LA SOCIÉTÉ: THE ETHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY IN PARIS, 1839[1]

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It may well be the nature of scholarship that the ideas of those who pursue it reach extremes of brilliance and stupidity. The group of scholars and érudits of all backgrounds which formed the Société Ethnologique in the Paris of 1839 was no exception. We find in the pages of the first two volumes of the Mémoires of the Société, which cover the period from August 23, 1839, to December 27, 1844, a mixture of scientific curiosity and cultural evolutionary bigotry, of careful remarks and sweeping generalizations about les sauvages (the savages). According to Tuul Dieserud (1908:189), the Société lasted until 1848, publishing in addition to the Mémoires, two volumes of their bulletin for the years 1846-47.[2]

The Société des Observateurs de l'Homme had been founded in 1800, at least one member of which, Geoffroy St. Hilaire, was to become also a member of the subsequently established Société Ethnologique (1839), subject of the present paper, and of the Société Anthropologique de Paris (1859).[3] According to Stocking (1968:16), the Mémoires of that first French anthropological society were never published, but its proposed goals in the introduction heralded--as we shall see--those of the Société Ethnologique. This introduction included suggestions for establishing "a methodological classification of races" on the basis of a complete comparative anatomy of peoples; a comparative anthropology of the customs and practices of societies; an anthropological topography of France to help determine the precise influence of climate on man; a museum of comparative ethnography; and a comparative dictionary of all known languages. Citizen Degérando was one of the most influential members of that society. He wrote a memoir entitled Considerations on the Diverse Methods to Follow in the Observation of Savage Peoples which served as a model for much of the Société Ethnologique's own attitudes and questions about man (Stocking 1968:21-28). Degérando being a révolutionnaire, however, would have found followers only among the more contemporarily liberal members of the Société Ethnologique. He did not pay much attention to race. With Cuvier, however, French anthropology focused decisively on the physical and mental differences between the races, with the implication that the "races of depressed and compressed skulls" have been "condemned to an eternal inferiority" by some cruel law (Stocking 1968:35). From then on, civilization was reserved for the white European who alone was judged capable of abstract thought.

One aim of the present research is to investigate what sort of people the Société was composed of, to reveal their class background, political affiliations if any, intellectual interests and professional occupations. Another aim is to show how the "objective" work of the Société and its intellectual goals were strongly colored by pseudo-scientific assumptions popular in the nineteenth century, and by the social status of many of the Société's founders. Contemporary ideas such as those propounded by Lamark, for example, that cultural, moral and social behavior was inherited in the same inflexible manner as physical racial traits (however complicated these really are), appear again and again in the actual procès-verbaux (proceedings) of the meetings and writings of the group. Nowhere, however, do we find any explanation of the actual process by which these traits are transmitted. Thus, despite individual humanitarian beliefs, the Société's work as a whole tended to justify the domination and economic exploitation by the European colonial powers of other nations, and social inequality and injustice within individual societies.

Upon examining the biographies of a significant proportion of the members of the Société Ethnologique, numbering about 130, the procès-verbaux of the meetings, a selection of writings and a questionnaire, I came to the conclusion that, had it not been for the stimulating participation of such men as d'Orbigny and Von Humboldt, the Société might have been nothing more than an agglomerate of rather amateurish scholars, most of whose work consisted of educated guesses based on information by others, and colored with assumptions of superiority of some races over others.

W. F. Edward's essay "On the Physiological Characteristics of Human Races, Considered in Their Relation to History"[4] presented as a letter to Amédée Thierry and published in its entirety in the first volume of the Mémoires was the source of inspiration for the creation of the Société. The Mémoires tell us (I:1:i, 1841) that it attracted the attention of contemporary scientists, and friends of Edwards decided to study seriously with him the question of human races which had populated the world.

In 1838, in London, English scholars had created a society for the protection of aborigines. Edwards and some of his friends were encouraged to do the same in Paris. For unstated reasons they were unable to do so and resolved instead to create a Société Ethnologique with a scientific aim. A central committee was established; a statement and rules were decided upon and submitted to the government, which authorized the Société shortly afterwards.

The aim of the Société was very clearly stated at the beginning of the first volume of the Mémoires:

> The main elements which help distinguish the human races are: physical organization, intellectual and moral character, languages, and historical traditions; these various elements

> have not yet been studied in a manner which might help build on its true bases the science of Ethnology. It is to reach the latter aim through a series of observations, and to establish what are in reality the different human races, that the ethnological society was formed in Paris (I:1:iij, 1841).

