a transitional advance: he founded modern physics, he redefined and reanimated mathematics, but in other compartments of his mind remained an orthodox theocentric thinker. As we move into the eighteenth century we find a new positivism and a more obsessive humanism; even men of the church, like Johnathan Swift, reason like pragmatists and their theology tags along behind their philosophy or even their politics. There was religious persecution and Pope, as a Catholic, was naturally among the persecuted; but the heavy pressures had fallen away and Pope and others in his situation lived rational rather than religious lives. Under the new circumstances religion became very substantially confused with morality, and theology, though it did not disappear, became something of a manner of speaking - or else it drifted into sectarianism. Religion became a politico-social system and not always distinguishable from the class structure. Hence, to return to the *Essay on Man*, Pope in that work defines clearly enough what he thinks is the most important of all subjects for wise men to think about:

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan,
The proper study of mankind is man.

Milton had still been a scanner, and was troubled to justify. Pope's less passionate commitment to religion allowed him to scan more coolly and critically; he used another work, and it bespoke a much changed attitude:

Laugh where we must, be candid where we can,
And vindicate the ways of God to man.

If vindication is possible, it is man we must study most closely. For what does man know of God? Is not God unknowable? He is only to be known by His works, and the chief of these is man. Man is therefore the vindication of God. The Catholic Alexander Pope thus reveals himself to be the author of a Deist poem; neither he himself, nor the age, saw any contradiction in that. As he puts it himself,

Say first, of God above, or man below,
What can we reason, but from what we know?

Certainly God above posed great difficulties, but man below could be satisfactorily observed simply by taking a little trouble. All that was really necessary was to uncover a few of the deceptive appearances. For it was admitted that man, in the course of becoming civilised, had also acquired sundry defects or imperfections, hypocrisies and the like, which the student must aim to expose. Underneath all those modern social disguises there must certainly
- so it seemed to the most rational of all rational ages, so it must
inevitably appear in (the phrase is Voltaire's) the best or all possible worlds
- exist some one simple, natural human type, basic man. That could not be
doubted; what was more debatable was whether this basic type was naturally
good or naturally bad. The good were (naturally) expected to be happy, the
evil miserable; but these were merely extensions of the debate. Reason in the
eighteenth century had become obsessional; and even when it broke down, there
was expected to be a reason for it.

Reason and what we now call science go together. There was an increasingly
active concern with the physical sciences. Much that was then the subject of
enquiry (Swift made considerable fun of it in Gulliver's Travels - the
extraction of sunbeams from cucumbers, for example) may now seem naive, but the
modern foundations were laid down. A work of the greatest importance was
Buffon's Histoire naturelle, which in the definitive edition - posthumous - of
1804 amounted to 44 packed volumes (Georges Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon,
1707-1788). It was actually written from about 1749-1767, so it belongs to the
mid-century; the work mainly precedes Cook's voyages in the Pacific, but there
are additions which include some Australian material from Cook. The career of
Linnæus (1707-1771) was virtually contemporaneous with Buffon's; Buffon was,
however, the more philosophical writer. His commentaries surveyed the whole
of what was then known of "natural history"; he was an assiduous reader and
collector and to some extent an experimenter on his own account. I bring him
in here for the section of his work entitled The Natural History of Man, from
which I shall quote presently in the translation by William Smellie, edition
of 1812. In this section Buffon considers man in a spirit of scientific
detachment, very much as he considers other aspects and species of the general
creation. What clashes this point of view led to with entrenched ecclesiasti-
cal authority may well be imagined; however, he says little about his own
religious opinions and seems in any case to have been well furnished with tact
and discretion. Possibly the passage I choose for quotation is not fully
representative of his scientific method but rather shows him playing at some-
thing like a philosophical game - it is a fable or a fancy, rather unusually
lyrical for him (but remember that it was Buffon who made the famous
pronouncement, le style est l'homme même!). For all that he means it to be
understood seriously. Of course one needs to be able to interpret the
artificial eighteenth-century, decorative manner; below it there is a very
rational intention. Milton had described the creation of Adam in a
decorative way, and Buffon imitates his design - I would say parodies it, but
his extravagance is without ridicule. It is a longish passage, so I must cut
it short, but this is the beginning (Smellie, 1812, vol III). Adam himself is
speaking:

I remember the moment when my existence commenced:
it was a moment replete with joy, amazement and anxiety.
I neither knew what I was, where I was, nor from whence I
came. I opened my eyes; what an increase of sensation!
The light, the celestial vault, the verdure of the earth,
the transparency of the waters, gave animation to my
spirits, and conveyed pleasures, which exceed the power
of expression.

I at first believed that all these objects existed
within me, and formed a part of myself. When totally
absorbed in this idea, I turned my eyes to the sun: his
splendour overpowered me. I involuntarily shut out the
light, and felt a slight degree of pain. During this
involuntary moment of darkness, I imagined that I had
lost the greater part of my being.
When reflecting, with grief and astonishment, upon this great change, I was roused with a variety of sounds. The singing of birds, and the murmuring of the breezes, formed a concert, which excited the most sweet and enchanting emotions. I listened long, and was convinced that these harmonious sounds existed within me.

