

RALEIGH LECTURE ON HISTORY

THE DISCOVERY OF AMERICA
AND THE DISCOVERY OF MAN

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TWO things', wrote Michelet in a famous passage, 'belong to this age [the sixteenth century] more than to all its predecessors: the discovery of the world, the discovery of man.'¹ By 'the discovery of man' Michelet meant European man's discovery of himself as both a physical organism and a moral being, whose mysteries were now explored to their innermost depths. But the simultaneous discovery of the world also represented a discovery of man—the European discovery of non-European man, a creature whose strange, varied, and frequently repulsive habits proved to be a source of consuming curiosity.

During the course of the sixteenth century sufficient new information became available about the distant, and sometimes hitherto unknown, peoples of the world to furnish the European reader with a rich and varied picture of the races of mankind. By 1556, for instance, the Spanish translator of that standard repository of ethnographical information, Boemus's *Manners, Laws and Customs of All Nations*, was able to expand the original text with two hundred informative pages on the inhabitants of the New World of America.² Although some of the most valuable material never found its way into print or general circulation, the sheer quantity of ethnographical information at the disposal of the sixteenth-century European reading public remains very impressive. The printing-press and the long-distance sailing-ship had between them brought the world to Europe's doorstep.

But it is one thing to arrive on the doorstep and another to pass through the door. How far was the discovery of man, in Michelet's sense of the phrase, really affected by the discovery of non-European man? The experiences of Spanish officials and missionaries among the American Indians offered a novel

¹ Jules Michelet, *Histoire de France*, vol. vii (Paris 1855), pp. ii–iii.

² Francisco Tamara, *El Libro de las Costumbres de todas las Gentes del Mundo y de las Indias* (Antwerp, 1556).

source of first-hand information on man's capabilities and behaviour. But while that remarkable treatise on human psychology and aptitudes, the *Examination of Men's Wits* by the Spanish doctor Juan Huarte (1575),¹ reveals a profound acquaintance with the classical world of Hippocrates and Galen, it completely ignores the findings of his compatriots in the New World of America—findings which were by no means irrelevant to his interests. This seems to have been sadly typical. The evidence of sixteenth-century treatises on manners and morals suggests that, with the occasional distinguished exception like Montaigne, most authors felt that the Christian and classical traditions were sufficient to enable them to explore the mysteries of human behaviour without any need for recourse to the new worlds overseas. No doubt the disturbing figure of Caliban would soon be discovered on his enchanted island; but even Caliban's ancestry can be traced back beyond the Caribbean to the legendary wild man of medieval Europe.²

It seems that most sixteenth-century Europeans could manage well enough on their voyages of self-discovery without having to land for fresh provisions on exotic shores. But circumstance and opportunity drove a certain number of them to apply their minds to the study of strange men in alien environments; and when they did this, they found themselves confronted with fundamental questions about the nature of man himself. Their attempts to answer these questions may, at least in the sixteenth century, have had little or no resonance in their European homelands.³ But they did something, if only in restricted circles, to widen the boundaries of perception. And if the answers were often inadequate and ill-informed, the questions, once posed, remained creatively disturbing. What were the essential characteristics of humanity? What constituted a civilized man, as distinct from a barbarian? In what respects were certain peoples of the world deficient, and how best could their deficiencies be remedied?

European travellers to Asia, Africa, and America often returned with valuable information about distant lands. But the travellers and explorers, although they saw much and heard

¹ Juan Huarte de San Juan, *Examen de Ingenios para las Ciencias*, ed. Rodrigo Sanz (2 vols., Madrid, 1930).

² See Richard Bernheimer, *Wild Men in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass., 1952).

³ For a discussion of this point, see J. H. Elliott, *The Old World and the New, 1492-1650* (Cambridge, 1970), chs. 1 and 2.

more, were essentially birds of passage. They were in too great a hurry, and too concerned with the portrayal of the curious and the exotic, to formulate the crucial questions or undertake the systematic inquiries that would provide material towards an answer. It is for this reason that Spain's conquest and settlement of America play a unique part in the process of Europe's discovery of mankind. Millions of non-European peoples, whose very existence was unknown a generation earlier, were now exposed to a sustained missionary effort and to the experience of permanent European rule. As a result, observation based on casual contact could be replaced by observation based on intimate acquaintance over a prolonged period of time. The new-style colonial relationship represented by the Spanish domination of central and southern America created a new kind of opportunity for systematic ethnographical study.

The opportunity, as might have been expected, was only very partially seized. Yet enough information was collected, for one purpose or another, to create an impressive corpus of ethnographic source-material on the beliefs and customs of the peoples of the Spanish New World in the pre-conquest and immediate post-conquest periods. Enthusiastic lay amateurs like Juan de Betanzos studied native history and antiquities, while missionaries incorporated descriptions of native rites and superstitions into their narratives of the spiritual conquest of the Indies. Memoranda on Indian affairs were prepared by members of the religious orders for presentation to the Council of the Indies or consideration by ecclesiastical councils. Crown officials drew up innumerable reports—detailed accounts of local visitations, careful replies to the famous royal questionnaire of 1577, and elaborate treatises on the Indian problem, like those produced in the middle of the sixteenth century by Alonso de Zorita in New Spain and Juan de Matienzo in Peru. On top of all this, there were the massive investigations into Indian history and civilization undertaken by those two great friars, the Dominican Diego Durán and the Franciscan Bernardino de Sahagún, and three supremely ambitious 'natural and moral' histories of the Indies by Fernández de Oviedo, Bartolomé de las Casas, and José de Acosta respectively.