The work of the Société consisted of gathering, coordinating, and publishing all observations likely to advance knowledge of the different human races. Its members, as well as members of other societies with whom the Société was in contact, were to contribute relevant material. Contacts were to be established with all scholars, travelers, and individuals who were in a position to provide enlightening information. A questionnaire was therefore put together to be sent to these people, the content of which will be examined later in a special section of this paper.

Article 5 (I:1:iv, 1841) describes the intention of the Société to make collections of drawings, portraits, and natural objects which could help determine the physical characteristics of races, as well as of art objects and artifacts which might help people appreciate the degree of intelligence and culture achieved by the different groups. The statement already outlines clearly the view that it is not just a matter of scientific quest and classification of the different kinds of people found in the world, it is also their arrangement in a hierarchy of lower and higher, of more or less advanced--a hierarchy where present and past become fused in the same evolutionary scheme. The Société members were transforming the hierarchically organized status quo of Western Europe into a general theory of scientific explanation for the whole world: what better way would there have been to preserve that status quo?

Article 6 shows how the Société intended to follow the intentions of its older sister in London:

> The Société, while pursuing its scientific aim, will not neglect its contributions to the improvements (as much as will be in its powers) of the plight of aboriginal people (I:1:iv, 1841).

In England, as in France, the scientific communities already echoed the colonials' "White Man's burden" policy.

The Société counted in its ranks a great variety of people. Many were not French, and thus we have an immediate impression of "international" scholarly effort. English, German and Portuguese were among the most common nationalities. The scientists of the time sought to transcend their political borders and hostilities.

Some of the members were also members of the Institute (also known as l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres) and others of the Société de Géographie. Many were professors, natural

scientists, medical doctors, administrators and government officials. Others were traders, librarians, antiquarians, seamen, and artists. A significant number were part of the French and other national colonial administrations. All occupations were more or less closely related to the Société's chief concern, which was to gather as much information as possible about all the different human groups to be found in the world and to establish a complete classification of the "races."

Among the most distinguished members we find men like W. F. Edwards, Alcide d'Orbigny, Fowell Buxton, Lord Brougham, Alexander von Humboldt, and the Duke of Sussex. The life of Edwards, president of the Société (until February 25th, 1842) was more interesting than his work. He was born in Jamaica in 1776, son of an English plantation owner who then moved to Bruges, where he was raised. He studied Natural History and took an interest in the flora of Flanders, then a part of France. He turned to medical studies and went to Paris to complete his studies in 1808. Until 1823 he wrote numerous works on various scientific topics, then suddenly abandoned medical research in favor of the study of languages. In 1826 he traveled through France and Italy, and made a series of observations which marked the beginning of an obsession lasting up to his death in 1842 (Michaud 12:280-281).

His ambition was to unravel the complexity of the racial make-up and history of Western Europe. The 1829 Lettre à Amédée Thierry contains several theories about race which are worth examining since they constituted the source of intellectual inspiration for the Société. According to Edwards, races present fixed characteristics; they can propagate without change in their basic characteristics over a long historical period, even though racial mixture can influence them. Descendents of the great classical nations can therefore still be found. The most useful index of racial classification is the proportion of the head and facial traits. Two major types can be recognized in France and other Western European nations: Edwards calls them the Gael and the Kimri (also known as Celtic and Belgian races). Everywhere he went in France, Italy, England, he was obsessed with identifying these two types and the various mixtures. In that essay, his statements remain neutral; nowhere can we find him passing judgment on the different races found in Europe relative to one another. He even cautions others against hastily equating physiological characteristics with intellectual and moral capacity:

> In this letter, I have abstained from examining whether the groups whose forms and body proportions I have isolated, also possessed moral and intellectual traits exclusive to them.
>
> Although I have not neglected this object of observation, and while it is not extraneous to my goal, it is not so tied to that goal that it might not be separated from it. To simplify matters, the researcher should set aside all examination of

> these causes, and should limit himself to considering whether or not a particular moral character might distinguish a group previously categorized from the physical point of view.
>
> Such an observation would be a simple coincidence and not a necessary correlation (I:1:107, 1841).