Totally occupied with this new species of existence, I had already forgot the light, though the first part of my being that I had recognized. I again, by accident, opened my eyes; and was delighted to find myself recover the possession of so many brilliant objects. This pleasure surpassed every former sensation, and suspended, for a time, the charming melody of sound. I fixed my eyes upon a thousand objects: I soon perceived that I had the power of losing and of recovering them, and that I could, at pleasure, destroy and renew this beautiful part of my existence.

I could now see without astonishment, as hear without anxiety, when a gentle breeze wafted perfumes to my nostrils. This new and delightful sensation agitated my frame, and gave a fresh addition to my self-love.

When totally occupied by all these sensations, and loaded with pleasures so delicate and so extensive, I suddenly arose, and was transported by the perception of an unknown power.

I had made but a single step, when the novelty of my situation rendered me immovable. My surprise was extreme. I thought my being fled from me: the movement I had made confounded the objects of vision; and the whole creation seemed to be in disorder.

I raised my hand to my head; I touched my forehead and my eyes; and I felt every part of my body. The hand now appeared to be the principle organ of my existence. ...

This passage of Buffon is but little known, and if for that reason only, the temptation is strong to give the whole of it. But I must content myself with just a quick outline of the rest, which I think will appear plainly enough in the following snippets:

I surveyed my body...I brought my hand near my eye; then it seemed to be larger than my whole body...I began to suspect that there was some illusion in the sensation conveyed by the eyes. I therefore resolved to depend upon the sense of feeling alone, and to be on my guard against all other modes of sensation. I walked...and struck against a palm tree. I perceived, for the first time, that there was something external, I concluded that I ought to judge concerning external objects in the same manner as I had judged concerning the parts of my body. I had desire of touching the sun...it was not until
after an infinite number of trials, that I
learned to use my eye as a guide to my hand. The
judgements I formed were imperfect...the more I
meditated, my doubts and difficulties increased.

A passage follows in which Adam discovers the pleasure of eating. "I was
seated under the shade of a beautiful tree. Fruit of a vermillion hue hung
down, in the form of grapes, within reach of my hand..." It is worth pointing
out that nothing is said about this or any other fruit being forbidden (it is
a scientific fantasy, not a parable!), but the biblical allusion is not quite
eliminated: "Till now I had only enjoyed pleasures; but taste gave me an idea
of voluptuousness." Adam has now experienced and learned to interpret all of
the five usual senses or modes of sensation. But still he has to experience
sleep. "An agreeable languor gradually impaired my senses; my limbs grew
heavy; and my mind seemed to lose its natural activity", lies down upon the
grass, I quote again:

   Everything now disappeared: darkness and
   confusion reigned. The train of my ideas was
   interrupted; and I lost consciousness of my
   existence. My sleep was profound; but, having no
   mode of measuring time, I knew nothing of its
   duration. My awakening appeared to be a second
   birth; for I only perceived that I had ceased to
   exist. This temporary annihilation gave me the
   idea of fear, and made me conclude that my existence
   was not permanent.

   Another perplexity arose: I suspected that
   sleep had robbed me of some part of my powers: I
   tried my different senses, and endeavoured to
   recognize all my former faculties. When surveying
   my body, in order to ascertain its identity, I was
   astonished to find at my side another form perfectly
   similar to my own! I conceived it to be another self;
   and instead of losing by sleep, I imagined myself
   to be doubled.

   I ventured to lay my hand upon this new being:
   with rapture and astonishment I perceived that it
   was not myself, but something much more glorious
   and desirable; and I imagined that my existence was
   about to dissolve, and to be wholly transfused into
   this second part of my being.

   It is, of course, part of the artfulness of the writer's rococo style to
   identify this mysterious being, without further rationalisation, as her.
   "In time," as Adam has just remarked in the passage describing the grapes,
   "I tasted the fruit".

   I perceived her to be animated by the touch of
   my hand; I saw her catch the expression in my eyes; and
   the lustre and vivacity of her own made a new source of
   life thrill in my veins. I ardently wished to transfer
   my whole being to her; and this wish completed my
   existence; for I now discovered a sixth sense.

   At this instant the sun had finished his course; I
   perceived, with pain, that I lost the sense of seeing;
my enjoyment was too exquisite to allow me to
dread annihilation; and the present obscurity
recalled in vain the idea of my former sleep.

And so, as the Bible says, the evening and the morning were Adam's first day.
Note that in Buffon's fable not only is the concept of sin - original or other -
not dwelt upon, but that other matters which are rather of doctrine or faith
than of an evidential nature are not dwelt upon either. Adam's first sleep
comes upon him unawares; he awakens to the world as it is, he does not ask for
an exposition of the sacred mystery of creation itself, or God's purpose in
performing it. He is plainly an eighteenth-century Adam, clear in his mind
from the outset about what questions may profitably be asked, and what may not.
His first premise is the same as Pope's: what can we reason, but from what
we know?

