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Enlightenment and extra-European cultures

On reading the *Histoire des deux Indes* (1780) by Raynal and Diderot: exploring tensions between European expansion and Enlightenment values

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Abstract. This contribution will engage with a key question concerning the *Histoire des deux Indes* (1780) by Raynal and Diderot, viz. What can the ideas and the writings of these two *philosophes* still teach us today? In our discussion we will focus first on Raynal's *Histoire* and its 18th-century Europeans, their commerce and colonies outside Europe, with special attention to what at the time was almost a paradigm case: the global maritime merchant empire of the Dutch. Secondly, we will consider what Diderot's many contributions have added to the *Histoire's* power and impact, especially his critique of European colonial, commercial and civilisational endeavour around the world. At the time, as Diderot and Raynal gave voice to the discontents arising from the ongoing global expansion of Europe, their *Histoire* – as Jonathan Israel has shown in his *magnum opus* – became a major vehicle for the dissemination of their Radical Enlightenment. The question that will concern us here is the one posed by Anthony Pagden: What relevance do those radical ideas still have in our postcolonial and globalised world of today, where the former colonial empires and their peoples are today writing back themselves, clamouring to be heard?

Keywords. Raynal, Diderot, *Histoire des deux Indes*, Slavery, Radical Enlightenment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Why does the Enlightenment still matter?, asks Anthony Pagden¹. To find an answer to this question, we will examine one book in particular, which stands out within the Enlightenment's critical discussion of European colonial and commercial expansion. It is the *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* (1780), produced under the direction of Abbé Raynal and with the help of Diderot (and many others), which straight away – so Robert Darnton tells us – became one of the forbidden bestsellers of the French Enlightenment. As the Nantes bookseller Barre explains in his letter of 15 September 1781:

¹ A. Pagden, *The Enlightenment and why it still matters*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2013. Cf. Y. Benot, *Diderot, de l'athéisme à l'anticolonialisme*, Maspero, Paris 1970; and A. Thomson, (*Why does the Enlightenment matter?*), «Diciottesimo Secolo», 1, 2016, pp. 147-168.

The public has received this work with enthusiasm. The author has genius, true knowledge, and an honest heart. He paints things in vivid colors, and in reading him, you feel your heart has been set on fire. He has torn away a great deal of the fatal blindfold that covers the eyes of the human race and prevents it from seeing the truth².

It was a massive work, a world compendium of all overseas colonies established by European nations since 1492: first their commerce and trade, then their history, nature, produce, people and cultures, together with many critical discussions, from a philosophical and political point of view, of this European expansion, its virtues and its discontents³. With Raynal's name on the title page and his engraved portrait on its frontispiece, this bestseller, presenting as it did many different voices within Enlightenment debate, became the colonial complement to Diderot's *Encyclopédie* (1751-1772). A vast book, covering all European colonies and trading posts anywhere: the Portuguese, the Spanish, the Dutch, the British, the French, the Danish, the Swedes, the Flemish, the Russians. Translated into many languages, the *Histoire* became a major vehicle for the dissemination of Enlightenment ideas⁴, and was «one of the period's most important texts»⁵.

² Cit. in R. Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France*, HarperCollins, London 1996, p. 221. See also: R. Darnton, *Éditeur et Pirate. Le commerce des livres en France et en Europe au seuil de la Révolution*, Gallimard, Paris 2021.

³ The modern scholarly edition is: G.-Th. Raynal, *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* (1780), éd. par A. Strugnell et al., Centre International d'Étude du XVIII^e siècle, Ferney-Voltaire 2010-2020, 3 vols. Accompanied by: G.Th. Raynal et R. Bonne, *Tableaux, atlas et cartes*, ed. by A. Brown (2010). The final volume IV is due out in 2022. For this new edition we will use the abbreviation «Raynal, HDI»; the original 1780 edition will be referred to as «*Histoire*». Since the discovery of the Fonds Vandeul by Herbert Dieckmann and his publication of its *Inventaire* (Droz, Genève 1951) many scholars have been studying Diderot's contributions to Raynal's *opus magnum*; from 1991 onwards there has been an important series of international Raynal conferences; see: G. Goggi, s.v. «Histoire des deux Indes», in *Dictionnaire de Diderot*, éd. par R. Mortier et R. Trousson, Champion, Paris 1999, pp. 225-228 (further references in Raynal, HDI 2010-2022).

⁴ For an early discussion of Raynal's *Histoire* in connection with Diderot, see: J. Morley, *Diderot and the Encyclopaedists* (1866), Macmillan, London 1878², 2 vols, esp. vol. II, chpt. VII. *Raynal's History of the Indies*, and pp. 123, 155, 207 and 220. For three important recent monographs, all published by Champion in Paris, see: G. Bancarel, *Raynal ou le devoir de vérité*, 2004; Id., *Réseaux de Raynal*, 2015; and *Bibliographie des Éditions de Guillaume-Thomas Raynal, 1747-1843*, éd. par C.P. Courtney et al., 2021.

⁵ S. Tomaselli, in *A Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century World History*, ed. by J. Black and R. Porter, Blackwell, Oxford 1994, p. 360. Her source: Y. Benot, *Diderot. De l'athéisme à l'anticolonialisme*, F. Maspero, Paris 1970, p. 74. Cf. also: Id., *La Révolution française et la fin des colonies 1789-1794* (1987), La Découverte, Paris 2004² (avec Postface inédite). And Id., *Les Lumières, lesclavage, la colonisation*, Textes réunis et présentés par R. Desné et M. Dorigny, La Découverte, Paris 2005.

In her *Panorama of the Enlightenment* (2003)⁶, Dorinda Outram tells us how Raynal's *Histoire* offers lots of important information, especially on the dilemma of slavery; on the many negative things (slaughter, syphilis, expropriation of land and mineral wealth) which Europeans brought to America; on the colonial produce from the Caribbean, listed in Table [19] in book 14 – sugar, rum, coffee, cocoa, cotton, piment, ginger, indigo and tropical wood – generated by slave labour, imported into Great Britain and worth some 93 million pounds annually; and on the painful debates and ambivalent attitudes amongst Europeans concerning slavery and the slave trade – which were seen as unjustifiable, certainly, but also as necessary; and not to be abolished any time soon, for fear of commercial loss, disorder and violence in the colonies, unless the black slaves were first civilised and Christianised before they might be liberated, eventually.

Actually, as Joel Mokyr observed in 2009: «Within the Enlightenment paradigm, many ambiguities remained unresolved»⁷. Also, the *Histoire* has not nearly remained as well-known as the *Encyclopédie*. For a very long time it was almost totally forgotten. It is not mentioned in Braudel's *The Wheels of Commerce, Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century* (1982)⁸, which only features its opponents in economics, such as Adam Smith and French Physiocrats like Quesnay and Turgot. And in *Le Livre noir du colonialisme* (2003), Raynal's *Histoire* hardly features and is sharply dismissed for its incoherence and paradoxes on colonial matters by Marcel Merle, who prefers the rigour and directness of Rousseau in his *Contrat social*⁹.