But in his essay called "On the Reciprocal Influence of Races on National Character" published in the second volume of the Mémoires, we can see that this thought had changed, and that he had adopted a developmental attitude, which even showed signs of biological determinism. For example, race has certain moral characteristics; the Germans are pure, honest and simple. If two races of opposite moral characteristics find themselves of the same soil, one of the two must disappear and it will inevitably be the one with the weaker and less stable characteristics. Thus in England, the Kimri type (tall, long face, long acquiline nose) was successful over the Gaelic type (short, round face, short round nose). The climate does not seem to affect basic racial characteristics, yet differences of language and history do modify them. Thus the colonists in North America, whose character clearly dominates all others, show an exaggeration of the English character in those things which they hold in common. For instance, they have a great compulsion for trading, they are remarkable ship-builders but often embark for long trips on unsafe ships, and also have bad credit! (II:I:5, 1845).

Alcide d'Orbigny, born in 1802 in Cuéron, Loire-Inférieure, was also a naturalist, emulator of the most famous of them all, Alexander von Humboldt. At the request of the Musée d'Histoire Naturelle he set off on an expedition to South America in 1826. Like von Humboldt, he did not restrict himself to the description of the fauna, flora, and lower animals, but also made numerous direct observations of the people of the regions he visited (Brazil, Uruguay, Parana, Argentina). In Patagonia, he found himself having to fight alongside a tribe whose hospitality he had received, thus being one of the first to experience the extreme difficulty the ethnographer faces in striving to remain "objective" in fieldwork! (Michaud 31:312-319).

He brought back a huge collection of animals, plants, fossils, and artifacts to Paris in 1833, thereby making a valuable contribution to European science. D'Orbigny has the merit of having been one of the very few scientists who actually made empirical observations--on the whole, the Société was composed of "armchair scholars." He shared, however, some of the ethnocentric assumptions of his contemporaries:

> Finally, M. d'Orbigny also gave details on the mores of the Yecatura, a Peruvian society who were unfortunately extremely immoral (II:1:lxiv, 1845).

Thomas Fowell Buxton was an Englishman, famous in his day for being an influential abolitionist and advocate of African civilization. Born in Devonshire in 1786 (NBG[5] 7:918-921, 1862, and DNB 3:559-561, 1917), Buxton spent most of his life fighting for liberal causes such as prison reform and the abolition of slavery, without much initial success. Opponents even accused him of having caused slave revolts in the colonies. His chivalrous campaigns included such ethnocentric, and yet (from one viewpoint) not unjustifiable, fights as that against the "barbaric prejudices which forced widows to be burned along with their husbands' bodies" in India. In general, he was a "White Man's burden" advocate: primitive people had as much potential as we did, and ought to be treated as human beings, and yet we must remove them from their present barbaric state and show them the way to civilization. It is important to note that Buxton started to gain recognition in England only after pointing out the great unexploited riches of Africa.

Another interesting English member of the Société was Lord Brougham, born in Edinburgh in 1779 (NBG 7:518-527, 1862, and DNB 2:1356-1366, 1917). He was said to possess both practical sense and liberal views. He became a lawyer and famous speaker and was opposed to the enslavement of Black people. The Nouvelle Biographie describes him as a "direct descendant of Scottish philosophy and free thinkers of the eighteenth century." He wrote biographies in French of Voltaire and Rousseau. Other causes he fought for were the reform of English laws, the organization of public education for the masses, and the emancipation of Catholics.

A significant number of the members were politically liberal and had personal life histories which were somewhat unusual. Most of them had undertaken arduous travels or experienced adventures, and some would surely have qualified more as adventurers than scientists. Many were what I would call "marginals," born in one country, raised in another, having adopted yet another--or else holding widely different political views from those of most people. Indeed from reading the biographies of many of these members, one would expect a Société full of exciting new ideas, and yet the contents of the two volumes of the Mémoires reflect the conservative intellectual attitudes of the majority. It is as though these members' unusual lifestyles and personal intellectual daring were never adopted for the benefit of the Société and instead remained only individual phenomena.