What does this elegantly fabulous, Louis-Quinze Adam of Buffon's really
represent, then? Underneath the decorative surface, obviously, he stands for
the basic rational man. He may be merely an eighteenth century postulate. But
he is the postulate upon which all modern social and scientific institutions
rest, so far as they are of European origin.

Because the European postulate has in modern times been accepted so widely, it
has become increasingly difficult to make a clear distinction between basic
rational man and basic man. Do we have to assume that basic man is a basic
savage? And where, in the range between the savage and the rational man, must
we expect to find the natural man?

The poor Indian, according to Pope, has and "untutor'd" mind; he sees deities
in the clouds and wind, but knows nothing of "proud science" (Pope's "science"
is not modern science, but not so far from it as to be worth disputing). He has
some rudimentary idea of eternal life ("Heaven"), but no formal religious
institutions to systematize his beliefs ("angel's wings", "seraph's fire"); it
is enough for him simply to accept his existence ("to Be, contents his natural
desire"), and hope that the life to come will merely continue the happier
aspects of the present (with his faithful dog). All this is very imprecise and
indeed anthropologically rather ridiculous, but I do not remark on it merely to
point that out. The point I need to make is that its ignorance is of a
peculiarly and common European kind. What the poor Indian did not know about
Europe was more than equaled by what the prejudiced European did not know
about the vague "India" in which he dwelt. The allusion to the faithful dog
perhaps relates to one of the Hindu scriptures, but the predatory Christians
who "thirst for gold" just as obviously recalls Mexico or Peru; and the
slavery topic no doubt looks towards Africa. So for "Indian" we may as well at
once substitute "savage" and leave it at that. Those lands were all distant
places of which nothing; or virtually nothing, was known in Europe before the
period of expansion which began with Columbus, and even so did not reach its
great peak until the century of Pope and Buffon. There was a notion, not too
hard to credit in mediaeval Europe (which was late enough in history to account
for some pretty firmly fixed ideas) that all such lands, known if at all only
through legend or rumour, lay too far away from Christendom for the providence
of God to reach so far. Hence how could their inhabitants (all, more or less,
antthropophagi, the most terrible of civilised tabus) enjoy His holy blessing,
acquire a properly rational mind (or education), or indeed even appear
completely human? Actual confrontation with certain of those distant savages
(or heathen) which come with the commercial exploitation of America and of
India constituted a cultural shock. True, the exploiters had to find ways of
getting along with the exploited in their own countries. Something of that
experience penetrated back to Europe, but not, in the eighteenth century heyday, a great deal. There were vast contrasts in power - commercial, military and other - between the European and the native cultures; and in the circumstances of the time nothing could ever have persuaded the European Adam that he was not, constitutionally, a better Adam than any savage equivalent. Yet the Adamic issue was raised; philosophers raised it, even if merchants were more naturally unenquiring. And apart from his ideal and highly rational Adam, Buffon found himself speculating extensively about man - as distinct from European and Christian man - simply as a genus of the animal creation. The new scientific spirit of the age demanded this approach.

He even had something to say about the natives of New Holland. Tasman, who discovered Van Diemens Land in 1642, saw none of its inhabitants but his men reported evidences which, they said, pointed to their being fearful giants - this was still mediaeval credulity. On the other hand, the buccaneer William Dampier did touch on the north west coast of the Australian mainland in 1688 and recorded in his journal his impressions of the natives of the region. They were tribes afterwards reported on by Grey, Elkin and many others who described them in more detail. Dampier's account exhibits a marked degree of European shock, yet by his lights he gives a fair picture of the people.

The passage is well known:

The Inhabitants of this Country are the miserablest People in the World. The Hodmadods of Monomatapa, though a nasty people, yet for Wealth are Gentlemen to these; who have no Houses, and skin Garments, Sheep, Poultry, and Fruits of the Earth, Ostrich Eggs, &c., as the Hodmadods have; and setting aside their Humane Shape, they differ but little from Brutes.

They are tall, strait-bodied, and thin, with small long limbs. They have great Heads, round Foreheads, and great Brows. Their Eyelids are always half-closed, to keep the Flies out of their Eyes; they being so troublesome here, that no fanning will keep them from coming to one's Face; and without the Assistance of both hands to keep them off, they will creep into one's Nostrils, and Mouth too, if the Lips are not shut very close; so that from their Infancy being thus annoyed with these Insects, they do never open their Eyes as other People: and therefore they cannot see far, unless they hold up their Heads, as if they were looking as somewhat over them.