These sixteenth-century observers of the Indian societies of America did not, on the whole, approach their work in a spirit of scientific detachment. Instead, they began with a clear conviction of the superiority of their own Christian civilization, and their inquiries were generally guided by considerations of

utility. Crown officials needed precise information on Indian land tenure and inheritance patterns if they were to dispense justice according to custom, which was the essence of good government to sixteenth-century Europeans. Missionaries needed precise information on pagan superstitions if they were to cast down the idolaters. 'To preach against those things,' wrote Sahagún, 'and even to know if they exist, it is necessary to know how they used them in the time of their idolatry.'¹

As against these directed inquiries, there are relatively few which were primarily inspired, as was Oviedo's *History of the Indies*, by sheer intellectual curiosity. But the intellectual calibre of some of the inquirers was so high as to enable them to produce studies of indigenous society and institutions which triumphantly transcend the limitations of scope and purpose inherent in their origins. This is especially true of Sahagún's *General History of the Things of New Spain*, which represents an attempt, unique in the sixteenth century for its range and penetration, to provide a comprehensive linguistic and ethnographic survey of Aztec society by means of carefully controlled investigations making use of native informants.²

While the sophistication of Sahagún's technique places him in a class of his own, his material is similar in kind to that of his contemporaries. Between them, Spanish observers touched on all the major aspects of Amerindian life. Birth, marriage, and death; domestic life and customs; inheritance systems and methods of education; clothes, hygiene, and medicine; tributary systems and economic organization; government and warfare; popular beliefs, practices, and superstitions—all of these receive some attention, and many are studied in detail. When this information is more systematically exploited, it should become possible for historians and anthropologists to explore in considerable depth the Central American and Andean civilizations of the immediate pre-conquest period and the impact upon them of European rule.³

¹ Fr. Bernardino de Sahagún, *Historia General de las Cosas de Nueva España*, ed. Angel María Garibay K. (4 vols., Mexico, 1969), i. 27.

² For Sahagún's method see his own account in the *Historia General* i. 105-8. Also Luis Nicolau D'Oliver, *Historiadores de América. Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, 1499-1590* (Mexico, 1952).

³ Pioneering work along these lines is being done by Professor John V. Murra of Cornell University and his colleagues. See in particular his edition of the *Visita de la Provincia de León de Huánuco en 1562* by Iñigo Ortiz Zúñiga (Huánuco, 1967).

This does not, however, exhaust the possibilities of sixteenth-century investigations. For if they open a window on to non-European societies with few or no records of their own, they also allow us to observe the observers—to glimpse something of their underlying assumptions and attitudes as they embarked on their discovery of non-European man. These sixteenth-century Spaniards were faced with the challenging test of confrontation with alien societies and alien systems of belief. It is not surprising if under this test they reveal something of themselves, even as the twentieth-century anthropologist may also reveal more of himself and his own society to future generations than he is ever liable to suspect. In setting up, however unconsciously, an objective reality against which to measure an alien society, the investigator offers his own hostages to fortune. For the sixteenth-century European, the great line of division lay between the Christian and the pagan. For his twentieth-century successor, the product of a scientific civilization, it lies between the 'irrational' and the 'rational'.¹

The sixteenth-century Spaniard who tells us something of the Indian cannot fail in the process to tell us something of his own conception of man. But difficult questions of method at once present themselves. Spanish commentators on the Indians were sharply differentiated by background and profession. Many, but not all, of them—Oviedo and Durán are both distinguished exceptions—had received a university education. Some were religious, and some secular; some trained in the law and others in theology. Among the religious themselves, there were significant disagreements between religious and secular clergy, and between members of the different orders. Interest and partisanship, too, led to deep-seated differences. Those who spoke for the settlers' lobby were likely to depict the Indian in a very different light from those who were primarily interested in the salvation of his soul. Moreover, any conception of man with which the Spaniards arrived in the Indies was itself liable to be modified in one direction or another by the sheer fact of prolonged contact with their alien inhabitants. Is it permissible, then, to assume the existence among Spaniards of a commonly agreed and relatively unchanging conception of man?

¹ J. D. Y. Peel, 'Understanding alien belief-systems', *The British Journal of Sociology* xx (1969), 69–84, provides a suggestive study of some of these questions, as also does Peter Winch, 'Understanding a primitive society', *Religion and Understanding*, ed. D. Z. Phillips (Oxford, 1967).

For all their differences, however, they were the products of a society united by certain strongly defined attitudes—Christian in its values, legalistic in its outlook, corporate and hierarchical in its organization. On arrival in the Indies they were all confronted, whether consciously or not, with the same fundamental problem—that of the unity and diversity of the human race. How far were the Indians the same kind of beings as themselves? If they differed, how was their diversity to be explained; and indeed how far could it be tolerated among peoples subject to their rule? For all the varieties of response to this problem, it still remains possible to detect certain assumptions, spoken or unspoken, which point to a common vocabulary among the conquerors. And although due allowance must be made for the strongly Aristotelian cast of much sixteenth-century Spanish thought, a large part of this common vocabulary would seem to have been shared by Christendom as a whole.

From the moment when Columbus reported that he had found ‘no human monstrosities’ among the Caribbean islanders,¹ there existed at least a presumption in favour of the humanity of the peoples of the Indies. The presumption acquired the status of dogmatic certainty when Paul III’s bull of 1537 described the Indians as ‘true men . . . capable not only of understanding the Catholic faith, but also, according to our information, desirous of receiving it’.² Spiritually, then, as well as biologically, the Indians were officially accepted by Christendom as descendants of Adam, and consequently as members of the family of man.

This represented a decisive victory for the party of humanity, and it was consolidated by the scholastic arguments of Vitoria and others—arguments tacitly accepted by the Spanish Crown in its dealings with the Indians—that pre-conquest Indian society was a valid society in spite of its ignorance of Christianity. By living in polities, and regulating their lives in accordance with fixed rules and regulations—however defective these may have been from a Christian standpoint—large numbers of American Indians had satisfied the Aristotelian criteria for acceptance as political and social beings.³ Although there

¹ Letter on first voyage in *The Journal of Christopher Columbus*, trans. Cecil Jane, revised L. A. Vigneras (London, 1960), 200.

² See Lewis Hanke, ‘Pope Paul III and the American Indians’, *Harvard Theological Review* xxx (1937), 65–102.

³ Francisco de Vitoria, *Relectio de Indis*, eds. L. Pereña and J. M. Pérez

remained the difficult problem of those tribes so savage and nomadic that they appeared to live outside society,¹ the application of Aristotelian arguments to the peoples of America conferred proper credentials on uncounted millions. Socially, as well as biologically and spiritually, they had established their claim to be regarded as men.

In a moving passage in the prologue to his *History of the Things of New Spain*, Sahagún writes: 'it is very certain that these people are all our brethren, proceeding like us from the stock of Adam. They are our fellow creatures, whom we are obliged to love as ourselves, *quid quid sit*.' Had they not, he argued, shown their aptitude for the mechanical and liberal arts? Had they not displayed in warfare their capacity to support hunger and thirst, cold and lack of sleep? 'Then they are no less capable of learning our Christianity.'²

But the very fact that such arguments were still felt to be necessary in the 1570s suggests the depth of disagreement over the nature of the Indians. Although the words 'beast' and 'bestial' figured prominently in the debate, the critical point at issue was not the humanity of the Indians *per se*, but the exact degree of humanity with which they could be credited.³ Could the Indians really be regarded as men, in the full sense of the word as understood by sixteenth-century Europeans, or were they in some, or indeed in all, respects defective human beings—sub-men perhaps, requiring special treatment appropriate to their status?