Pierre-Etienne du Ponceau was born in France in 1760 (NBG 40:733-735, 1862, and DAB 5:525-526, 1930).[6] Son of a poor army officer, he had no other choice but to study with the "Bénédictins." Placed as a teaching assistant in a seminary, he escaped and eventually got to Paris where he was able to put his talent for the English language to good use. He became the interpreter-secretary of Baron Steuben, who was about to set off to North America to fight in the War of Independence. Once there, du Ponceau quit the service and became attaché to the cabinet of Livingston, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs (1782-83). He studied law and passed the bar exams

in Philadelphia in 1785. Du Ponceau became a successful lawyer, specializing in cases regarding the "conflicting rights of neutrals" --the United States having remained neutral in the European conflict. His success was due to a knowledge of European and American law and languages. He also became a linguist on the side and wrote about North American Indian languages,[7] English phonology, and the Chinese system of writing.

Jean Kolettis, the Greek correspondant of the Société, had studied medicine in Bologna, Italy. A fervent nationalist, he returned to Greece to fight for its liberation from the Turks (NBG 28:37-38, 1862). In 1822, he was one of the writers and cosigners of the Greek Declaration of Independence and was named Minister of the Interior.

Jacob de Graberg de Hemsoe, a Swedish scientist, was born in 1776 (NBG 21:541-544, 1862). At sixteen he joined the merchant marine and, in 1793, the English navy, stationed in the Mediterranean. In 1795, he fought a duel, became a deserter and took refuge in Italy, where he became an attaché to the Swedish embassy in Florence. His luck turned once again when an economic crisis deprived him of his occupation. He taught languages to survive, refusing to work for the French invaders, then at war with Sweden. From 1811 to 1820, he joined the Swedish embassy, eventually becoming consul in Tangiers, Morocco, where he was said to have had influence on the sultan. But this misfortune-prone character was forced to leave Morocco by an "incident," of which no details are given. He went back to Genoa to be vice-consul and was finally given a retirement pension by the Swedish government. Some of his writings contributed to spreading knowledge of Scandinavia throughout the rest of Europe.

Charles-Christian Rafn, a Danish archaeologist born in 1795 (NBG 41:468-469, 1862), was the author of Antiquitates Americanae (1837), a work which "established in a peremptory manner that the Icelanders had discovered North America in the 10th century and that they had created colonies in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, which subsisted until the 14th century.

Adam Mickiewicz, a Polish poet born in 1798 (NBG 35:437-442, 1862), is described in the Nouvelle Biographie as a "romantic Slav." He was a Polish nationalist and was imprisoned for a year in 1824 by the Russians. Eventually he was exiled to St. Petersburg where he immediately set out to find allies for his cause among Russian liberals. Finally granted a passport by Czar Nicholas, he left for Germany (where he met Goethe) and later went to Rome. After a few more peregrinations, he was given a teaching appointment as a professor of Slavic languages and literature at the Collège de France in 1839.

Auguste-Guillaume de Schlegel was a German "critic" born in Hanover in 1767 (NBG 43:532-539, 1862). We are told he was good at languages and studied with Heine from whom he acquired a love of the

literature and culture of the ancient Greeks and Romans. The latter feature was shared by many members of the Société: Greek and Roman societies were both the source of modern Western European society and a model against which to compare all the societies of the world, then and in the past. Schlegel also had anti-French feelings and became part of the German romantic movement in 1798 along with Schiller and Novalis. In 1814, he was in France under the patronage of Madame de Stael. She died, leaving him unprotected from strong anti-German sentiment. Back in Germany, he was given a professorship in Oriental studies at Bonn and in 1814 was studying the languages of India. In 1818 the Prussian government assigned him the task of creating a Sanskrit press and he had to spend eight months in Paris to supervise the casting of the devanagari characters.

Agostino Codazzi was an Italian engineer-geographer, born near Ferrara in 1792 (NBG 11:22-24, 1862). At sixteen, he joined the French army and fought in campaigns until Napoleon's fall in 1814. He was in Amsterdam when he heard about Bolivar's revolution and decided to go to South America. After military involvement in several South American "causes," he came back to Italy in 1823, but returned to South America in 1826. In Santa Fe de Bogota, vice-president Santander made him lieutenant-colonel d'artillerie and put his geographical knowledge to use by having him draw maps of strategically important areas. In 1830, Venezuela became independent from Bolivia and Codazzi drew maps of Venezuela as well as participating in the military campaigns. He was promoted to colonel in 1839, the year he undertook an adventurous expedition to the "deserts" of Guyana. He then went to Paris to publish his findings in Spanish. In 1841, he was at the service of the New Republic of Grenada and General Paez charged him with the exploration of Panama to find out whether a canal could be dug across it.