In recent years, however, this has changed significantly, and today Raynal's work is getting a lot more scholarly attention internationally, most emphatically in Jonathan Israel's multi-volume work on the Radical Enlightenment (4 vols, 2001-2019)¹⁰ – a vast and com-

⁶ D. Outram, *Panorama of the Enlightenment*, Thames & Hudson, London 2003. Important Raynal anthologies are: *Histoire philosophique et politique des Deux Indes* (1981), éd par Y. Benot, La Découverte, Paris 2001²; *A History of the Two Indies. A Translated Selection from Raynal's Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements des Européens dans les Deux Indes*, ed. by P. Jimack, Ashgate, Aldershot 2006; *Die Geschichte beider Indien*, hrsg. von H.-J. Lüsebrink, Die Andere Bibliothek, Berlin 2013; and *La Bible des Révolutions*, éd. par G. Bancarel et F.P. Rossi, Préface de I. Bokova, Clapàs, Millau 2013.

⁷ J. Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy: Britain and the Industrial Revolution 1700-1850*, Penguin, London 2011, p. 37.

⁸ F. Braudel, *The Wheels of Commerce, Civilization & Capitalism 15th-18th Century*, vol. II, Phoenix Press, London 1982. Note that while Malouet has a place in Braudel's book, Raynal and Diderot do not.

⁹ *Le Livre noir du colonialisme: XVI^e-XXI^e siècle: de l'extermination à la repentance*, éd. M. Ferro, Laffont, Paris 2003, pp. 620-621.

¹⁰ J.I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2001; Id., *Democratic Enlighten-*

plex project of historical and philosophical reconstruction, running from the 1660s to the early part of the 19th century, and ending in the split between radicals and socialists. Israel's groundbreaking reconstruction of the Radical Enlightenment throws new light on the key role which Raynal's *Histoire* has played within it – a role which goes far beyond colonial commerce and economics, into critical discussions of politics, morality, and grand themes such as slavery and enlightened despotism¹¹.

Against this background we will here be reading the *Histoire* to find out what it can tell us about colonial contact and interaction between Europeans and Non-Europeans. While the *Histoire's* discussions cover a quite multi-faceted international Enlightenment, we will here focus in particular, first, on the global merchant empire of the Dutch. Then secondly, we will take a closer look at the *Histoire's* authors, exploring how the different contributions by Raynal and Diderot shaped their critique of European colonial, commercial and cultural/civilisational endeavour all around the world, by addressing issues of counterpoint within the Enlightenment, as these emerged from voices both inside and outside Europe. Here the question is: What can Raynal and Diderot still teach us today? And as we proceed, we may wonder: Will our common humanity and the dream of a better world turn out, once again, to be just an Utopia, or is the struggle for radical enlightenment values today as crucial for mankind as it was in the 18th century? In other words: What relevance can the *Histoire* still have for us in the 21st century?

2. RAYNAL'S HISTOIRE DES DEUX INDES (1780)

ment, *Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights, 1750-1790*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2011; Id., *Revolutionary Ideas. An Intellectual History of the French Revolution from The Rights of Man to Robespierre*, Princeton University Press, Princeton (NJ) 2014; and Id., *The Enlightenment that Failed*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2019, pp. 10, 942.

¹¹ See also: G. Imbruglia, *Reflected Images: the Histoire des deux Indes and the censorship of the Roman Congregation of the Index*, «Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century», 7, 2003, pp. 175-201; G. Abbattista, *European Encounters in the Age of Expansion*, «EGO. European History Online», <<http://www.ieg.eu>> (01/2011); R. Minuti, s.v. «Asia», in *Dictionnaire de Montesquieu*, éd. par C. Volpillac-Augier 2013, <<http://dictionnaire-montesquieu.ens-lyon.fr/en/article/1377667827/en/>> (04/2022); D. Droixhe, *L'Histoire des deux Indes: Impact et réception*, in *Raynal un regard vers l'Amérique*, éd. par P. Latour et G. Bancarel, Bibliothèque Mazarine, Paris 2013, pp. 91-111. According to F. Obermeier, the *Histoire* is «das ideengeschichtlich wichtigste Buch der Aufklärung über die Europäische Kolonien», cf. F. Obermeier, s.v. «RAYNAL, Guillaume-Thomas genannt Abbé Raynal, Weltgeistlicher, Schriftsteller, Theoretiker der Ökonomie der Kolonien», in *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, Bautz, Nordhausen 2018, Band 39, pp. 1218-1234.

2.1. A key Enlightenment project

The central theme in Raynal's *Histoire des deux Indes* (1780) is the global expansion since 1492 of the Europeans, their colonies and their commerce, under the banner cry of «c'est le commerce, c'est le commerce»¹². As he put it in his opening sentence:

*Il n'y a point eu d'événement aussi intéressant pour l'espèce humaine en général, & pour les peuples de l'Europe en particulier, que la découverte du Nouveau-monde & le passage aux Indes par le cap de Bonne-Espérance. Alors a commencé une révolution dans le commerce, dans la puissance des nations, dans les mœurs, l'industrie & le gouvernement de tous les peuples*¹³.

In the nineteen books that follow, the *Histoire* goes on to present a wide-ranging critical-comparative examination of that European expansion – starting from the European discovery of the lands beyond the sea, discussing an immense range of contacts with the peoples living there – their customs, traditions, beliefs and history, their morality, laws and wars, their government, women, slaves, agriculture, colonial produce and taxation, through to their achievements in arts and philosophy, as well as their commerce, money and sources of wealth. The crucial book 19 offers a wide-ranging, systematic-comparative and analytical discussion of the vital features of all those empires. By the end of his vast survey, the author – now clearly a sadder and wiser man – takes his leave with a rather more humble wish for a better future for mankind, in a world where our only hope appears to be for 'philosophy' and the 'civilised nations' to give the 'savages' out there something better than the vice and oppression they have had until then from us Europeans:

*Puisse, sous les auspices de la philosophie, s'étendre un jour d'un bout du monde à l'autre cette chaîne d'union & de bienfaisance qui doit rapprocher toutes les nations policées! Puissent-elles ne plus porter aux nations sauvages l'exemple des vices & de l'oppression!*¹⁴.

Does it matter that these passages in Raynal's book

¹² *Histoire*, vol. I, bk. 1, *Introduction*, p. 3 [= Diderot Fragment, Goggi nr. 1]. Here and below, the numbering of Diderot's fragments refers to G. Goggi, *Lexemnaire de H-80 in-quarto et les contributions de Diderot délimitées par Mme de Vandeuil*, in *Autour de l'abbé Raynal: genèse et enjeux politiques de l'Histoire des deux Indes*, éd. par A. Alimento et G. Goggi, C-18, Ferney-Voltaire 2018, pp. 245-299. See notes 44 and 54 below.