There is a good deal more, but this fragment will serve. Flies in the bush, we may see, are no modern innovation. Another point made by Dampier with some disgust is that these natives cannot be persuaded (or bribed) to carry burdens for the European strangers who don't care to carry them themselves - not even for rewards like a pair of breeches or a ragged shirt. The passage affords an interesting illustration of the way in which truth can become distorted when it is repeated without fresh verification at the source. Buffon had read Dampier. He says of the same people:

The natives of the coast of New Holland, which is situated in the sixteenth degree of south latitude, and beyond the island of the Timor, are perhaps the most miserable of the human species, and approach nearest to the brutes. They are tall, erect and thin;
their limbs are long and slender; they have large heads, a round forehead, and thick eyebrows; their eyelids are always half shut, a habit which they contract in infancy, to protect their eyes from the gnats; and, as they never open their eyes, they cannot see at a distance without raising their heads as if they were looking at something above them.

The account goes on, still drawing upon Dampier. It is as objective as might be expected:

They have thick noses and lips, and large mouths: they pull out, it should appear, the two fore teeth of the upper jaw; for, in neither sex, nor at any period of life, are these teeth to be seen. They have no beard; their visage is long, without a single feature that is agreeable; their hair is short, black and crisped; and their skin is as black as that of the Guiney Negroes. They have no clothing but a piece of the bark of a tree tied round their waist, with a handful of long herbs in the middle. They have no houses, and they sleep on the ground without any covering. They associate, men, women and children, promiscuously, to the number of twenty or thirty. Their only nourishment is a small fish, which they catch in reservoirs made of stones in small arms of the sea; and they are totally unacquainted with bread and every species of grain. (Smellie's translation, vol III 338)

How basic is this picture of the species man? Which comes nearer to what A.D. Hope has called the "human LCM", Dampier's New Hollander or Buffon's intelligent, rational Adam? — I interrupt this reflection to remark upon Buffon's gnats (or they may more likely be Smellie's*). They were flies when Dampier mentioned them and they are still flies to us. But two translations intervene: Buffon's into French, and Smellie's back again into English. With some 120 years of refinement to modify terminology, the vulgar fly has become the mentionable gnat. It is a small matter; yet a significant trifle. Savages like the Australians were so remote in both appearance and life-style from what Europeans knew, that they were almost bound to be distorted in representation. The same is true of European drawings of various savage peoples when they appeared in books of travel (in Cook's journals, for instance); exaggerations of one kind or another inevitably crept in. The savage Adam bore little resemblance to the European. What was remarkable, and it appears unequivocally enough in Buffon, was the related thesis that, far from being accidental, the inferiority of every aspect of nature away from the European context was a result of actual degeneration from the European, or at any rate the creatonal, original. In tropical countries, for example, birds were markedly inferior to their European counterparts, for although the birds in Europe had not the bright colours of the tropical foreigners, they were much better singers (and that was evidently more important). In America even the cattle were smaller than European beasts. (Thomas Jefferson disputed this with Buffon, but found the set opinion hard to shift.) The degeneracy theory was applied with special force to man. No doubt the relative indifference of Divine Providence to lands and peoples so far away from all that was normal

*Buffon is the culprit. His word is moucherons (gnats, midges), not mouches.
made even Nature behave peculiarly - different constellations, reversals in the seasons, shadows falling on the wrong side of the noonday, and the like. How should man himself expect to escape the consequences of these anomalies? So it was reasonable to argue. But certainly, evidence still kept on coming in to upset these preconceptions, and Buffon himself looked for verifications. People like the New Hollanders did seem to represent the abysmal depths of barbarism. Not even the Hottentots, as Dampier averred, sank lower. Buffon was, of course, dependent for his information on sources he could not personally test; it was not invariably of the highest accuracy.

"We are informed", he says, "by the Dutch voyagers" - and others - that "the Hottentots are not true Negroes, but blacks beginning to approach toward whiteness" - they are tawny, he says, and not really black - "as the Moors are whites approaching to blackness."

These Hottentots, moreover, are a very singular species of savages. Their women, who are commonly much less (i.e., smaller) than the men, have a kind of excrescence, or hard broad skin, which originates above the os pubis, and descends, like an apron, to the middle of their thighs. Thevenot says the same thing of the Egyptian women, but that, instead of allowing this excrescence to grow, they burn it off with hot irons... The (Hottentot) men are all half eunuchs, not naturally, but by an absurd custom of cutting out one of the testicles about the age of eight years. M. Kolbe saw this operation performed on a young Hottentot. The circumstances with which this ceremony is accompanied are so singular, that they deserve to be recited.

Is this custom any more remarkable, or less believable, than tooth-knocking? Which was the more amazing thought to contemplate, that the primitive savage should degenerate to such ridiculous atrocities, or that the primitive European had once practised them but left no trace of the fact? I refer here to Buffon's Hottentots only to illustrate what to the European mind seemed the irrational unaccountability of savage life and customs. (At the same time one may wonder about the European persistence, complex and debated as it was within the church, of the rite of circumcision; and some might be inclined to question how far the Christian sense of sin, especially when it becomes obsessive, may represent a similar mutilation of human normality imposed at a mental level.) For the curious reader, impatient to hear about the singular ceremony which Buffon says deserves to be recited, I append a footnote.