Martin de Moussy was a French traveler born in 1810 (NBG 34:57-58, 1862). He studied medicine in Paris' military hospitals in 1835 and left for South America in 1841 to become a doctor in Montevideo. In 1852, he traveled to the "basin de la Plata" subsidized by the Argentinian government. From 1855 to 1858, he crossed the whole of Argentina and explored the Uruguay and Parana rivers. This energetic man made contact with the Indians of "Chaco" and Patagonia, spent a year going through the Andes, and crossed over to Chile and back to Argentina twice. He gathered a great many observations on the geography, ethnography, geology, population, and meteorology of the areas he covered, and went back to France to publish his findings in 1860.[8]

Charlemagne-Theophile Lefebvre was also a "French traveler" born in Nantes in 1811 (NBG 30:324-325, 1862). In 1836, the French government gave him the assignment of exploring the interior of Abyssinia. Together with a doctor named Petit, and naturalist, Dillon, he managed to obtain a trade treaty with a Djeddaz Oubie (presumably a local king or chief). Lefebvre then went back to France with the treaty, while Dillon and Petit continued the

exploration, gathering rich scientific data until Dillon died in 1839. In 1840, Lefebvre was granted permission to resume the exploration and went this time accompanied by an artist, Vignaud, with the intention of compiling an atlas. The Académie des Sciences sponsored the publication of all the findings accumulated by these four men.

Jean-Antoine Letronne, critic and archaeologist, was born in 1787 in Paris (NBG 30:1015-1021, 1862). He attracted attention by solving extremely difficult problems in Greek translations. The Nouvelle Biographie tells us that he went on his travels with a rich foreigner. From 1810 to 1812 they traveled through Southern France, Italy, and Switzerland. He published topographic and geographic works and was accepted as a member of the Académie des Inscriptions in 1816. We are also told that Letronne was a critical person who spent too much time pointing out and correcting scholarly mistakes to be able to produce much work of his own. Trips to Egypt were fashionable at that time, and many saw the origin of Christianity in Zodiacs found in Esneh and Denderah which were thought to be of great antiquity. Letronne showed that they dated in fact only from Roman times and he also determined the chronology of the Ptolemies through the study of Greek and Latin inscriptions.

Only the biographies of those members who led eventful lives and attained notoriety are included in this paper. They constitute a minority in a membership which totalled approximately 130, biographies on the majority of whom could not be located. Whatever the the lives of this majority may have been, their narrow-minded spirit which set the intellectual tone of the Mémoires cannot be overlooked. The procès-verbaux of the meetings provide numerous examples in which it seems that the Société was more concerned with moral judgments than scientific research:

> "The Betsimsarak," he said, "is restless, talkative, and cowardly. The Hova has a high intelligence and a great aptitude for mechanical arts: otherwise, greed and revenge are unfortunately the main motives for his actions. M. de Froberville does not doubt that the Hova are of Malay origin. The black race remains to be discussed, probably indigenous to Madagascar, a better and yet less intelligent race than the other two. The extreme indolence of blacks is the cause of their stupidity!" (I:1:xxix, 1841).

Lelut, the chief physician for the mentally ill at the Hospice de la Salpêtrière in Paris, was one of several psychiatrists in the Société. The Nouvelle Biographie tells us that, according to him, the main concern of anthropology should be general studies applicable to psychology and political economics, and tersely added that it should include a "very daring application of physiology to history" (NBG 30:1:548-550, 1862). It seems that Lelut thought that the phenomenon of social class was biologically determined, since

physical size corresponded to it. On June 25, 1841, he gave a lecture at one of the meetings: "He points out that height is usually greater among rich people than among the poor; and that city people are usually taller than country people" (I:1:xlvijj, 1841).

On December 24, 1841, M. G. d'Eichtal, on whom no biographical information could be found, gave a lecture:

> The author develops this quite new idea, that the human species can be regarded as a couple in which the white race would represent the male type, and the black race the female type; their association, according to him, only began in the sixteenth century and has produced the mulattos, a mixed race which seems to him to be destined to the greatest role in the future (II:1:xxvij, 1845).

D'Eichtal's sexual allegory is an interesting one. It is based on the assumption that the white race will help ameliorate the black one through miscegenation. This helps solve the contradiction between humanitarian intentions of desiring to raise the status of non-white races on the one hand, and the view that black people are inferior on the other.