Various criteria could be used to determine this point. It is significant that physical characteristics, which were to assume such prominence in nineteenth-century discussions on the non-European races of the world, were not among the criteria most commonly applied. It was not until Europeans became obsessed with the idea of a graded, and then of an evolutionary, scale of being, that physical traits moved to the forefront of the

Preudes (Madrid, 1967), 29–30. For the development of scholastic arguments see especially Joseph Höffner, *Christentum und Menschenwürde. Das Anliegen der Spanischen Kolonialethik im Goldenen Zeitalter* (Trier, 1947).

¹ Bartolomé de Las Casas attempts to deal with this problem in book iii, ch. 47 of his *Apologética Historia Sumaria*.

² *Historia General*, i. 31.

³ For critical discussions of the Indian 'bestiality' thesis, see Edmundo O'Gorman, 'Sobre la naturaleza bestial del indio americano', *Filosofía y Letras* i (1941), 141–56 and 305–15, and Lino Gómez Canedo, 'Hombres o bestias?' *Estudios de Historia Novohispana* i (1966), 29–51.

argument.¹ Colour in particular was treated, at least in so far as the Indians were concerned, in largely neutral terms. This was partly because the colour of the Indians, which was described by the cosmographer of the Indies, Juan López de Velasco, as resembling cooked quince,² lacked the historical and emotional overtones which were beginning to be associated with the more familiar black. It was difficult, too, to attach guilt to the non-white as long as colour was primarily attributed to long exposure to the sun.³

Yet for Europeans nurtured in the Aristotelian and Hippocratic traditions, colour took its place alongside other physical characteristics as one among many clues to the natural condition of a man. Physical appearance testified to the disposition of the soul; but the testimony could, it seemed, be variously interpreted. For Las Casas, as might have been expected, the Indians had fine complexions and well-proportioned bodies—fitting receptacles for noble souls.⁴ But those who regarded the Indians as naturally inferior beings had no difficulty in turning the same evidence to provide support for their views. The Spanish jurist Juan de Matienzo, in his *Government of Peru* of 1567, pronounced all Indians to be ‘pusillanimous and timid’, and ascribed these defects to their special brand of melancholic humour. ‘Men of this type or complexion are, according to Aristotle, very fearful, weak and stupid. . . . It is clear that this is their complexion from the colour of their faces, which is the same in all of them. . . .’ Both the appearance and the behaviour of the Indians led Matienzo to an irresistible conclusion: that they were ‘naturally born and brought up to serve. And it can be known that they were born for this because, as Aristotle says,

¹ For the change in European attitudes in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century see Margaret T. Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia, 1964), ch. x, and especially pp. 417–18.

² *Geografía y Descripción Universal de las Indias* (1571–4; ed. Madrid, 1894), p. 27.

³ Francisco López de Gómara, however, was already arguing in 1552 that the colour of the Indians was the result of *naturaleza* and not exposure (*Primera Parte de la Historia General de las Indias*, Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, vol. xxii, Madrid, 1825, p. 289). The Jesuit Alonso de Sandoval, writing in 1627, considers blackness an ‘intrinsic quality’ (*De Instauranda Aethiopia Salute*, ed. Bogotá, 1956, p. 26). The explanation of colour in Iberian literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries deserves closer and more documented study than it has so far received.

⁴ *Apologética Historia Sumaria*, ed. Edmundo O’Gorman (Mexico, 1967), i, 207.

such types were created by nature with strong bodies and were given less intelligence, while free men have less physical strength and more intelligence. So it can be seen that the Indians are physically very strong—much stronger than the Spaniards—and can bear more than them, for they carry burdens on their backs of twenty-five to fifty pounds and walk along beneath them without difficulty.’ ‘The stronger they are’, he concluded, ‘the less intelligence they have.’¹

Matienzo was no arm-chair theorist like Sepúlveda, condemning Indians to natural servitude from a well-stocked library thousands of miles away. On the contrary, he was a highly intelligent royal official (unfortunately we have no information as to his physique), with six years of experience in the viceroyalty of Peru. His remarks suggest how profoundly an Aristotelian training—acquired in this instance in the university of Valladolid—could colour Spanish attitudes towards the indigenous population of the Indies. Just as Aristotle described some of the races of distant barbarians as irrational by nature and living only by their senses like the beasts,² so too for Matienzo the Indians were ‘animals who do not even feel reason, but are ruled by their passions’.

Matienzo’s prime evidence for this sweeping assertion was that the Indians ate and drank without thought for the morrow.³ It is clear that we are faced here with a failure both of sympathy and understanding—sympathy for the plight of a people numbed by the shock of European conquest, and understanding of the system of social organization and food provisioning to which the Andean Indians were accustomed. At the same time, it must be remembered that Matienzo was writing to a brief. In the difficult political climate of the 1560s, Crown officials felt it incumbent upon them to justify the substitution of Spanish rule for that of the Incas.⁴ Aristotle’s theory of natural servitude, based on the idea of innate inferiority and incapacity, provided this justification. Working from a *parti pris*, it was not hard to find the evidence to fit.

¹ *Gobierno del Perú*, ed. Guillermo Lohmann Villena (Paris-Lima, 1967), 16–17.

² *Nicomachean Ethics* vii, 1149^a9 ff. See Arthur O. Lovejoy, *A Documentary History of Primitivism and Related Ideas*, vol. i (Baltimore, 1935), 179.

³ *Gobierno del Perú*, 17–18.

⁴ For the background to Matienzo’s treatise, see the valuable introduction by Lohmann Villena (separately printed in his *Juan de Matienzo*, Seville, 1966).