¹³ *Histoire*, vol. I, bk. 1, *Introduction*, p. 1.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, vol. IV, bk. 19, chpt. XV: *Réflexions sur le bien et le mal que la découverte du Nouveau-Monde a fait à l'Europe*, p. 706 [= Goggi nr 352].

were written by Diderot? Yes, and the point is not only that they were, but that today we have practically all the evidence that this is so¹⁵. The *Histoire*, certainly the third edition of 1780, was a project of them both – two *philosophes*, both leading public intellectuals, first class writers, well-connected in society through the *Salons* they attended, and protected by enlightened government officials of the *Ancien Régime*, such as Malesherbes and Sartine. Both born in 1713, they had known each other in Paris at least since the early 1750s as freethinking members of the Enlightenment, engaged in critical discussion while looking for opportunities to work, to write and earn money. Decades before the Revolution, they were already well-established *bourgeois*, in the days when a merchant with philosophical pretensions would be an easy target for aristocratic ridicule on stage, as in Sedaine's play, *Le Philosophe sans le sçavoir* (1765)¹⁶. Their project was to gather information on commerce and many other things, to present and discuss before the emerging *opinion publique*. What was going on in the real world – that was the subject they studied, from China and Japan through the Orient on to North-Africa; and from South-Africa and the Cape on to Brazil, the Caribbean and North-America. Their approach was to start from empirical and historical fact finding, using questionnaires, correspondence and printed sources so as to get reliable first-hand data from informants with direct overseas experience; and moving on that basis to systematic-comparative description, together with critical philosophical and political reflection and moral discussion of those European colonies from the viewpoint of humanity and justice.

2.2. The Dutch empire in Raynal's *Histoire*

Coming now to the Dutch colonial and merchant empire in the *Histoire*, we will pursue this – like Raynal – as a special case of the European expansion. On this empire, first established in 1602, with its monopoly on colonial trade in Asia and elsewhere¹⁷, Raynal has many interesting things to say regarding its trading monopolies and global networks.

Right at the beginning, he refers to the seagoing Phoenician traders of ancient times – «les premiers

négociants dont l'histoire ait conservé le souvenir»¹⁸, living on a small stretch of land along the Mediterranean seacoast of the Lebanon. Discussion continues in chapter VI of book 19, on the seagoing Europeans of the modern age, beginning with the Portuguese and the Spanish, who conquered and plundered the Two Indies. Thereafter, it was the newly independent Dutch Republic which saw the real opportunity for global commerce, and grasped it – starting, like the Phoenicians, from their unpromising small strip of land along the sea – by taking to the oceans, for liberty and for trade. They did so with great success, establishing trading posts and forts all round the world: in Batavia on Java; on Ambon, Banda and Ternate in the Moluccas; Malacca in Malaysia; Deshima in Japan; Masulipatnam and Coromandel in India; Djeddah and Mocca in Arabia; Cape Town and Elmina in Africa; then Curaçao, Paramaribo and Nieuw Amsterdam in the Americas¹⁹. As a result, Holland soon became «un magasin immense» – not so much the Chinese of Europe (as the Dutch were often called), but actually the Phoenicians of the Modern Age.

The Phoenician analogy applied also to the dealings of the Dutch with the Japanese, who in Raynal's typology of nations emerged as their very opposite, viz. the Spartans of the Modern Age: isolated, fierce and despotic, closed off as they were from the world's commerce and from civilised intercourse with other nations – i.e. the opposite of the Dutch as a seagoing, trading and freedom-loving nation. Of the two, Raynal said: «Par le commerce, on est au moins citoyen peut-être, mais on devient plus homme; & le Japonais est devenu tigre sous la verge de ses tyrans»²⁰. In Raynal's view, the Dutch empire stood out as a prime example – if not the paradigm case – of the *Histoire's* central theme and interest, which was «le commerce!»²¹. Other Europeans at the time took a far more critical view of the Dutch, whether in Japan or elsewhere. But Raynal saw right: the «esprit de commerce [...] étoit nécessaire aux Japonais», and from 1600 to 1900, through the Dutch trading post in Deshima, the Japanese acquired many European goods – weapons, clocks, paintings, scientific works, dictionaries and encyclopedias – from the Dutch as purveyors of western culture and civilisation²².

¹⁸ *Histoire*, vol. IV, bk. 19, chpt. VI: *Commerce*, p. 579.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 581.

²⁰ *Histoire*, vol. I, bk. 2, chpt. VII: *Commerce des Hollandais avec le Japon*, p. 171.

²¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 166-171.

²² See: C. Joby, *The Dutch Language in Japan (1600-1900): A Cultural and Sociolinguistic Study of Dutch as a Contact Language in Tokugawa and Meiji Japan*, Brill, Leiden 2021. Cf. R. Salverda, *When Japan's Elite Spoke Dutch*, «The Low Countries», 9, September 2021, www.the-low-countries.com (04/2022). See also below, n. 60.

¹⁵ See also: A.S. Curran, *Diderot and the Art of Thinking Freely*, Other Press, New York 2019, pp. 372-373.

¹⁶ M.-J. Sedaine, *Le Philosophe sans le Sçavoir* (1766²), ed. by J. Dunkley, Runnymede Books, Egham Surrey 1993.

¹⁷ C.R. Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800*, Hutchinson, London 1965. Cf. J.G. Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia: European and Eurasian in Dutch Asia*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison WI 1983.

This long Dutch tradition in international trade was sustained by their ideal of the *Mercator sapiens*, the learned merchant, with his skillful combination of trade, science, learning, innovation and enterprise – set out as a program in 1632, at the opening of the Amsterdam Athenaeum by Professor Caspar Barlaeus; and practised too, for example by the Amsterdam burgomaster, polymath, international merchant and Dutch East India Company (VOC) director, Nicolaes Witsen early in the 18th century. From Holland – probably via *Le Parfait Négociant* (1675) by Jacques Savary²³ – this notion made its way into Raynal's *Histoire* as «le génie du négociant»²⁴ – with very high praise for the manifold talents a merchant will need, and an extensive discussion of the principles, maxims, do's and don'ts of the modern science that is *le commerce*. Given that the *Histoire*'s central theme is trade and commerce, we are here at the very heart of Raynal's great work; in his view, good commerce «devient en quelque sorte le moteur du monde», while at the same time Raynal also discusses the real-life abuse, injustice and devastation caused by illiberal monopolies and wars of commerce²⁵, concluding that this sorry state of affairs will require a veritable revolution before we can hope to establish liberty and universal peace.