Loewenstern, at the July 26th, 1842, meeting, gave a lecture on the state of Mexico after the revolution:

> The Indian of Mexico is not sanguinary, contrary to what the pre-conquest human sacrifices might lead us to expect. However he is a thief. He does not have the energy of North American Indians. He is in fact either stupid or extremely cunning. He is attached to his historical traditions and is extremely good at music and mime. He has a ceremonial character. Mixed races are very depraved in Mexico, domestics almost all belong to them. The population is depraved; could it be otherwise? Order and justice have almost disappeared (II:1:xxvij, 1845).

At the February 25th, 1843, meeting, a M. Dumoutier gave a lecture on the natives of Nukahiva (Marquesas Islands). Their heads, he declared (II:1:xxxiv, 1845), are oblong, flat on the sides and shaped very much like a roof on top. The underdevelopment of the upper cortex showed that their intellectual capacity was clearly much less developed than their instincts, but they were sweet and loving, and showed much family loyalty and hospitality. Dumoutier thought they represented the ideal type of a race in childhood. Some traces of violence could be found but were so atypical that Dumoutier asked himself whether this might not be the influence of contact with civilization.

Concern about the consequences of contact between "savages" and civilization was beginning to emerge. On February 25, 1842, Loewenstern presented a memoir on the Literary Institute established in Lahainahula of Maui (Hawaiian Islands) by American missionaries. His concluding remarks were particularly significant:

> While applauding higher education, Mr. Loewenstern regrets that elementary education, of a much more direct use, is neglected. He has observed a frightening decrease in the Sandwich Archipelago population, which is only a quarter of what it was sixty years before. Could the transition from savage to civilized state be the cause of this? (II:1:xix, 1845).

On November 26th, 1841, a discussion occurred as to "whether Christianity's intervention does contribute to the speeding up of savage peoples' civilization?" (II:i:xv, 1845). Then we are told only that "opinions are split on this topic" (Ibid.).

Thus, this concern existed, but we also find an indication of exactly the point to which the Société was willing to go in its humanitarianism:

> . . . M. de Semallé suggests that the committee write a humanitarian letter on behalf of the tribes of Native Americans to the New York Ethnological Society. The committee judges that this letter strays too far from the scientific aims of the Société; even though in its activities the Société takes into consideration the improvement of the Aborigines, this must only be a secondary concern. M. de Semallé's letter will be placed in the archives (II:1:lix, 1845).

In the light of the foregoing, one man stands out as expressing particularly "modern" ideas. Julian R. Jackson, the secretary of the Royal Society of London, published in the first volume of the Mémoires an essay entitled "Of the Arts and Inventions of Savage Life considered as a Direct Result of the Observation of Nature." He wrote that language was the phonetic expression of ideas. However, he described as a common misconception the notion that, since savages have few ideas, their language must be poor (I:1:287, 1841). He then contended that we should be able to find in the most uncivilized savage the same fundamental ideas as existing in the most civilized European. His reasoning was that if the savage has the same physical senses as the civilized man, then he is capable of experiencing the ideas which derive from the impression of exterior objects on the senses. On the other hand, "natural affections" are the same for all humanity, therefore, they must be the same for the savage as for the civilized man. This, continued Jackson, was not contradicted by their actions since the same thought can give birth to opposite manifestations. If their senses and affections were the

same, then there was no reason why the savage would not have the whole gamut of ideas common to all mankind (I:1:288, 1841).

One very important gauge of the assumptions and goals of the Société is the Instruction générale adressée aux voyageurs, etc. . . . A standard list of items to investigate was made up for those who, in any capacity, might go to other parts of the world. They would gather the information and communicate it to the Paris-based central committee of the Société.

Not surprisingly, the first item was to be the physical characteristics of the people visited (I:1:vj, 1841). We have seen how the study of the different races was the self-admitted primary focus of the Société. Some ideas on that topic seem to have been predominant within the Société. First, it can be seen from many discussions all through the procès-verbaux that the Société was of the opinion that, even though it could not yet be scientifically proven, empirical evidence pointed to a multiple origin for the races of man, rather than a single one as religious dogma would have it (Jackson I:1:286, 1841).

On that first point, the Société recommended that the traveler draw portraits of the natives (both profile and front, and of the two sexes), that he take measurements of the bodily proportions, that he take molds of the busts and try to get skulls to bring back. The voyageur was also advised not to confuse pure and mixed races.