In the context of Spanish attitudes to man, however, the exact motivation is less important than the underlying assumptions, which are often, as with Matienzo, almost casually betrayed. Matienzo's assumptions about Indian waywardness were based, as was only natural, on expectations which were derived from European patterns of behaviour. As Las Casas clearly saw, these false expectations could only be dispelled by the acquisition of a proper understanding of Indian life and Indian psychology. This in turn demanded a greater willingness to learn Indian languages than his compatriots had so far displayed. 'From this failure has sprung an error that is by no means insignificant, and whose pernicious character will be realized on the day of the Last Judgment—the tendency to regard them as beasts.'¹

It would have been equally possible to argue that lack of knowledge had led to the depiction of Indians as paragons of pre-lapsarian innocence; but such assumptions—unlike those of bestiality—did not long survive a closer intimacy with the peoples of America. Increasing acquaintance with the Indian character, and bitter experience of spiritual backsliding among their native converts, produced a growing disillusionment even among those friars who were their most fervent partisans. This disillusionment, although explicable in terms of American conditions, may also reflect changing attitudes to man in Europe itself. As the optimistic view of human nature current in Renaissance and Erasmian Europe gave ground before a renewed emphasis on the innate sinfulness and depravity of man, so the character of the American Indians came to be more unfavourably assessed.

The change can be traced in the deliberations of the clergy of New Spain, as one generation of missionaries gave way to the next. In these deliberations one can follow that fateful progression—from enchantment to total disenchantment and thence to paternalism—which was to repeat itself so often in the history of European colonial enterprise. While a meeting of the clergy in Mexico in 1532 insisted on the spiritual and intellectual capacity of the Indians, they emerge twenty years later from the first Mexican Provincial Council of 1555 as intellectually feeble and inconstant creatures, distinguished by a natural inclination to vice.² This increasingly pessimistic consensus

¹ *Apologética Historia* i. 545.

² See José A. Llaguno, *La Personalidad Jurídica del Indio y el III Concilio Mexicano* (Mexico, 1963), pp. 13 and 35.

about the nature of the Indians had obvious implications for the way in which they should be treated. These were spelt out by Fray Pedro de Feria, bishop of Chiapa, in a memorandum submitted to the third Mexican Provincial Council of 1585. 'We must love and help the Indians as much as we can. But their base and imperfect character requires that they should be ruled, governed and guided to their appointed end by fear more than by love. . . . These people do not know how to judge the gravity of their sins other than by the rigour of the penalties with which they are punished.'¹

In the bishop's words we hear the echoes of the sixteenth-century schoolroom; and it was indeed as archetypal children that many of the Spanish religious, irrespective of their order, came to look upon the Indians.² But what did this imply? Huarte, in his *Examination of Men's Wits*, describes the child as 'no more than a brute animal', moved exclusively by anger and desire. Childhood, which lasted till the age of fourteen—to be followed by 'adolescence' from fourteen to twenty-five—was the period in which the rational spirit was submerged in a hot and humid temperament, which inhibited the child from making use of his understanding and free will. Yet if the child was close to the beast, he was also not too far removed from the angels. 'The virtues of childhood are many', wrote Huarte, 'and its vices few.' Children were amenable to discipline and easy to persuade. They were bland and tender, generous and simple.³

From a theological standpoint, the analogy with children was not perhaps entirely satisfactory. As one of its critics, the Augustinian Alonso de la Vera Cruz, pointed out in a course of lectures delivered in the University of Mexico in 1553, 'if they were incapable like children and simple-minded, it would follow that they could not sin; and so all their vices . . . would not any more be imputed to them than to brute animals. But they are held responsible, and rightly so. Therefore they have sufficient discernment to commit sin. . . .'⁴ But the analogy served its turn in suggesting that the Indians were something less than full men, while at the same time implying some hope

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

² Antonio de Egaña, 'La visión humanística del indio americano en los primeros Jesuitas peruanos, 1568-1576', *Analecta Gregoriana*, lxx (1954), 291-306.

³ *Examen de Ingenios*, pp. 76 and 90-1.

⁴ *The Writings of Alonso De La Vera Cruz*, trans. and ed. Ernest J. Burrus S.J., vol. ii (St. Louis, 1968), § 718.

for the future, in that the Indian mind, like a child's mind, was a *tabula rasa* on which any suitable doctrine could gradually be impressed.¹

But what doctrines needed to be impressed on these tender minds? Those of Christianity, clearly enough. But were the Indians not also deficient on other counts? Bishop Landa ends his description of Yucatán, written around 1560, by providing a conventional list of the benefits brought to the Indians by Spain—horses, domestic animals, iron, the mechanical arts, the use of money. 'Although', he concludes, 'the Indians managed to do without them, they live now that they have them incomparably more like men.'² The Indians, in fact, lacked some of the prerequisites of a civilized way of life as understood by the Spaniards, and in so far as they lacked these things they were something less than men.

The obvious answer for the partisans of the Indians when faced with the argument that the barbarian was defective as a human being by virtue of his barbarism, was to widen the definition of barbarism as a concept, while limiting its applicability to the peoples of America. This was the approach adopted by Las Casas, who distinguished four different contemporary uses of the word 'barbarian'. Of these only one—a man so lacking in reason as to behave like a beast—was accounted for by essence rather than by accident, and it was not applicable to the Amerindian.³ But most of those who had dealings with the Indians remained unconvinced by such arguments. No observer could fail to be impressed by the glaring cultural disparities to be found among the numerous different peoples of the American continent; and most Spaniards believed that even the Indians with the highest standards of civility were in some respects inadequate. They might indeed have shown their capacity for a civil life in conformity with the most rigorous Aristotelian criteria; but even if this proved, as it did to Alonso

¹ Matienzo, *Gobierno del Perú*, p. 18, talks of 'printing' or 'impressing' (*imprimir*) doctrines upon them. Las Casas (*Apologética Historia*, ii. 262) uses the words *tablas rasas*. Vasco de Quiroga and Gerónimo de Mendieta both used the image of soft wax (see John Leddy Phelan, *The Millennial Kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World*, 2nd edn., Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1970, p. 150).

² Fray Diego de Landa, *Relación de las Cosas de Yucatán*, ed. Angel María Garibay K. (8th edn., Mexico, 1959), p. 138.

³ *Apologética Historia*, ii. 637–54. 'Barbarian' could also be used of non-Christians; of men who lived without laws or ordered polities; and of those who spoke strange languages and lacked the art of writing.

de la Vera Cruz, that they were neither simple-minded nor children, he found himself unable to deny that 'even the most outstanding among them if compared to our Spaniards are found to be deficient in many respects'.¹

In what, then, did these deficiencies lie? When Bishop Landa argued that the Indians lived, as a consequence of Spanish rule, 'incomparably more like men', it is clear that he equated 'man' with 'European man', and regarded any deviation from this norm as a diminution of manhood. Similarly, when even so sympathetic an observer as Sahagún concerned himself with the aptitude of the Indians for the study of the mechanical and liberal arts and theology,² it is clear that much of the argument turned on whether they possessed sufficient intellectual and rational capacity to lead of their own volition a style of life which approximated to the Christian and European model.