Further trade information on the Dutch colonies can be found not only in books 2 and 12 but throughout the *Histoire* of 1780. The many Dutch names of capes, straights, forts and trading posts in its Atlas by Rigobert Bonne²⁶ testify how «commercially and still

more politically and militarily, the Dutch remained pre-eminent throughout much of south and south-east Asia until the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780-1784)»²⁷. The *Histoire*'s three Tables (numbers [1], [2] and [16]) on the VOC analyse how it was doing on the Amsterdam Stock Exchange. Covering long periods – from 1605 to 1777 – they detail the VOC capital, its shares, partners, trading rates and dividends, which averaged 21.5% per year on the capital (over 172 years); with a cumulative total dividend paid out over that period of 3,650 percent on the original capital – altogether, clearly a stupendously profitable investment. In stark contrast, the *Histoire* does not have a Table on the many slaves bought, sold and shipped by the VOC, though Raynal's text documents that Cape Town had between 40 to 50,000 slaves against some 15,000 Europeans; Surinam had 60,000 slaves against 2,880 Europeans; the Dutch Caribbean islands had more than 11,500 slaves under 6,000 Europeans; and Batavia had 150,000 slaves plus very many uncounted domestic servants, against some 10,000 whites²⁸.

When the *Histoire* was translated into Dutch, people bought and read it, but public opinion in the Republic kept its distance and reserve²⁹. Most people were interested only in useful trade information, and this need was catered for in the popular one-volume Dutch edition, *Tafreel* (1784)³⁰, and later also in the long pamphlet on the international tea trade, published in 1792 by the Amsterdam tea merchant Robert Voûte, which carried

²³ On Savary's *Parfait Négociant* and Dutch monopolistic practices: Braudel, *The Wheels of Commerce*, cit., pp. 418-423. On Nicolaes Witsen, see: B.H.M. Vlekke, *Evolution of the Dutch Nation*, Roy Publishers, New York 1945, pp. 245, 246, 248-250.

²⁴ *Histoire*, vol. IV, bk. 19, chpt. VI: *Commerce*, pp. 586-592, esp. p. 586.

²⁵ Cf. Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment*, cit., chpt. XIX. *Commercial Despotism: Dutch Colonialism in Asia*, pp. 535-557. But note, though the *Histoire* was critical of the Dutch in Asia, Raynal glossed over the 10,000 victims of the Dutch massacre in 1740 of Batavia's Chinese inhabitants (cf. *Histoire*, vol. I, bk. 2, chpt. XIX. *Empire des Hollandais dans l'isle de Java*, p. 223), and was equally uninformative about the Banda massacre of 1621 under the Dutch governor-general Coen (cf. Raynal, *HDI*, vol. I (2010), bk. 2, chpt. VIII. *Les Moluques subissent le joug des Hollandais*, p. 170, n. 53). Meanwhile, the Dutch massacre of the English at Amboyna in 1623 was given far more space, cf. *Histoire* vol. I, bk. 3, chpt. III: *Démêlés des Anglois avec les Hollandais*, pp. 273-274.

²⁶ The *Histoire*'s Atlas by Rigobert Bonne, *Atlas de toutes les parties connues du globe terrestre*, has been published in facsimile, jointly with Raynal's Tables with trade information, by A. Brown (see n. 1). A Dutch translation of Bonne's Atlas, but without his informative *Analyse succincte de cet atlas*, was published in 1792 as: *Atlas, tot opheldering der Wysgeerige en Staatkundige Geschiedenis van de Bezittingen en den Koophandel der Europeaanen in de beide Indiën*, door den abt Willem Thomas Raynal, te Amsterdam, by M. Schalekamp. The cartographic collection of the VOC, including a wide range of visual material, is available in the *Grote Atlas van de Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie/Comprehensive Atlas of the Dutch United East India Company*, ed. by G. Schilder et al., Asia Maior, Voorburg 2006-2010, 7 vols.

²⁷ Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment*, cit., p. 536.

²⁸ Slaves in Cape Town: see *Histoire* vol. I, bk. 2, chpt. XVIII. *Etablissement des Hollandais au cap de Bonne-Espérance*, p. 211. In Surinam: see *ibidem*, vol. III, bk. 12, chpt. XXIV. *Etat actuel de la colonie de Surinam*, p. 298. In the Dutch Caribbean Islands: see *ibidem*, vol. III, bk. 12, chpts. XVI-XX, *Description des isles Hollandaises*, pp. 283-288. In Batavia: see *ibidem*, vol. I, bk. 2, chpt. XIX. *Empire des Hollandais dans l'isle de Java*, pp. 222-223. Altogether: well over 270,000 slaves, under 35,000 European masters – the Dutch empire's commerce was built on large-scale slavery. It made the Dutch very rich, but also corrupt and decadent, prompting Diderot to argue, that without a revival of their former republican virtues, the Dutch risked losing everything: their empire, their riches, but especially their liberty. Cf. *Histoire*, bk. 2, chpt. XXVII. *Ancienne sagesse des Hollandais & leur corruption actuelle*, pp. 256-260 [= Goggi nr. 26].

²⁹ Raynal's work was severely criticised in the Dutch Republic by the orangist publisher Elie Luzac: see his Dutch version, *Hollands rijkdom*, adapted from Jacques Accarias de Serionne's *La Richesse de la Hollande* (1778); cf. R. van Vliet, *Elie Luzac (1721-1796). Bookseller of the Enlightenment*, AfdH Publishers, Enschede 2014. Also: R. Salverda, *Raynal and Holland: Raynal's Histoire des deux Indes and Dutch Colonialism in the Age of Enlightenment*, in Raynal's *Histoire des deux Indes: colonialism, networks and global change*, ed. by C.P. Courtney and J. Mander, Voltaire Foundation, Oxford 2015, pp. 217-234.

³⁰ In 1784, the three Tables on the VOC and the four maps of the 1774 edition of the *Histoire* (in facsimile in *Tableaux*, ed. by Brown, cit., pp. 117-124) were published in this single-volume Dutch-language edition: W.Th. Raynal, *Tafreel van de Bezittingen en den Koophandel der Europeaanen in de Beide Indiën*, M. Schalekamp, Amsterdam 1784, pp. 52-55.

a quote on its cover from Raynal's praise for 'le négociant'³¹. The *Histoire's* commercial views of free trade and profits were rather more welcome in Holland than Raynal's incisive critique of the duplicity of the Dutch, who at home had fought themselves free from the Spanish, while they brought nothing but injustice, greed and violence to the lands they subjugated overseas³².

Here, the comparative approach taken in the *Histoire* enables us to identify two interestingly different national trajectories during the Enlightenment: In France, after 1789, the Revolution gave the Jews civil rights; in 1794 followed by freedom for the Black slaves. In the Netherlands, in contrast, after the Batavian Revolution of 1795, civil rights followed for the Jews in 1796, and in 1797 two Amsterdam Jews became the first elected Jewish Parliamentary representatives anywhere in the world, one of whom was a coffee trader who had made his fortune in Surinam. But when in 1798 the Batavian Republic adopted its first, democratic Constitution, it was decided after long deliberation to leave out the tangled matter of slavery – in line with the US Constitution, but not the French³³.

