

**CORNELIUS DE PAUW (1739–1799)**  
***RECHERCHES PHILOSOPHIQUES SUR LES AMÉRICAINS (1768–1769)***

**General View of the Americans**

When the Spaniards, on their discovery of the new world, disembarked at St. Domingo, then called Haiti, they were surprised to find a race of men, of whom sluggishness was the principal characteristic: after eating and dancing the better part of the day, they spent the rest in sleep, without thought of tomorrow. The greater number had neither reflection nor memory, went almost naked, and often intoxicated themselves with tobacco.

The surprise of the Spaniards increased, when, penetrating farther into this new world, they found that the men had no beards, their bodies hairless, like those of eunuchs; that they were almost insensible to the passion of love; had milk, or a kind of milky liquid, in their breasts; that they could not, or would not carry weights; and that the men and women were universally tainted with the venereal disease: such throughout the laziness of the men, and their hatred of labour, that extreme want, to which they were often subject, had never induced them to cultivate the earth; trusting all to nature, and utter strangers to industry.

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As the most ancient histories agree in representing every race of men rising gradually out of savage life to the first rudiments of arts, and of society, there is just reason to believe that the first men were thrown on this globe without other notions or advantages than those which are found in ordinary savages; containing in themselves the elements of perfectibility, they were at a mighty distance from the attainment: in their creation, brutal and unenlightened, they owe to themselves their manners, their laws, and their sciences. They had no common model, no fixed rule of conduct; accordingly, they have differed very much, as well in the means of attaining to civilized life, as in the institutions on which their civilization depended: climate has governed them full as much as reason . . .

There are people, who, it should seem, can never emerge out of infancy, or a state of nature. The Eskimo, the Greenlanders, will not have towns, or (which is the same thing) a cultivated soil, while the present position of the globe remains the same with respect to them. The Negro will never be civilized so long as he dwells under the Line, exposed to the greatest heat the earth knows.

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The Europeans who pass into America degenerate, as do the animals; a proof that the climate is unfavourable to the improvement of either man or animal. The Creoles, descending from Europeans and born in America, though educated in the universities of Mexico, of Lima, and College de Santa Fé, have never produced a single book. This degradation of humanity must be imputed to the vitiated qualities of the air stagnated in their immense forests, and corrupted by noxious vapours.

Curious as this fact may seem, it is attended by another much more so; the Creoles both of South and North America come to a maturity of intellect, such as theirs is, more early than the children in Europe; but this anticipation of ripeness is short-lived, in proportion to the unseasonableness of its appearance; for the Creole falls off, as he approaches puberty; his vivacity deserts him, his powers grow dull, and he ceases to think the very time that he might think to some purpose: hence it is commonly said of them, that they are already blind at the time that other men begin to see.

**Taken from Cornelius de Pauw, *A General History of the Americans, of Their Customs, Manners, and Colours*, trans. Daniel Webb (Rochdale: T. Wood, 1806), 1–2, 6–7, 17–19.**

**JAMES COOK (1728–1779)**  
***A VOYAGE TO THE PACIFIC OCEAN (1784)***

It is worthy of observation, that the islands in the Pacific Ocean, which our late voyages have added to the geography of the globe, have been generally found lying in groups or clusters . . . I named the whole group the Sandwich Islands [Hawaiian Islands], in honour of the Earl of Sandwich. Those that I saw, are situated between the latitude of 21° 30', and 22° 15' North, and between the longitude of 199° 20', and 201° 30' East.

The inhabitants are of a middling stature, firmly made, with some exceptions, neither remarkable for a beautiful shape, nor for striking features, which rather express an openness and good-nature, than a keen, intelligent disposition. Their visage, especially amongst the women, is sometimes round; but others have it long; nor can we say, that they are distinguished, as a nation, by any general cast of countenance. Their colour is nearly of a nut brown; and it may be difficult to make a nearer comparison, if we take in all the different hues of that colour; but some individuals are darker.

They are vigorous, active, and most expert swimmers; leaving their canoes upon the most trifling occasion; diving under them; and swimming to others though at a great distance.

They seem to be blest with a frank, cheerful disposition; and were I to draw any comparisons, should say, that they are equally free from fickle levity which distinguishes the natives of Otaheite [Tahiti], and the sedate cast observable amongst many of those of Tongataboo. They seem to live very sociably in their intercourse with one another; and, except for the propensity to thieving, which seems innate in most of the people we have visited in this ocean, they were exceedingly friendly to us. And it does their sensibility no little credit, without flattering ourselves, that when they saw the various articles of our European manufacture, they could not help expressing their surprise, by a mixture of joy and concern, that seemed to apply the case, as a lesson of humility to themselves; and, on all occasions, they appeared deeply impressed with a consciousness of their own inferiority; a behaviour which equally exempts their national character from the preposterous pride of the more polished Japanese, and of the ruder Greenlander. It was a pleasure to observe with how much affection the women managed their infants, and how readily the men lent their assistance to such a tender office; thus sufficiently distinguishing themselves from those savages, who esteem a wife and child as things rather necessary, than desirable, or worthy of their notice.

Though they seem to have adopted the mode of living in villages, there is no appearance of defence, or fortification, near any of them; and the houses are scattered about, without any order, either with respect of their distances from each other, or their position in any particular direction. Neither is there any proportion as to their size; some being large and commodious, from forty to fifty feet long, and twenty or thirty feet broad, while others of them are mere hovels

Their amusements seem pretty various; for, during our short stay, several were discovered. The dances, at which they use the feathered cloaks and caps, were not seen; but from the motions which they made with their hands, on other occasions, when they sung, we could form some judgement that they are, in some degree at least, similar to those we had met with at the Southern Islands, though not executed so skilfully. Neither had they amongst them, either flutes or reeds; and the only two musical instruments which we observed, were of an exceedingly rude kind. One of them does not produce a melody exceeding that of a child's rattle.

**Taken from James Cook and James King, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, 3 vols. (London: W. and A. Strahan, 1784), 221–222, 228–229, 233, 235–236.**