To live like a man meant, ideally, to live like a Spaniard. America was not the first place in which Spaniards had attempted to promote this ideal among their subject peoples. Within a few years of the conquest of Granada, Hernando de Talavera, the first archbishop of Granada, was telling the newly baptized Moors of the Albaicín that it was necessary for them to conform in all things to the practices of the Christians, 'in your dress and your shoes and your adornment, in eating and at your tables and in cooking meat as they cook it; in your manner of walking, in giving and receiving, and, more than anything, in your speech, forgetting in so far as you can the Arabic tongue'.³

The archbishop's words suggest how difficult it was, even had the desire existed, to separate the doctrinal requirements of a newly baptized Christian from the patterns of his social behaviour. Doctrine and behaviour were so closely associated in the minds of most Europeans that the friar who wrote of 'reducing those who lived like barbarians and brute animals to a Christian and human polity'⁴ would probably have been hard put to it to distinguish between the two. Marriage and funeral customs, education and dress—especially when it was

¹ *The Writings of Alonso de la Vera Cruz*, ii. § 742.

² See above, p. 107, n. 2.

³ Antonio Gallego y Burín and Alfonso Gámir Sandoval, *Los Moriscos del Reino de Granada* (Granada, 1968), Appendix iv, p. 163.

⁴ Padre Araya, *Segunda parte de la Historia de San Esteban*, quoted by Luis G. Alonso Getino, *El Maestro Fr. Francisco de Vitoria* (Madrid, 1930), p. 184.

a question of dress or undress—all came within the ambit of a Christian way of life.

There was, however, a difference of views on the question of language. To some Spaniards, the languages spoken by the Indians were a clear indication of their barbarism. In a memorandum drawn up for the ecclesiastical council of 1585 Dr. Ortiz de Hinojosa of the University of Mexico described some of the languages of New Spain as being 'so inaccessible and difficult that they appear to have been introduced not by men but by nature, as the illiterate noise of birds or brute animals, which cannot be written down with any kind of character, and can scarcely be pronounced for being so guttural that they stick in the throat.'¹ On the other hand, Europe, and Spain itself, was used to a diversity of tongues; and although knowledge of Castilian would enable the Indians of New Spain to acquire, in the words of a royal decree of 1550, 'our civilized way of life (*nuestra policía*) and good customs',² the principal deficiency of Indian languages seems to have been considered not so much their obscurity as the fact that they lacked a written alphabet.

Themselves the children of a civilization increasingly dependent on the written word, sixteenth-century Europeans naturally regarded the absence of it among the American Indians as a sign of barbarism. Did not the Venerable Bede, argued Las Casas, introduce letters into England so that his fellow-countrymen should no longer be regarded as barbarians?³ For Acosta, even the Chinese, who formed the highest of his three categories of barbarians, did not possess 'true writing and reading, since their words are not made up of letters but of little figures of innumerable things'. But he was deeply impressed by the pictographs of the Mexicans and the *quipus* of the Peruvians—two peoples which he placed in a second, intermediate, category of barbarian. 'If this is not ingenuity', he wrote, 'and if these men are beasts, judge who will. . . .'⁴

The correlation between civilization and possession of the alphabet was clearly taken for granted by sixteenth-century Europeans; and even the most zealous friends of the Indians,

¹ Llaguno, *La Personalidad Jurídica*, p. 200.

² Richard Konetzke, *Colección de Documentos para la Historia de la Formación Social de Hispano-América*, vol. i (Madrid, 1953), 272.

³ *Apologética Historia*, ii. 638.

⁴ Joseph de Acosta, *Historia Natural y Moral de las Indias*, ed. Edmundo O'Gorman (2nd edn., Mexico, 1962), pp. 288 and 292.

like Las Casas, were unable to conceal the existence of some deficiency on this score. But the lack of a written language was no more than one among the many points which made the Indians vulnerable in the eyes of those who doubted their capacity to conduct their lives in a suitable manner without the benefit of firm Spanish control.

Even the most prejudiced witnesses were prepared to concede that the Indians differed widely among themselves. In particular, some lived settled lives in towns and villages, while others were hunting and food-gathering nomads. Civilized man, for the sixteenth-century Spaniard, was essentially urban man; and it was for this reason that Las Casas, following in the steps of Aristotle, had found it necessary to devote so much space in his *Historia Apologética* to towns and urban life in pre-conquest America.¹ But even where the Indians met Aristotelian requirements by living in settlements, their way of life still left much to be desired in the eyes of those who doubted their rational capacity.

Writing in 1599, captain Vargas Machuca was ready to admit that those Indians who lived in more temperate climes were superior to those in the tropical lands. 'They are people who wear clothes, and have more civility (*policía*).' 'But all of them', he continued, 'are barbarous peoples, as is shown by their houses, dress, food and curious clothing, of which anyhow they wear very little except in the temperate regions. And even here they did not know what stockings and shoes were until, as a result of contact with us Spaniards, they were reduced to civility and put on clothes, and covered their bare bodies with shirt, doublet and hose, stockings and shoes, hats and cloaks.'² Matienzo, in Peru, had shown a similar preoccupation with dressing at least upper-class Indians in European clothes. Among other advantages, this would allow them to become 'more like men'.³ But he was unexpectedly tolerant of the Indian practice of wearing the hair long. 'Some people consider this bad. But I can find nothing wrong with it, except perhaps on the score of cleanliness.'⁴ His limited understanding of

¹ *Apologética Historia*, book iii.

² Bernardo de Vargas Machuca, *Milicia y Descripción de las Indias* (Madrid, 1599), f. 131^v.

³ *Gobierno del Perú*, p. 69 ('... porque comiencen a tener algún ser de hombres').

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 80. For a similar preoccupation in the British reaction to the North American Indian, see *The Complete Writings of Roger Williams*, vol. i (New York, 1963), p. 136, and n. 97.

Andean civilization was sufficient to make him realize that ordering an Indian to have his hair cut was equivalent to sentencing him to death.