Another point of controversy within the Société brings us to the second item of investigation of the questionnaire: language. Until then, language had been considered the most important tool for the classification of the different races. A member of the Société de Géographie, Vivien, wrote an essay called "Research on the History of Anthropology," which sums up the ideas of most Société members on that point: "One certainty is the plurality of creations in organic nature, a plurality which applies to the species of each genus as well as to the different genera in each order" (II:1:50, 1845). The reasoning, inspired by the work of Alexander von Humboldt, was that if there were multiple "hearths of creation" for all other living organisms, why shouldn't there have been for man also? But, Vivien continued, a great deal of research was yet to be undertaken to determine exactly how many of these creation hearths there were for man, that is to say, of how many espèces exactly the human genus was composed. The Société clearly saw the latter as its main task. As to why language cannot be the main tool for race classification any more, Vivien quoted von Humboldt: "Neither analogy nor diversity of language are sufficient to solve the great problem of the relationship of people, and they offer only weak possibilities" (II:1:62, 1845). There follows an argument which immediately brings to mind the famous Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of years later. If, as some contend, languages reflect the characteristics of the races that speak them, how could the cases be explained in which several neighboring people of the same race (in North America for instance) speak totally different languages (II:1:63, 1845)? And also,

conversely, how could it be explained that people of very different racial origin (as in Western Europe) speak closely related languages? Vivien concluded that, since physical characteristics are much more stable than languages, they should be used as the basis for a rigorous racial classification.

The Société postulated that, if a language was advanced, it would have grammars and dictionaries which should be brought back. Otherwise it would be good to try to collect two kinds of vocabularies, one including names of sensate objects and of abstract but usual ideas; the other containing the different parts of discourse. It would also be necessary to sketch a grammar, first describing the three fundamental tenses of the verb, then the case variations of the substantive, etc. (I:1:xij, 1841).

The third item of investigation was "De la vie individuelle et de famille" (individual and family life). This was to become the "life cycle" section of all later anthropological monographs. The traveler was to record observations on the rituals pertaining to birth, education, puberty "rites de passage," marriage, and death. Nutrition, clothing habits, health problems and remedies, occupation by sex, and longevity were other empirical data the traveler should collect (I:1:xij, 1841).

The fourth item on the questionnaire was "De la vie sociale" (social life) (I:1:ix, 1841) divided into ten paragraphs. The traveler should first take notes and draw the different buildings and public works. Then he should pay attention to agricultural techniques, food and medicinal plants, and also to husbandry methods. Third, he ought to describe clothing and ways to manufacture it. Fourth, cloth dying techniques ought to be observed, and fifth, wood and metal-working skills ought to be noted. Sixth, note should be taken of different professions and liberal arts, as well as of the people's degree of advancement in the Arts and Sciences. Education constituted the object of investigation of the seventh paragraph, and institutions of public welfare (hospitals, libraries, etc.), of the eighth. Law and the legal apparatus should be observed and described, and the ninth paragraph focused on property. The questions dealing with property included the most common type, rules of inheritance, and the ways to regulate disputes relating to its ownership and transmittal. Are those who commit crimes against people or property punished? How were taxes collected? This paragraph strongly reflects the ethnocentric assumption that law should be primarily concerned with property. The tenth paragraph (I:1:xj, 1841) dealt with social relations within the group, whether the people had any recreations such as fishing and hunting, and population data.

The fifth item, "Of the Relationships of Natives with Foreign Populations," was particularly relevant to the colonial enterprise. All the knowledge collected with the help of this questionnaire could no doubt be used for better handling of often difficult colonial situations, but of all of the information, military and

trade practices were the most directly useful. Weapons should be drawn, and ways to recruit armies and military organization described along with trading methods and trade relations.

Item six (I:l:xiij, 1841) brought religion into the investigation: God or gods? future life? rewards and punishments? other religious dogmas? cult forms, religious practice and rituals? extent of faith? organization of clergy or priesthood? moral influence of religion on people? influence of superstitions?

Item seven (I:l:xiv, 1841) was more purely scientific: it dealt with the climate in great detail, as well as with the geology and geography of the people's physical environment. Again here, one can only suspect that motives other than purely scientific ones prompted such questions as: "What kind of soils are there and are they fertile?"