The source is vol III, p. 398 of Smellie's translation.¹

European knowledge of the overseas world was slow to grow and slower still to become systematic; still it might be said that during the eighteenth century the main geographical outlines were laid down and what was to follow was detail. So far as man as a species was concerned, so much strange information was brought home that many other preconceptions were subjected to challenge. But one thing remained clear. In spite of the variety that emerged to view, nothing was seen anywhere to throw any doubt upon the superiority of European culture. The world as it continued to open up was manifestly recognized to be divided between two broad classes of mankind, the civilised and the savage. And of civilisation, Europe had virtually the monopoly. But to thoughtful Europeans the position was not quite as simple as it might appear. Buffon among others found himself speculating with interest upon elements of savagery among the Europeans themselves, and hence asking pertinent questions about the

¹
Foundations upon which civilisation itself was built. It was not civilisation that was hard to define, but nature. On what bases did the nature of man stand? Was modern culture, in effect, always as reasonable as it ought to be? How could the real human LCM be discovered? A few stories, for example, were current which gave little support to the degeneracy theory and seemed to bring the problem of savagery much nearer to home. There were certain European children said to have been brought up in the wildwood (like Kipling's Mowgli) and if the facts could only be gathered and authenticated, perhaps they might demonstrate the argument advanced earlier (more by the poets than by sensible men) that human nature was innately good, and that man did not have to reason his way to the good life but possessed it as a natural gift. It must follow, in such a case, that the savage from far away and unknown places might well have a natural virtue and even a natural nobility not previously thought possible; such a conclusion was confusing, certainly.

An absolute savage, such as the boy brought up by the bear, described by Conor [reference given], the young man found in the forest of Hanover, or the girl discovered in the woods of France, would be a curious object to a philosopher, by the contemplation of which he might estimate the force of natural appetites; here he would see the mind perfectly naked; he might distinguish all its movements; he might, perhaps, discover in it more sweetness and tranquillity than in its [sic. his?] own; he might, perhaps, clearly perceive, that virtue is more natural to the savage than to the civilised, and that vice derives its origin and support from society alone.

(Vol. III, 412-3)

This in fact was a stirring thought and of great social importance; not so much to Buffon himself, as to a contemporary of his, Jean Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau (1712-78) by no means invented the idea, but he urged it further than any writer - certainly any "scientific" writer - before him.

In point of fact no man ever lived more upon European assumptions than Rousseau did, but his very rationalism invaded and often overwhelmed his emotions. His influence upon his fellow Europeans was enormous - too extensive to dwell upon here; it is enough to mention that his ideas stood behind the Revolution of 1789, and that the intellectual movement called the Enlightenment, of which he formed a motivating part, changed the life of Europe as a whole and not merely of France. All this came about because of the new rational disposition to observe the perfect nakedness of the human mind and trace the force of its natural appetites so as to show it as innately virtuous. It was society that had become degenerate - and that in Europe itself; not among the Hottentots.

At least, such was the new argument. But intellectual habit dies hard, and however the natural man was reviewed in social theory at home, the effect of the change was largely local and political. The philosopher might weigh pro's and con's, but the average citizen did not much change his view of the still remote Hottentot. There was, it is true, a phase of revaluation in the late years of the century and in the early nineteenth, with discovery and some European settlement in the Pacific, Tahiti for a time gave the world an image of lost paradise (earlier sought, but not found, in America). But after a few years of experience of inhibition-free delights associated with the naked human mind and the innocent natural appetites, the older European intellectual and moral establishment reasserted itself and (with reinforcement from the
missionary movement*) savages once again were firmly seen to be savages and due distinction maintained. But here we are flying ahead of our formal timetable, which stops short more or less firmly with the eighteenth century. It was then that fundamental principles were laid down.

If there is any one source of information, or it might be more to the point to suggest influence, about eighteenth century attitudes to the human savage: noble, ignoble or mixed that tells us more than any other, it must be Robinson Crusoe. In case that may seem an extravagant claim, let me give my reasons.

What we have been looking at up to this point has been largely theory, and philosophical in bias. It all emphasised the rationality of the modern mind. It is perhaps still, or in any case was during most of recent history (until, say, the beginnings of the nuclear age) an eighteenth century mode of enlightenment. But that is not the only way to see reality. What governs a great deal, perhaps most, of common human conduct is not, generally speaking, the enlightened but (sadly enough) the unenlightened mind. At any rate what the common man thinks is very hard to contradict, and what the common European man thought in the definitive period is only partly to be seen in what the philosophers and even the scientists said. Especially on the subject of savages - of the naked human mind and the force of the natural appetites - there is observably a great deal of prejudice to take into account. There is also some enlightenment, for the common man, if he is basically himself a savage, is also in some degree an enlightened one. Whether it was more or less, something at least rubbed off from the philosophers. Hence to find illustrations of what people, actual people, really thought about matters of social theory, we can best of all look for them in a popular novel. Robinson Crusoe was certainly that; so popular as to become assimilated (I use the modern jargon) into the mythology of the broad European middle-class mind. The book satisfied a craving for various eighteenth century excitements - adventure, conquest, commerce and enterprise, middle-class expansionism, not the least of them the spirit of the ordinary citizen's rational individualism; and it did so all the more effectively for being pitched in a journalistic tone and being especially adapted for the enjoyment of young minds. There followed after the work many notable sequels, like The Swiss Family Robinson - a whole category, indeed, of juvenile fiction know to literary history as Robinsonomades. The imitations were not only English. One such work, J.H. Campe's Robinson der Jüngere, written when Campe was a tutor to the family, may even have had some bearing in influencing Alexander von Humboldt towards becoming the great scientific traveller in Brazil, Mexico and elsewhere that he afterwards was. Humboldt, of course, was an accurate recorder; but broadly speaking we shall not look among the novelists for factual accuracy. From Robinson Crusoe, more especially in the parts of the book which include Man Friday (and that is not all of it), we learn superbly what people of that day thought about savages - I use the word "savage", incidentally, because it is Daniel Defoe's word; but now I use it with a certain irony.