2.3. Glory and demise of Raynal

Raynal, although denouncing slavery in the name of humanity, deferred the future emancipation of real slaves

³¹ *Histoire*, vol. IV, bk. 19, chpt. VI. *Commerce*, p. 587. Robert Voûte, *Korte Beschouwing van den daadlyken toestand van den Theehandel, zo in Europa in het algemeen als in deze Republiek in het byzonder* [= Short consideration of the actual situation of the tea trade, both in Europe in general and in particular in this Republic], Willem Holtrop, Amsterdam 1792. On Voûte and tea, see also: «The Monthly Review», 1794, pp. 576-580. As international agent of Bank Henry Hope & Co in Amsterdam, Robert Voûte went on to work on major Russian, Austrian and French loans as well as Dutch national finance; he was made Baron de l'Empire by Napoleon, cf. M.G. Buist, *At Spes Non Fracta. Hope & Co, 1770-1815*, Nijhoff, Den Haag 1974. Recently, two important Dutch successor banks – the ABNAMRO Bank and the Nederlandsche Bank – have opened their books on the slavery past in particular of Bank Hope & Co, see: G.de Kok and P.Brandon, *Het slavernijverleden van historische voorlopers van ABNAMRO. Een onderzoek naar Hope & Co en R. Mees & Zoonen*, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam 2022, <<http://www.abnamro.com/nl/nieuws>> (04/2022); and K. Fatah-Black et al., *Dienstbaar aan de keten? De Nederlandsche Bank en de laatste decennia van de slavernij, 1814-1863*, Leiden Publicaties, Leiden 2022, <<https://www.dbnl.nl>> (04/2022).

³² As Raynal wrote of the Dutch: «S'ils ont brisés les fers, c'est pour en forger» (*Histoire*, vol. I, bk. 2, chpt. XXII. *Etablissement des Hollandois à Sumatra*, pp. 189-190). Such critical remarks were left out of Raynal's single-volume Dutch *Tafreel* of 1784.

³³ A.H. Huussen, *The Dutch Constitution of 1798 and the problem of Slavery*, «The Legal History Review», 67, 1999, pp. 99-114. The *Histoire* attacked both colonialism and slavery, whereas the Americans put an end to colonialism but not to slavery: cf. H.S. Commager, *The Empire of Reason, How Europe Imagined and America Realized the Enlightenment*, Phoenix Press, London 1977, pp. 213 and 265.

to some unspecified moment in the future, and did not develop a clear, coherent and reasonable transition programme leading towards abolition³⁴. On this issue he was clearly much more cautious and moderate than Diderot or Rousseau, and also than Voltaire, who in his *Candide* (1759) was scathing in his critique of the Dutch in Surinam and their treatment of slaves. Still, Raynal's sharp moral criticisms and his passionate outcry over European crimes against humanity – e.g. the English famine in Bengal in 1769, and the great massacre by Pizarro in Peru³⁵ – rightly earned him the title of «Défenseur de l'Humanité, de la Vérité, de la Liberté», engraved on the monument on the frontispiece of his *Histoire* (1780)³⁶.

This glowing epithet came from his friend Eliza Draper – making her literally the first woman who has something to say in the *Histoire*. The *Eloge à Eliza Draper* – in fact written by Diderot – presents a moving portrait in words of Eliza³⁷, who was born in India and had earlier been the Eliza of Lawrence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1767). Raynal, equally smitten with her, and having read her letters from India, hoped she would bless his pen with her grace and her virtue. In reply to her dying wish, that History, Fame and Genius will incite him always to be the «Defender of Humanity, of Truth and of Liberty», he swears by heaven that he will never write even one line in which she may not recognise her friend. Underlining this monumental tribute, both her epithet and his oath are printed in capitals in the *Histoire*³⁸.

In stark contrast, Diderot's fragments were dismissed as «déclamations» by Pierre-Victor Malouet, who – as an

³⁴ J.-P. Doguet, *Les Philosophes et l'esclavage*, Editions Kimé, Paris 2016, p. 427.

³⁵ English famine in Bengal: see *Histoire*, vol. I, bk. 3, chpt. XXXVIII. *Vexations et cruautés commises par les Anglois dans le Bengale*, pp. 384-388. Pizarro's massacre in Peru: see *ibidem*, vol. II, bk. 7, chpt. V. *Comment Pizarro, chef de l'expédition, se rend maître de l'empire*, pp. 132-137.

³⁶ And also in the text, see *ibidem*, vol. I, bk. 3, chpt. XV. *Description de la côte de Malabar*, p. 320.

³⁷ *Eloge à Eliza Draper*, in *ibidem*, pp. 318-321 [= Goggi nr. 40]. Cf. A. Strugnell, *À la recherche d'Eliza Draper*, in Raynal de la polémique à l'histoire, éd. par G. Bancarel et G. Goggi, Voltaire Foundation, Oxford 2000, pp. 173-186. See also Sterne's *Eliza. Some Account of her Life in India, With Her Letters Written between 1757 and 1774*, ed. by A. Wright and W.L. Sclater, Heinemann, London 1922, which contains a portrait drawing of «Eliza, From Yorick», and an unknown engraved portrait of «W.T. Raynal F.R.S.», held in the British Museum's Department of Prints and Drawings (Print nr. 1919, 1201.5).

³⁸ When Raynal, after the condemnation of the *Histoire* in 1781, fled to Liège, his publisher, Clément Plomteux, ordered from one of Liège's best artists, Joseph Dreppe, a «Tombeau d'Eliza Draper», to present to the «défenseur de l'humanité, de la vérité, de la liberté». The work is now in the Collections Artistiques de l'Université de Liège (Inv. 23-332): «On y voit l'ouvrage porté par le Temps, au pied du sarcophage de la muse de l'écrivain», D. Droixhe, *Une histoire des Lumières au Pays de Liège. Livre, idées, société*, ULg Éditions, Liège 2007, p. 152.