The member of a civilized polity, then, as conceived by the sixteenth-century Spaniard, was a town-dweller who was dressed in doublet and hose, and wore his hair short. His house was not overrun with fleas and ticks. He ate his meals at a table and not on the ground. He did not indulge in unnatural vice, and if he committed adultery he was punished for it. His wife—who was his only wife and not one among several—did not carry her children on her back like a monkey, and he expected his son and not his nephew to succeed to his inheritance. He did not spend his time getting drunk; and he had a proper respect for property—his own and other people's.¹

The fact that so many of these desiderata were more honoured in the breach than the observance in Europe itself was irrelevant to the attempt to realize them in the New World of America. They fixed a standard by which Europeans could assess non-European man. Admittedly the standard was not adopted without a challenge. The strain of primitivism and the hankering for innocence in Renaissance thought created a continuing ambiguity in the European response to the customs of the unspoilt peoples of America.² But the ambiguity affected most deeply those who were farthest removed from the Indians. The officials faced with the task of incorporating their charges into the new-style Spanish polity had fewer doubts. They found their Indians intolerably idle, for reasons which to them were perfectly plain. Aristotle had taught them that it was attachment to private possessions which made a man work. 'So it is not surprising', argued Matienzo, 'that these poor Indians should be idle and take no trouble to work, because up to now they have had no private property, but everything in common.' His solution was to offer them their own plots of land, and wages for their labour, so that they would begin to purchase Spanish goods. This, he believed, would gradually transform them into civilized men.³ The same view was held by another Spanish official in Peru, Hernando de Santillán,

¹ For all these and other adverse criticisms of Indian customs and behaviour see Vargas Machuca, *Milicia*, fs. 132^v-137^v.

² For an illuminating example of this ambiguity, as it affected one particular individual, see Elizabeth Armstrong, *Ronsard and the Age of Gold* (Cambridge, 1968).

³ *Gobierno del Perú*, p. 20 ('... entrar en ellos la pulicía').

for whom the Indians, although 'of little understanding and civility', were not as brutish as the Spaniards made them out to be. Wages would create in them the acquisitive instinct, and a consequent propensity to work.¹

The determination of these officials to bring the Indians into a wage economy, which they saw as an essential constituent of a civilized polity, suggests how far European civilization, even in its Hispanic version, had travelled by the later sixteenth century towards the modern western view of economic man. This view remained obnoxious to those who, like Las Casas, clung to the ideal of apostolic poverty. It was only, he argued, because Europeans in their greed were obsessed with the acquisition of riches, that they described the Indians as idle, whereas in fact their land was so abundant as to allow a minimum of labour, and they could devote the remainder of their time to hunting and crafts and *fiestas*.² But with a few exceptions³ the ceremonial and ritualistic character of labour in Amerindian society was too alien to be understood by Spaniards who themselves, however inadequately, had by now entered the world of wages and the clock.

While certain qualities elicited respect, and even admiration—the bravery and independence of the Araucanian Indians of Chile,⁴ for instance, or the remarkable aptitude of many of the Mexican and some of the Peruvian Indians for European arts and crafts⁵—the Indian, measured by the yardstick of sixteenth-century European man, was clearly a failure. This was partly because the yardstick itself derived from the European situation and was totally inadequate for assessing the non-European races of the world; and partly, too, because the Indian, demoralized and psychologically crippled by the experience of conquest and colonization, conformed all too well to the low expectations of a post-Renaissance generation deeply persuaded of the depravity of man. If the Indian was all too often as he was depicted—'vicious, lazy, idle,

¹ 'Relación del Origen . . . y Gobierno de los Incas', in *Crónicas Peruanas de Interés Indígena*, ed. Francisco Esteve Barba (Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, vol. ccix, Madrid, 1968), p. 140.

² *Historia de las Indias*, ed. Agustín Millares Carlo, vol. ii (Mexico, 1951), 463-4.

³ Notably Alonso de Zorita, *The Lords of New Spain*, trans. Benjamin Keen (London, 1965), pp. 202-4.

⁴ e.g. Acosta, *Historia Natural y Moral*, p. 131.

⁵ Cf. Matienzo, *Gobierno del Perú*, p. 18, and Bernardo Vargas Machuca, *Refutación de Las Casas* (ed. Paris, 1913), p. 229.

melancholic, cowardly, base, evil-intentioned, mendacious, ungrateful, with little memory and no constancy, idolatrous, and given to wicked and abominable sins', to quote the description of the unfortunate inhabitants of Hispaniola by the Spanish translator of Boemus, Francisco Tamara,¹—this may largely have been because the Europeans had made him so.

Faced with this unsatisfactory human being, the instinctive reaction of the Spaniard was to thank God, as Tamara thanked Him, for 'making us Christians and not heathen; civilized and not barbarians; Spaniards and not Moors or Turks, dirty idolaters'.² The only way to break this crust of complacency was to introduce a historical dimension—to look at the Indian not simply as he was now, but also as he had been in the past.

This was the great achievement of men like Durán, Las Casas, Sahagún, and Acosta. By a patient process of historical reconstruction, worthy of men who had read the historians of classical antiquity, they were able to recapture the lineaments of indigenous civilizations which had already vanished beyond recall. Although they found in this process of reconstruction much that was repellent to them as Europeans and Christians, they also discovered much that they could genuinely admire. They were impressed in particular by the achievements of the higher civilizations of pre-conquest America in government, education, and public works. There were, as Sahagún wrote, 'many notable things in the government of these pagans'³—things which a sixteenth-century European could appreciate and to some extent understand.

Certain contradictions are to be found in Spanish reactions to the governmental systems of the Incas and Aztecs which reflect the contradictions in sixteenth-century Europe itself. They were admired for their power and efficiency, as also for their provision for the well-being of their subjects, and for their capacity to mobilize them for great public works.⁴ Yet their power was at the same time equated with tyranny, which, as Acosta argued, represented an inherent characteristic of barbarism. 'The nearer men are to reason, the more humane

¹ *El Libro de las Costumbres*, p. 253.

² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³ *Historia General* ii. 282.