Defoe (1660-1731) was, as mentioned, a journalist, perhaps the first British journalist of note and a most prolific writer, with his finger firmly on the popular pulse, gifted with an extremely smooth and plausible style - one would always willingly credit him with having been an eyewitness of what he describes, however exaggerated or impossible! The story of Robinson Crusoe (1719) elaborates extravagantly on the experiences of one Alexander Selkirk, a sailor who elected to be marooned upon the island of Juan Fernandez off

*The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge was set up as early as 1698; The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts in 1701.
the coast of Chile and remained there for four and a half years. It is in itself a remarkable enough story, but not much like Defoe's version, especially when it comes to Man Friday, who is the novelist's own invention. Defoe relocates the (unnamed) island in the Atlantic, south of Trinidad and adjacent to "the mouth of the Orinoco" (of which the map actually shows a number). The story of Crusoe's survival on the island is extended over many years. That part exploits contemporary speculation about the self-sufficiency of the individual spirit; but the novel obviously reaches its peak with the appearance of the wild savage. The main point remains the vitality of the soul and its capacity to survive against loneliness and adversity. But the introduction of the savage reestablishes the social contract and hence reaffirms more strongly the vital nakedness of the individual spirit. Man Friday is not brought in for his own sake, so much as because he provides a means for Crusoe to demonstrate his civilization. Crusoe/Defoe does, it is true, seem to develop an affection for Man Friday, but when the point is once made - and the passages in which it is dominant occupy only a dozen pages or so - the companionship rather peters out. If the truth were acknowledged, the character tends to become rather a drag upon the narrative. It is retained throughout the novel, but there are long stretches towards the end where Friday gets no mention, and his last appearance on the return to England is in a merely clownish episode in which he shows the gentlemen a funny way to kill a bear. He is still present in the early pages of Part II of the story, but disappears quickly; he no longer serves any purpose. But in any case nobody now reads Part II.

This treatment does not reduce his essential importance as a representative "savage" in the eighteenth century context, which is the reason for examining him here. On the contrary, as the account is relatively brief and contains little subtlety, it simplifies the need to cover a wide ground. We can happily deal with it in snippets, and I think the extracts will not require much comment. It will be quite easy to see what are the contemporary notions, attitudes and prejudices that they uncover. All that needs to be repeated is a reminder that what Defoe puts before the reader is for the most part addressed from prejudice (or parti pris) to prejudice. This is not philosophy or science. These things are what the popular eighteenth century audience expected, and therefore what for the most part the popular nineteenth and twentieth century intelligence also accepted with only a slowly modifying change of attitude. And they are probably what many people, if they are not taught better, would willingly accept today.

The day comes when Crusoe, wandering by the shore of his lonely island, looks down with astonishment to see a human footprint on the sand. Conflicts of fear and hope succeed in his mind: does it import danger or companionship? His investigations reveal to him that the island is visited from time to time by parties of savages from the not very distant mainland, who come to perform terrible cannibal rituals. There is probably no tabu more shocking to the European mind than cannibalism; hence it rates highly as a suspense-raiser in the island context. (When it disappeared from Europe itself is not wholly clear; probably very early in most parts, but among certain eastern European barbarians it may have persisted longer than would be supposed.) An occasion arises when one of two intended victims escapes and Crusoe compassionately saves him from the pursuit. The savage is properly and primitively grateful:

At last he lays his head flat upon the ground, close to my foot, and sets my other foot upon his head...and after this, made all the signs to me of subjection, servitude, and submission imaginable, to let me know he would serve me as long as he lived.
- in this humility, clearly, he did not much resemble Dampier's Hodmadods or Buffon's Hottentots (see p. 11 and note, p. 20), who "can neither support servitude nor hard labour"; but then - he is not a Hottentot. "I understood him", Crusoe goes on, "in many things, -"

and let him know that I was very well pleas'd with him; in a little time I began to speak to him, and teach him to speak to me; and first, I made him know his name should be Friday, which was the day I sav'd his life; I call'd him so for the memory of the time; I likewise taught him to say Master, and then let him know, that was to be my name; I likewise taught him to say yes and no, and to know the meaning of them...