Oratorien from the Collège de Juilly, the French-taught school of Colbert and Montesquieu – may well have had different stylistic preferences than Raynal and Diderot, both Jesuit-educated. It may also be, that Malouet used «déclamations» as in Sedaine’s play, as an aristocratic ridicule against pretentious *philosophes*. Be that as it may, we do know how Malouet played a crucial role, both as a colonial expert and a co-director of the *Histoire* within the Ministère de la Marine (which included the colonies), exerting considerable influence over its political strategy³⁹. As co-author of book 13 of the *Histoire*, Malouet got into a dispute over the matter of slavery – which he considered, like Adam Smith, as ‘necessary’ – against Diderot, who in book 11 argued that there was no argument that could ever justify a terrible and inhumane business like slavery⁴⁰. We know, furthermore, that Raynal, who in 1781 was banished from France, upon his return in 1784 was ordered to live in Toulon and Marseille, with his close friend Malouet. It was under Raynal’s name that Malouet in 1785 published his own pro-slavery book about Saint-Domingue, while in 1788 he launched a frontal attack on Condorcet, the progressive *philosophe* and *Ami des Noirs*, over his *Réflexions sur l’esclavage des nègres* – a clash, which escalated into a clear separation of minds over slavery between moderates and radicals within the Enlightenment⁴¹. Malouet was a constant and forceful presence in these various exchanges. In 1792, as we now know in detail from Lüsebrink⁴², he was involved in events, when he took an active part, first, in helping to produce the *Address* to the National Assembly in Paris, in which Raynal revoked, under pressure from Malouet, the revolutionary ideas in his *Histoire*. Then next, it was Malouet who ensured that this text was read out in the National Assembly on 31 May 1791, in the middle of the Revolution – an event which caused a major political upheaval,

ripped apart the revolutionary camp, severely dented Raynal’s great reputation, while Diderot’s political ideas in the *Histoire* suffered a serious setback. Malouet, meanwhile, throughout the Napoleonic era and into the Restoration “when he became Minister of the Navy and the Colonies”, remained a hardline defender of colonialism and slavery and did everything to defeat the radical ideas in Raynal’s *Histoire*⁴³.

3. DIDEROT’S FRAGMENTS⁴⁴

3.1. *In Search of Liberty*

Following in the footsteps of Montesquieu, the *philosophes* advocated new ideas, such as the freedom of thought and expression, the freedom of the press and the free exchange of ideas – and, as they proceeded, also the freedom of trade and commerce, and the freedom from slavery and exploitation. It was Diderot who, as a radical humanitarian, thought these new notions through to their logical political consequence, in particular in his many contributions to the third edition of Raynal’s *Histoire* (1780). From Diderot’s core notion of human freedom and dignity there is a direct line to his critique of monopolistic economics, colonial exploitation and slavery, of monarchical government, tyranny and censorship, and of the Church’s stranglehold over the beliefs and ideas which people were allowed to have. It is for these reasons, and in particular – as reported in the Dutch Republic in the *Middelburgsche Courant* of 12 June 1781 – for its «godless, blasphemous and seditious» character, that the third edition of Raynal’s *Histoire* was officially forbidden by the Parliament of Paris in June 1781 and sentenced to be burnt by the public hangman⁴⁵.

Those were heady days under the Ancien Régime in France, as Claude Manceron tells us in *Les Hommes de la Liberté*⁴⁶. In 1770 the first edition of the *Histoire* was

³⁹ On Malouet, see: M. Duchet, *Anthropologie et histoire au siècle des Lumières* (1971), Albin Michel, Paris 1995², pp. 125-136; Y. Benot, in *Dictionnaire de Diderot*, cit., p. 306; J. Ehrard, *Lumières et Esclavage*, André Versailles, Bruxelles 2008, esp. pp. 205-206; M. Dorigny, *Raynal, les droits de l’homme et l’esclavage*, in *Raynal, un regard vers l’Amérique*, cit., pp. 131-145; and «Outre-Mers. Revue d’histoire», 386-387, 2015 (*Raynal, les colonies, la Révolution française et l’esclavage*, ed. by M. Dorigny et al.), pp. 5-112.

⁴⁰ Cf. Salverda, *The involvement of Pierre-Victor Malouet*, cit. Also: *Livre Douzième*, éd. par C. Courtney et R. Salverda, in *Raynal, HDI*, vol. III (2020), esp. p. 205 and nn. 149, 157 and 178.

⁴¹ Benot, *Révolution*, cit., pp. 36, 38. Cf. Condorcet, *Réflexions sur l’esclavage des nègres* (1788), ed. by J.P. Doguet, GF Flammarion, Paris 2009, p. 149. The choice here was between Malouet’s *réforme* of the *Code noir* and Condorcet’s plea for abolition of slavery and emancipation of the black slaves. Cf. Doguet, *Les Philosophes*, cit., pp. 429-434 and 446, n. 6.

⁴² *L’Adresse à l’Assemblée Nationale (31 mai 1791) de Guillaume-Thomas Raynal*, éd. par H.J. Lüsebrink, Société française d’étude du dix-huitième siècle, Paris 2018.

⁴³ Israel, *Enlightenment that Failed*, cit., pp. 732-733, 737 and 743.

⁴⁴ For Diderot’s fragments in the *Histoire*, see: G. Goggi’s edition of D. Diderot, *Fragments politiques échappés du portefeuille d’un philosophe*, Hermann, Paris 2011; plus the lists of Diderot Fragments in the four volumes of Raynal, *HDI* 2010-2022; and Goggi’s formidable list of 373 numbered and fully annotated Diderot Fragments, in Goggi, *Lexemnaire de H80 in-quarto*, cit. The Diderot Fragments discussed below are identified by their Goggi number from this list. The *exemplaire* d’Hornoy was first discovered in 2015; there is an impressive ninety percent overlap between mme Vandeul’s markings and the results of seventy years of philological scrutiny of Diderot’s contributions. Still, with some ten percent non-overlap at each end of the equation, there is an obvious need for further philological research of the *Histoire*.

⁴⁵ *Middelburgsche Courant 12 June 1781*, Delpher Digital Archive, <<https://www.delpher.nl/nl/kranten/>> (04/2022).

⁴⁶ Cf. C. Manceron, *Les Hommes de la Liberté, 1774-1779*, Laffont, Paris 1972-1989, 6 vols. Cf. also: K. Martin, *French Liberal Thought in the*

brought out anonymously by Raynal, and from the second edition of 1774 Diderot became fully engaged with this project until its third edition of 1780. So let us see how Diderot went about this. In the fragments which he contributed – fully «20 percent» of the entire book⁴⁷, i.e. well over 500 pages –, Diderot found an outlet for his political ideas, which he developed into a critical commentary on the European colonials who take centre stage here. Behind these fragments there is his core view of humans as social beings, from which follows a simple social rule of secular moral virtue: Do Unto Others As You Would Have Them Do Unto You. From this perspective, the *Histoire* holds up a critical mirror to the rest of the world. Well-read and well-travelled, Diderot cast his net wide, holding forth on a great many topics, ranging from his critique of Russian despots (including Catharine II) and his support for American independence and their right to revolt; through his outcry at the mass killing of Beavers in Canada and the devastating impact on nature Europeans were then already having everywhere; to his dire prophecy that in 300 years – that is, by 2080 – there will be no Indians left⁴⁸.

In the process of writing these contributions, while developing his critique of European colonial, commercial and civilisational endeavour, we see Diderot becoming increasingly radical himself. Thanks to the immense philological detective work done by Diderot philologists, we can now read these fragments in the context of the *Histoire* within which they were first published and to which they belong. This will be the perspective from which we proceed⁴⁹, when we now take a closer look at five key fragments by Diderot.