⁴ Las Casas, as might be expected, makes the most of these achievements of the pre-Columbian civilizations, and is especially enthusiastic about the solicitude of the Incas for widows, orphans, and the poor (see the *Apologética Historia* ii. 598 and 626–7).

and less arrogant is their government. . . . But among barbarians everything is the reverse, because their government is tyrannical and they treat their subjects like beasts. . . .'¹ The logic of this argument would seem to be that the highest admiration is reserved for those tribes which refused to tolerate kings and absolute rulers, and lived in what he described as *behetrias*—the old Castilian areas of jurisdiction by freely elected lords—electing their captains and chiefs for temporary emergencies. But in practice Acosta is soon affirming that the best government in the New World was the monarchical government of Montezuma and the Incas, 'although these were in considerable part tyrannical'.²

Acosta's mental acrobatics vividly illustrate the conflict in sixteenth-century European society between the competing claims of liberty and order; and it is not surprising to find that it is for order that a late sixteenth-century European finally opts. Yet the very existence of this conflict in European thought had a bearing on assessments of pre-Columbian state organization, which tended to fall short of unqualified enthusiasm. As soon as discussion moved, however, from the state to the family the qualifications could be safely dropped. Las Casas, Sahagún, and Acosta all discussed in great detail, and with undisguised admiration, the strict Aztec system for the training of children, and the deferential nature of the child's relationship to his parents. 'Nothing has impressed me more', wrote Acosta, 'or seemed to me more worthy of praise and remembrance, than the care and order shown by the Mexicans in the upbringing of their children. For realizing that the future hopes of a republic lie in the training and education of children and young people (a subject discussed at length by Plato in his *Laws*), they set out to turn away their children from indulgence and liberty, which are the two plagues of childhood, and to occupy them in useful and honest exercises.'³ Is it possible that Acosta and his fellow-observers glimpsed in the Aztec educational system a disciplined relationship which they felt to be breaking down in European homes?⁴

The introduction by men like Sahagún and Acosta of a historical approach into their study of non-European man,

¹ *Historia Natural y Moral*, p. 293.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 304–5.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 315.

⁴ Las Casas at least is not slow to point a moral for European parents, *Apologética Historia* ii. 421.

did much to reinforce in their own minds the case for attributing to the Andean and Central Mexican Indians a high degree of rationality. But there was always liable to come a moment when history faltered. It could be used, as Las Casas used it, to draw elaborate parallels between the American Indians and the peoples of Europe before the arrival of Christianity; but certain practices only became explicable to these sixteenth-century inquirers when the debate was transferred from the realm of history to that of theology. Even in the great work of Sahagún, which is perhaps as 'objective' as any sixteenth-century work of ethnographical inquiry could hope to be, there stands in the background a sinister shadow—that of Satan himself.

The devil stalked the America of the sixteenth century as surely as he stalked the continent of Europe, and the results of his machinations were everywhere to be seen. It was well known that, as Vargas Machuca said, 'the malice of the devil customarily attempts to deprive men of their reason, and turn them into beasts'.¹ From drunkenness to cannibalism the story was the same. Drunkenness, for Las Casas, was 'a defect of all the heathen thanks to the industry of the devil'.² The 'bestial and diabolical practice' of infant sacrifice among the Aztecs was blamed by Sahagún not on the parents, but on the 'most cruel hatred of our ancient enemy Satan, who with the most malign cunning persuaded them to engage in such infernal acts'.³ In confronting the more puzzling features of alien societies, a sixteenth-century Europe obsessed with the cosmic conflict between God and the devil found the answers to its puzzlement in the *diabolus ex machina*.

In some respects this European obsession with the powers of darkness provided a further incentive to inquiry. Without it, Sahagún and his colleagues would never have probed so

¹ *Refutación de Las Casas*, pp. 170–1.

² *Apologética Historia* i. 183. Drunkenness among the Indians was one of the problems which most preoccupied the missionaries and officials, and it constituted, in the eyes of their detractors, one of the clearest indications of their natural inferiority. The question was, however, sympathetically and intelligently discussed by Alonso de Zorita (*The Lords of New Spain*, pp. 132–3), who saw that it might well be a post-conquest phenomenon, brought about by the new circumstances of Spanish rule. For brief modern discussions see, for Mexico, Charles Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule* (Stanford, 1964), p. 150, and, for Peru, Fernando de Armas Medina, *Cristianización del Perú* (Seville, 1953), pp. 577–81.

³ *Historia General* i. 142.

deeply into the complexities of the Aztec calendar. 'This artifice of counting', wrote Sahagún in the prologue to his fourth book, devoted to Aztec feast-days and prophecies, 'is either an art of sorcery or a compact and fabrication of the devil, and it must with all diligence be uprooted.'¹ Yet at the same time Europe's preoccupation with the devil represented an obstacle to the deeper understanding of indigenous societies. It was hardly necessary to probe much further into Indian belief-systems or social behaviour for explanations of cannibalism and human sacrifice when such horrible rites were known to be inherent in the condition of paganism itself. The heathen, as Acosta pointed out, were by virtue of their paganism slaves to the prince of darkness, and prone, in consequence, to every form of evil.²

Paradoxically, however, the diabolical explanation of repugnant rituals helped to ease the task of those who saw the Indians as rational human beings. If the responsibility for bestial acts could be attributed to the devil, the Indian could be presented as a man who was deluded rather than deficient. Inevitably, then, as the light of Christianity dispelled the darkness, the delusions would vanish and these benighted heathen would recover true soundness of mind.

Behind this argument lay a critical assumption: that cultural diversity—the deviation from the norm which the inhabitants of Christendom had furnished for themselves—could be explained by the process of degeneration which afflicted the descendants of Adam in their wanderings through the earth.³ If this was so, the coming of the Spaniards with the Christian gospel could help to redress the baneful consequences of time and disobedience. Spain's consequent duty towards these unfortunate peoples was nowhere better described than by Acosta towards the end of the sixteenth century: 'All those who are scarcely men, or only half men, must be taught how to become men, and be instructed as if they were children.'⁴

A policy of civilization along Hispanic lines had always had its critics among those whose prime concern was the preaching

¹ *Ibid.* i. 315.

² *Historia Natural y Moral*, p. 216. The devil in America hardly receives his due in Rafael Heliodoro Valle, 'El Diablo en Mesoamérica', *Cuadernos Americanos* año xii, no. 2 (1953), pp. 194–208.

³ For sixteenth- and seventeenth-century explanations of cultural diversity, see Hodgen, *Early Anthropology*, especially chs. vi and vii.