Clearly it never occurs to Crusoe that the savage might have a language of his own or prefer to use it; but having made clear that he is to be called Master, while the savage is to say yea yea and nay nay, now generously offers him food, which he gratefully swallows, and again "made signs that it was very good for him." So it ought to have been; it was good European goat-mutton. Other lessons in general propriety follow at once.

I kept there with him all that night; but as soon as it was day, I beckoned to him to come with me, and let him know I would give him some clothes, at which he seemed very glad, for he was stark naked.

Once again the Hodmadods provided no precedent; but it is clear that Friday had civilised instincts unknown to them. It is true that when the pair visit the place where the invaders had come to carry out their cannibal orgies, Friday seems to exhibit a certain backsliding tendency, for he "had a hankering stomach" and "was still a cannibal in his nature". But the provision of a pair of linen drawers (from the wreck) and a jerkin and cap (of Crusoe's own manufacture out of skins) reforms all that; he is now "almost as well cloth'd as his master". This was a good beginning and excellent progress follows, Crusoe sums up: "Never had man a more faithful, loving, sincere servant, than Friday was to me." The qualities of a good servant are enumerated: "without passions, sullenness or designs, perfectly oblig'd and engag'd; his very affections were ty'd to me, like those of a child to a father." European paternalism could scarcely find sweeter expression. In duty bound, Friday undertakes to be wholly reformed; "at last he told me he would never eat man's flesh any more." On the contrary, he sets himself diligently to learn how to grind corn and make bread. The social experiment has turned out to be completely successful.

This was the pleasantest year of all the life I led in this place; Friday began to talk pretty well, and understand the names of almost every thing I had occasion to call for...Besides the pleasure of talking to him, I had a singular satisfaction in the fellow himself; his simple unfeign'd honesty appear'd to me more every day, and I began really to love the creature; and on his side, I believe he lov'd me more than it was possible for him to love any thing before.

Here we have both the nobility of the savage (somewhat antedating Rousseau) and transcendental Christian charity coming neatly together. It is clearly time now to induce a little rational religion into the naked savage mind; but it is more easily said than done:
I asked him one time who made him. The poor creature did not understand me at all...I took it by another handle, and ask'd him who made the sea, the ground we walk'd on, and the hills, and woods; he told me it was one old Benamuckee, that liv'd beyond all...I ask'd him then, if this old person had made all things, why did not all things worship him; he look'd very grave, and with a perfect look of innocence said, "All things do say O to him."

Here was common ground, then; other things being equal, the savages were churchgoers in their way. (It would seem, rather in the way like Defoe himself — rather a difficult point to prove, however.) There follows a good rattling lesson about the omnipotence of God and the irresistible might of His formidable rival the devil. The logic of this, however, is mildly questioned by the intelligent savage, whose newly awakened rationality scents a contradiction. Defoe finds himself in difficulties for an answer, and remarks, characteristically:

I had, God knows, more sincerity than knowledge, in all the methods I took for this poor creature's instructions, and must acknowledge what I believe all that act upon the same principle will find, that in laying these things open to him, I really inform'd and instructed myself.

Again Friday is suitably impressed and "humbly thankful". Crusoe, or Defoe, of course speaks in the clichés of his age and we need to remember that his religion is the religion of not merely his age but his dissenting caste also. We class the period as a rational one, but its rationality had many applications; even its piety was rationalized. Naturally it was a far cry from the sects to the received churches, and from them again to deists like Pope or advanced and independent thinkers like Buffon on the one hand or Voltaire on the other. All that it is necessary to say here is that the rationalization of religion went far in the eighteenth century mind, but not often as far as sheer atheism; religion was too deeply entrenched as an element of the total culture, more or less relaxed among intellectuals, but still with passionate rigidity among the less sophisticated. Defoe spoke out, and bravely, for the common man; but it was the character of the common man to be reticent of established attitudes. Too gradually for him to be fully aware of the changes, he was accustoming himself to regard the religious issues as having commercial and political significance rather than theological, and naturally enough his attitudes to social problems were coloured by those shifts. Men of the classes to and for whom writers like Defoe spoke had long since learned to say they believed all men to be equal. Thomas Paine summed up these sentiments at the end of the century in The Rights of Man (1791) and other works. But not even all this rational argumentation was ever able to persuade everyone that men were everywhere equal; as George Orwell was waiting in the wings to remark, though in theory it might be so, nevertheless some were always by destiny intended to be more equal than others. You could at last say it aloud in revolutionary Europe. You could not credibly say it of the Hottentot though, or the New Holland, or the Wild Man from Borneo, in either the seventeenth, the eighteenth, the nineteenth Century, and even in the twentieth we had to wait for the Third World to speak up for itself to hear it said anywhere with conviction.