Our key here is the electrifying contrapuntal writing we encounter throughout Diderot's work, in his musical studies no less than his philosophical and literary work⁵⁰. Instructive starting points have already become available, on writing in the margins of Diderot's oeuvre by Franck Cabane (2009), and on the dynamics of contrarities and counterpoint in Diderot's writings by Walter Rex (1998)⁵¹. Going further, Diderot's fragments

in the *Histoire* would merit a postcolonial 'contrapuntal analysis' à la Edward Said⁵². In this respect, note the pervasive dialogic character of Diderot's contributions, which range from Catechism-like presentations through fictional excursions to lively conversation pieces that hold up a critical mirror to his readers. Their orality is enhanced by a wide variety of forms of address, and by the many contradictory voices we get to hear in the *Histoire* – from concerned philosophers and expert advisers to the King, in passionate speeches, éloges, laments, warnings and prophecies, counter voices from women, from slaves, from sages all over the world, no less than from the narrator when he is speaking directly to us, his readers – all raising key questions of conscience for humankind to ponder and discuss.

This is how Diderot was drawing up the balance sheet, *le pour et le contre*, on our European expansion and colonial commerce, and what this has brought us and taught us. It was – as Strugnell has pointed out⁵³ – to enlighten us and make us reflect on this immense global domain that Diderot, with all the literary, philosophical, rhetorical, critical and subversive samizdat writing skills at his command, came to develop his very own and totally new political discourse in the *Histoire*⁵⁴.

3.2. *The Chinese, what are they really like?*

Our first Diderot Fragment here is his discussion of the Chinese in book 2 chapter XXI, entitled «État de la Chine, selon ses détracteurs»⁵⁵. Diderot comes straight to the point, in direct opposition to the preceding panegyric in chapter XX by Raynal. Attacking the Sino-philia of Voltaire in his *Essai sur les mœurs* (1756)⁵⁶, Diderot's critique of China and the Chinese was severe: their mandarins may be wise and enlightened, but only

Paris 2009. And W. Rex, *Diderot's counterpoints. The dynamics of contrariety in his major works*, Voltaire Foundation, Oxford 1988.

⁴⁷ E.W. Said, *Culture & Imperialism*, Chatto & Windus, London 1993. Cf. D.R.M. Irving, *Colonial Counterpoints, Music in Early Modern Manila*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2010.

⁴⁸ A. Strugnell, s.v. «Politique», in *Dictionnaire de Diderot*, cit., pp. 411-417: 415.

⁴⁹ On Diderot's political discourse, see: H. Wolpe, *Raynal et sa machine de guerre* (1957), AMS Press, New York 1967; P. Vernière, *Diderot, Oeuvres politiques*, Garnier, Paris 1963; Benot, *Diderot*, cit.; Duchet, *Anthropologie et histoire*, cit.; Strugnell, *Diderot's Politics*, Nijhoff, The Hague 1973; Duchet, *Diderot et l'Histoire des Indes, ou l'Écriture Fragmentaire*, Nizet, Paris 1978; *Diderot Political Writings*, ed. by J.H. Mason and R. Wokler, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1992; Diderot, *Œuvres*, vol. III (*Politique*), éd. par L. Versini, Laffont, Paris 1995; and Goggi, *Fragments politiques*, cit.

⁵⁰ *Histoire*, vol. I, bk. 1, chpt. XXI. *Etat de la Chine, selon ses détracteurs*, pp. 115-128 [= Goggi nr. 12]. Cf. Benot, *Raynal*, cit., p. 33, n. 1.

⁵¹ Cf. Raynal, *HDI*, vol. I (2010), p. 102, n. 420 (by G. Abbattista).

Eighteenth Century (1929), ed. by J.P. Mayer, Harper Torchbooks, New York 1962.

⁴⁷ Curran, *Diderot*, cit., p. 364.

⁴⁸ References, successively: *Histoire*, all in vol. IV: (i) bk. 19, chpt. II. *Gouvernement*, pp. 480-487 [= Goggi nr. 310]; (ii) bk. 18, chpt. XLII. *Les colonies étoient en droit de se séparer de leur métropole*, pp. 390-419 [= Goggi nr. 298]; (iii) bk. 15, chpt. IX. *Forme, caractère, gouvernement des castors*, pp. 62-63 [= Goggi nr. 242]; and (iv) bk. 15, chpt. IV. *Gouvernement, habitudes, vertus, vices, guerres des sauvages qui habitent le Canada*, p. 37 [= Goggi nr. 240].

⁴⁹ As suggested by Benot, *La Révolution française*, cit., p. 24.

⁵⁰ J.M. Bardez, *Diderot et la Musique*, Champion, Paris 1975; B. Didier, *La musique des Lumières*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1985.

⁵¹ F. Cabane, *L'écriture en marge dans l'oeuvre de Diderot*, Champion,

in name; one cannot get justice there; and they maintain their tyranny with clubs⁵⁷. China to him actually was a wretched and almost barbaric country, overwhelmed by social ills and despotism. This angry, anti-despotic view contrasts strongly with Raynal's much more positive assessment. Diderot then continues with a point-by-point rebuttal of many widely held *idées reçues* about the high culture, politeness and ancient wisdom of the Chinese, cutting down the admiring views of Voltaire and many Jesuits, who from about 1680 had played a major role in bringing knowledge about China to Europe⁵⁸.

The contradiction within the *Histoire* between those two chapters reveals a growing political awareness on Diderot's part⁵⁹. However, though sharply critical of the Chinese, he did not throw away what they did offer him: their secular moral sense, of Confucianist origin, so close to his own social and humanist views⁶⁰. No, his disagreement was first of all with Raynal and Voltaire, and this he did bring out into the open. His comprehensive debunking of Chinese despotism put down a crucial challenge to Enlightened Europe – viz. how China might actually be enlightened from the West⁶¹. For the time being, however, he suspended judgement, laying before the *opinion publique* a proposal (at the end of chapter XXI) to send out a jury of disinterested and judicious Europeans, well-versed in Chinese language and literature, for a long stay in Peking, at court and in the provinces, to engage in free, critical conversations with Chinese of all possible backgrounds, in order to find out more about the real conditions obtaining in China.

3.3. Hottentots, Hollanders and Humanity

⁵⁷ Montesquieu, *Esprit des Lois* (1748): en Chine «on ne fait rien faire [au peuple] qu'à coups de bâton». Quoted by H. Nakagawa, *La Chine et le Japon ou la morale sociale dans l'Histoire des deux Indes*, in Raynal, *De la polémique*, cit., p. 199.

⁵⁸ Cf. J. Needham, *Within the Four Seas*, George Allen & Unwin, London 1969, pp. 13n, 76-77, 90 and 107. And L. Lecomte, *Un jésuite à Pékin. Nouveaux mémoires sur l'état de la Chine, 1687-1692*, éd. par F. Touboul-Bouyeure, Phébus, Paris 1990.

⁵⁹ G. Abbattista, *How to deal with China? New questions in the 1780 edition of the Histoire des deux Indes*, in *Autour de l'Abbé Raynal*, cit., pp. 171-187.