⁴ *De Procuranda Indorum Salute*, ed. Francisco Mateos (Madrid, 1952), p. 48.

of the gospel. The friars, jealous of their own influence over their Indian charges, were naturally anxious to keep them uncontaminated by European vices. The ideal, for them, remained the superimposition of Christianity on the old pagan social structure.¹ The condition of the Indians after a few decades of Spanish rule only confirmed the fears they had always entertained. They saw them turned into a broken and demoralized people; and the Franciscan Mendieta wrote in 1596 of the 'shame which we Christians should feel that pagans, of less talent than ourselves, should have been better ruled and ordered in matters of morality and behaviour during the time of their heathendom' than they now were as Christians under the government of the Spaniards.²

What had gone wrong?—if indeed it had. For many Spaniards remained less impressed by the disasters than by the miraculous transformation wrought among the Indians by the introduction of European civility.³ Sahagún, for one, had an explanation. After describing the organization and way of life of the Mexicans in the pre-conquest period, he noted that all this had come to an end with the arrival of the Spaniards, who overthrew their customs and governmental system, 'and wanted to reduce them to the Spanish way of life'. This, he believed, was a disaster for environmentalist reasons. Good government was government attuned to the special needs of a people, and these were determined both by temperament and climate. The nature of Mexico, and the constellations under which it lay, made it a land whose inhabitants were naturally inclined to idleness and vice. The Aztecs, instinctively recognizing this fundamental fact, had devised a form of government that was characterized by sobriety and restraint, and had consequently succeeded in holding vice in check. The Spaniards, on the other hand, had ignored the special properties of the regions they had conquered, and had introduced a system ill-adjusted to the temper of the land.⁴

This was an argument with far-reaching implications for Europe's 'civilizing' mission in the overseas world. It was all very well for Acosta to argue that 'all those who are scarcely men, or only half men, must be taught how to become men';

¹ Phelan, *The Millennial Kingdom of the Franciscans*, p. 87.

² Fray Gerónimo de Mendieta, *Historia Eclesiástica Indiana* (ed. Mexico, 1870), p. 75.

³ e.g. Vargas Machuca, *Refutación*, pp. 229–30.

⁴ *Historia General* iii. 158–60.

but what in practice happened when this was attempted? The answer was supplied by a young doctor, Juan de Cárdenas, a native of Mexico City, who in 1591 published a book called *Problems and Marvellous Secrets of the Indies*.¹ He devoted a number of pages to the Chichimeca Indians of northern Mexico, whom he described as 'a savage and barbarous people, never subjected or tamed by any other nation'. They lived among the rocks and crags; they wore no clothes, and stank to heaven; they had no God, no rites, nor customs; they committed in public every bestial act, and their whole life was given over to the killing of animals and men. But he admitted that in their own country they were brave, strong, and healthy in spite of their repulsive diet.

Capture a Chichimec, however, and try to civilize him, and what happened? He languished and declined. Cárdenas found the explanation for this sad change in environment and custom. Spanish food was unnatural to a man who had lived all his life on a diet of roots and berries. The decline and death of Chichimecs in the hands of the Spaniards was to be ascribed, then, to 'the change of air, diet, customs and way of life, so that one can with justice say of them that change of custom is equivalent to death'.²

Cárdenas's treatise betrays an orthodox mind, brought up on the standard authorities studied in sixteenth-century Europe—Aristotle, Galen, Hippocrates. His arguments, along with those of Sahagún on the unfortunate results of the attempt to reduce the Mexican Indians to a Spanish way of life, indicate how Europe's classical inheritance had once again come to its rescue in its confrontation with alien peoples and customs. The only cure for ethnocentric complacency was a sense of perspective—the perspective of time and the perspective of space. The perspective of time was provided by men who, nurtured on Herodotus and Pliny, were ready to embark on historical research into the social organization and customs of the peoples with whom they now found themselves in contact. Similarly the perspective of space was provided by men whose classical training had made them alive to the significance of geography and climate. The environmentalism which is all too often exclusively associated with the towering figure of Bodin, but

¹ *Problemas y Secretos Maravillosos de las Indias* (Facsimile edn., Madrid, 1945).

² Folios 200^v–203^v.

which in fact was deeply rooted in sixteenth-century thought,¹ was itself an important incentive to tolerance. For if different climatic and topographical conditions created different humours and temperaments, this in turn suggested the logic of accepting that different regions of the earth should enjoy the style of life and social organization appropriate to their needs.

These environmentalist assumptions may in some respects have inhibited the development of anthropology in sixteenth-century Europe, for if the explanation of diversity lay in places rather than in people, there was little to be done except accumulate information about the varieties of human behaviour and note the repetition of certain patterns in the light of roughly similar topographical conditions.² Yet at the same time these assumptions made at least a handful of Europeans uneasily aware that the imposition of European standards on non-European peoples subjected to their rule might not, after all, be an unmixed good. They had, in fact, made the disturbing discovery that man and European man were not necessarily identical. And, even more disturbing, that they did not have to be so.

It was, admittedly, one thing to accept the fact of diversity for alien peoples living outside the sphere of European jurisdiction, and quite another to accept it for those who were the subjects of European kings. The Spanish Crown was unlikely to be deflected from the attempt to introduce 'civility' in its American dominions by the expression of a few doubts about the social and psychological consequences of the process for its Indian vassals. Yet the very expression of doubt and hesitation had an importance of its own in the slow and painful process of Europe's discovery of man. No Christian could accept a wholly determinist explanation of human diversity as an unalterable fact of existence. Religion and education must, by degrees, transform even those who lived in the most unfavourable natural conditions. But the awareness of diversity, and of the need to temper policy according to the demands of environment and social characteristics, was itself an acknowledgement of the complexity of man.

Applied to Europe itself, this awareness was nothing new.

¹ M. J. Tooley, 'Bodin and the Medieval Theory of Climate', *Speculum* xxviii (1953), pp. 64-83. Also Clarence J. Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore* (Berkeley, 1967), ch. ix.

² See John H. Rowe, 'Ethnography and Ethnology in the Sixteenth Century', *The Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers*, no. 30 (1964), pp. 1-19.

Indeed it was a truism that laws and governments should be appropriately framed in the light of local circumstances.¹ Diversity was, after all, an established fact of European life. But applied to non-European conditions in regions where Europeans enjoyed the mastery, the truism raised a number of awkward questions which were bound to reflect on the criteria and values of the European world. The Spaniards in America were among the first Europeans to be faced with these questions. The discovery and settlement of this strange new world compelled them to confront the problem of the nature of man, not only as a creature capable or incapable of salvation, but also as a physical and social being who should, or should not, conform to some pre-determined image. Their questions were sometimes badly posed, and their answers sometimes wrong. But America drove some of them at least to widen and deepen their concept of man, and to draw upon Europe's inherited historical and geographical traditions in order to understand better the peoples entrusted to their charge. In the process of inquiry, they found themselves led irresistibly towards an acknowledgement of the simultaneous unity and diversity of the human race. In the circumstances, therefore, it was entirely appropriate that, in portraying the Indians, they should also unconsciously have been portraying themselves.

¹ Cf. Tooley, 'Bodin', pp. 78-80.