"Another thing I cannot refrain from observing," Robinson Crusoe remarks on the effects of religion in bringing the benefits of civilisation to the simple savage. "(is) how infinite and inexpressible, a blessing it is, that the
knowledge of God, and the doctrine of salvation by Christ Jesus, is so plainly laid down...so easy to be receiv’d and understood." As the reading of scripture had helped him to repentance, so it had helped Man Friday, "bringing him to be such a Christian as I have known few equal to in my life." No doubt we must accept the bona fides of this. But it is hard not to throw in an observation of one's own as to the visible differences between men who were equal (or even superior) as Christians, yet vastly inferior in most other respects.

Yet what else was to be expected? As far as the eighteenth century was able to judge, was there any higher point to which the savage mind could be brought? Anything more and the savage would have been a savage no longer; what then? There was generosity, even some liberality in the desire to civilise him. But magnificent as had been the advance achieved by European man in the Age of Reason, reason had as yet achieved nothing for the savage. Tribal systems were unimagined. Mythologies were uncomprehended. Primitive religion was picturesque stories and nothing more; the whole organization of primitive consciousness everywhere could be dismissed in a word: superstition. Crusoe and his age had barely the slightest notion of the real savage mysteries. His age was intent upon exploitation and subjection; discovery, settlement and colonization. The manifest destiny of European man to dominate all the rest of the world really cared very little indeed for the naked human soul, except to put it in chains. And hence it is fair to assert that what Robinson Crusoe believed about savages, and exhibited in his treatment of Man Friday, provides us, when we consider all its implications, with an eloquent explanation of the misery and degradation that are suffered by the Australian Aborigines today. For they, more than any other primitives on the face of the earth, were in the days of their discovery by white men, most in need of spiritual, religious, social, ritual, mythological, imaginative and even physical understanding. And none was available for them.

Looking back, the march of civilisation in the modern world presents a rueful picture. An old European rhyme asked (in various languages), "When Adam delved and Eva span, Who was then the gentleman?" Men of God went out from Spain, carrying the cross to Mexico and Peru, bringing salvation with pillage and slaughter. The Pilgrim Fathers carried reason and piety to North America, crushing the red man wherever they went. The Honourable Company subdued India. The King of the Belgians exploited the Congo for rubber. Roger Casement brought out seeds of the rubber tree from Brazil, and the British afterwards hanged him. The great Behemoth of European righteousness trampled over the whole of the Australian continent after 1788, destroying every vestige of humanity in the old land wherever it went. Who was then the gentleman? Who was then the savage? What is the natural colour of savagery, black or white? Little as it would appear we can at this stage do about it, it is well at least that we should ask the question.
APPENDIX

After rubbing the young man with grease taken from the entrails of a sheep which is slain for the purpose, they lay him on his back on the ground, tie his hands and his feet, and three or four of his friends hold him. Then the priest (for it is a religious rite), armed with a sharp knife, makes an incision, and cuts away the left testicle footnote: Tavernier says it is the right, [refce. given], and puts in its place a ball of grease, of the same size, prepared with some medicinal herbs. He then sews up the wound with the bone of a small bird, which serves for a needle, and a thread made of the tendon of a sheep. The operation being this finished, the patient is untied. But the priest, before quitting him, rubs him all over with the warm grease of a new-killed sheep, or rather pours the grease upon him so copiously, that, when cool, it forms a kind of crust. At the same time, he rubs him so roughly, that the young man, who has already suffered too much, is covered with sweat, and fumes like a capon on a spit. The operator next makes furrows with his nails in this crust of grease, from one end of the body to another, and then pisses in them. After which, he again rubs the patient, and fills up the furrows with fresh grease. The young man is now instantly abandoned, and left alone in a condition rather resembling death than life: he is obliged to crawl, in the best manner he can, into a hut purposely erected near the place where the operation is performed. There he either perishes or recovers, without assistance, or any other nourishment than the grease that covers him, and which he may lick, if he chooses. At the end of two days, he generally recovers, comes out of his hut, and presents himself to his friends; and to prove that he is perfectly cured, he runs before them with the swiftness of a stag. [Source: Descript. du Cap, par M. Kolbe, p. 275.]

In this passage the reader may notice with some interest the complex presence in Buffon's style of amazement, incredulity, fascination, and civilised contempt for savage irrationality.

I add here, no doubt superfluously, that Dampier's Hodmadods and Buffon's Hottentots are of course the same, and that Buffon discusses them fairly extensively on the authority of M. Kolbe. He says (Vol III, 401):

Beyond the territory of Natal, we meet with those of Sofala and Monomatapa....The natives of Monomatapa, say the Dutch, are tall, handsome, black and have fine complexions. The young girls go naked, wearing only a thin piece of cotton stuff upon their middle; but put on garments as soon as they get husbands. These people, though very black, are different from the Negroes. Their features are neither so coarse no so ugly; their bodies have no bad smell; and they can neither support servitude nor hard labour. Father Charlevoix tells us, that he has seen blacks of Monomatapa and Madagascar in America; but that they could never be trained to labour, and soon perished. (Histoire de St. Dominique, p. 499).