The last item on the questionnaire (I:l:xiv, 1841) was about historical traditions, political revolutions and antiquities. The traveler should question the people as to their origin and relationships with other people, and what scientific, literary or political revolutions they had experienced. Other questions included, what sources were available to find out about historical traditions, and were those historical documents or art? In the first case, it would be good to know whether they were poems or historical works and to give examples. In the second case, drawings and descriptions of edifices, coins and anything useful in finding out about history might be appropriate. Did the people have any mythological traditions, cosmology, and how far back could they establish a chronology?

The writers of the questionnaire clearly intended to measure other cultures against the standards of the most advanced one, namely their own, and of its predecessors, the ancient Greeks and Romans. Those cultures were to be arranged on a hierarchical scale, the highest ones being those closest to Western Europe in physical type, language, life cycle customs, social life, foreign policy, religion, relation to environment, and historical traditions.

As we have seen in more than one place, colonial interests seem to crop up behind the questions, about trade, physical environment, military organization and religion. Most of the information thus collected may have been of purely scientific interest to the Société, but some of its members were colonial administrators and could put such information to precious use. Yet nowhere in the Mémoires is there any admission of such a goal by the Société.

Study of the two volumes of the Mémoires shows that early nineteenth century social scientists, whether well-intentioned or not, shared underlying assumptions about the human genus. Some were more intellectually exacting than others, and the degree to which they mixed culturally-biased moral judgments and scientific observations varied. While some were politically liberal and more humanitarian

than others, all thought in the biologically deterministic terms which we have inherited. Not only did they take it for granted that Western Europeans were culturally more advanced than the rest of the world, but within Western Europe itself the upper classes were at the apex of cultural evolution. The members of the Société were also members of the upper classes or at least shared their values. It should come as no surprise that most might have been concerned, more or less consciously, with a scientific justification of the status quo.

That would explain their obsession with the study of the moral and physical characteristics of the different races of the world. Not only would they show that the non-Western world was divided into races whose characteristics could be evaluated against those of Europe but also, within the latter, the scientists could recognize several types. The North and South were made up of distinct races, as were the social classes. Perhaps a contemporary European from the lower classes could appreciate how much these nineteenth century "scientific findings" have influenced present day popular thinking. He or she might notice a resemblance between the way he/she was treated by the upper classes and the manner in which a black person is sometimes treated by whites in the United States.

When studying early nineteenth century people's thinking, one must show the same sort of relativistic objective understanding as when studying other contemporary cultures. Yet scientific objectivity must not prevent one from revealing in them the beginnings of much of the anti-humanitarian thinking which still plagues us. Even today, science possesses only limited knowledge of the relationships between brain wave patterns, genetic matter, hormones and socio-cultural behavior. The fact that we are no closer to any understanding of how these factors are linked than were pre-Darwinian social scientists should make us more humble. However, the emergence of sociobiology--particularly the work of Edward Wilson (1975)--shows us that this is not the case, and that our thinking on these matters is essentially as unscientific and biased as that of the nineteenth century. At that time, there were already people who could sense the injustice of biological deterministic theories without being able to discredit them permanently. This urgent task is left for us to accomplish.

NOTES

[1]Special thanks to John Rowe, Rosemary Zumwalt, David H. French, Jena Camp, Jordan Simmons, Raymond Demallie and Suzanne Bowler for friendly encouragement, comments, and help with the writing.

[2]Information concerning the bulletin can be found in the National Union Catalog, Pre-1956 Imprints, V. 554. This bulletin was unavailable to the author at the time this paper was written: it will be the object of future research.

[3]Stocking, in his otherwise exceedingly good account of the development of French anthropology, seems to have overlooked the Société Ethnologique in favor of the other two (see p. 40).

[4]All titles and citations have been translated from the French by the author for purposes of better communication, except of course when originally in English.

[5]The Nouvelle Biographie Générale was abbreviated as NBG for purposes of convenience in the citations. Likewise, the Dictionary of National Biography was abbreviated as NDB, and the Dictionary of American Biography as DAB.

[6]The Dictionary of American Biography's account of du Ponceau's youth is less detailed than the Nouvelle Biographie's, but the account of his life in the United States seems more detailed and accurate, as is to be expected.

[7]Grammatical System of Some of the Languages of the Indian Nations of North America, by du Ponceau, 1838.

[8]Coup d'Oeil sur l'histoire du Basin de la Plata avant la découverte, by de Moussy, 1865.

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