⁶⁰ Nakagawa, *La Chine*, cit., p. 200, qualifies as «d'inspiration diderotienne» the position of the «détracteurs» that Confucianism was nothing but «une philosophie morale et une forme d'athéisme». Cf. Needham (cit., p. 190): «Confucianism is fundamentally a this-worldly social ethic». And C. Blum, *Diderot: The Virtue of a Philosopher*, Viking Press, New York 1974, esp. pp. 42 and 81. Cf. also R. Minuti, *Toleration in China and Siam in Late-Seventeenth-Century Travel Literature*, in *Paradoxes of Religious Toleration in Early Modern Political Thought*, ed. by J.C. Laursen and M.J. Villaverde, Lexington Books, Lanham (MD) 2012, pp. 109-120.

⁶¹ Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment*, cit., chpt. XX. *China, Japan and the West*, p. 572. Cf. Abbattista, cit., p. 187.

Diderot's second critical point comes in his famous passage on the Hottentots and the Hollanders in South Africa in book 2 chapter XVIII⁶². That chapter began with Raynal's praise for the Dutch at the Cape, for establishing a flourishing rest and recuperation station for their ships midway between Europe and Asia. Raynal also noted how the Dutch were running the only colony where «the whites have deigned to share the happy, noble and virtuous joys of peaceful agriculture with the blacks», who «eat the same food as their masters, and are employed only in the same labours»⁶³. Similar praise had been given in 1776 by Adam Smith in his *Wealth of Nations*:

The Dutch settlements at the Cape of Good Hope and at Batavia, are at present the most considerable colonies which the Europeans have established, either in Africa, or in the East Indies; and both of these settlements are peculiarly fortunate in their situation.

As an economic thinker and capitalist Smith was predominantly interested in the profitability of Dutch colonial trade, and not much in the Hottentots, whom he saw as «a race almost as barbarous, and quite as incapable of defending themselves, as the natives of America»⁶⁴.

As against this, Diderot's fragment on the Hottentots opens in a very different key, with a discussion of the bodies and customs of the Hottentots – the female genital skirt supposedly covering her vagina; the men having only one testicle⁶⁵. Then, turning to his European readership, he asks: «Mais sont-ils heureux, me demanderez-vous?»⁶⁶. The reply he gives himself is a strong warning to the Hottentots against the dangers and devastation which await them from the Dutch:

Fuyez, malheureux Hottentots, fuyez! enfoncez-vous dans vos forêts. Les bêtes féroces qui les habitoient sont moins redoutables que les monstres sous l'empire desquels vous allez tomber. Le tigre vous déchirera peut-être; mais il ne vous ôtera que la vie. L'autre vous ravira l'innocence et la liberté. Ou si vous vous en sentez le courage, prenez vos haches, tendez vos arcs, faites pleuvoir sur ces étrangers vos flèches empoisonnées. Puisse-t-il n'en rester aucun pour

⁶² *Histoire*, vol. I, bk. 2, chpt. XVIII : *Etablissement des Hollandais au cap de Bonne-Espérance*, pp. 203-206 [= Goggi nr. 21].

⁶³ Jimack, *A History of the Two Indies*, cit., bk. 2, p. 20. See also Abbattista's nn. 92 and 93 in Raynal, *HDI*, vol. I (2010), bk. 2, pp. 189-191.

⁶⁴ For both quotes see A. Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Wordsworth Classics, Ware 2012, pp. 632-633. Cf. Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment*, cit., p. 539.

⁶⁵ *Histoire*, vol. I, bk. 2, chpt. XVIII. *Etablissement des Hollandais au cap de Bonne-Espérance*, p. 203 [= Goggi nr. 21].

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 204.

*porter à leurs citoyens la nouvelle de leur désastre!*⁶⁷

The very different views of the Hottentots held by Diderot and Smith underline how far these two enlightened European colonial experts, who knew and read each other's works⁶⁸, were apart: on the one hand, Smith, an outspoken champion of capitalist free trade and admirer of the moderate Montesquieu – and on the other, Diderot's deep moral compassion with the Hottentots, his prophetic tone and passionate words against the Hollanders, which mark him as the committed, radical humanitarian he was.

3.4. Women, oppression, freedom and charity

Thirdly, an impressive feature of the *Histoire* is the long line of female portraits, detailing what women's lives were like at the time. Throughout the *Histoire*, we find Diderot and Raynal regularly taking stock of the position of women and the religion-driven customs they are subject to: in India it is widow burning; in Arabia infibulation, jealousy and honour killings; in Europe, Catholics have the institution of celibacy, which Diderot regarded as against nature, reason, humanity and religion; North American Indian Native Tribes, on the other hand, who do not have the Christian idea of an indissoluble relation between man and wife, often accept the practice of divorce⁶⁹; then again, in Japan, under the Sinto religion, female sexual instincts are welcomed by their deities and may wisely be cultivated in the houses of courtesans⁷⁰.

As Michèle Duchet has shown, these and other fragments in the *Histoire* brought the early beginnings of a global comparative anthropology of women and their

fate⁷¹. From the enormous variety of their life experiences, a key theme emerges: that of female oppression and regimentation by men – analysed by Gayatri Spivak as «double colonization»⁷². In Guinée, women are totally subject to their men, and lead a deplorable life of domestic slavery⁷³. In South-America, Orenoco-women relate how they kill their baby daughters so as to spare them the hell of slave life that is the fate of women. One of them, when reprimanded for this by a Jesuit, told him how her life was hell and how she wished she had been killed at birth by her mother and thus spared this suffering, which is a thousand times worse than death⁷⁴. Even in such atrocious situations, though, we still encounter female agency – as also in Mexico: when Cortés was given a slave girl, who became Marina Malinche, his lover, interpreter and counsellor, she led the Conquistadors to victory⁷⁵.

As we see, in the *Histoire* Eliza Draper was not the only woman to speak (or write). Polly Baker⁷⁶ was another. Hauled before the court in New England, she speaks out against the puritanism of her judges and their oppression of women, over fertility and sexual productivity. The tale of Polly Baker came into the world as a fictional anecdote by Benjamin Franklin in Philadelphia, was then relayed to London and Paris, picked up by Raynal and recounted by him in a *Salon*, then developed by Diderot and published in the *Histoire*. Interestingly, Diderot then reworked it again in his *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville*, where he combined it with the address by the Old Man on Tahiti⁷⁷, in the same prophetic style as the Hottentot address above, defending the way of life of his people against European men: «Weep, unhappy Tahitians! Weep – not for the going but for the coming of those wicked and ambitious men!». Thus, both in New England and on Tahiti, it would seem, there was a clear clash between natural female sexuality on the one hand, and on the other the

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 205.

⁶⁸ Abbattista, *How to deal with China?*, cit., p. 185.

⁶⁹ Divorce: see *Histoire*, vol. IV, bk. 15, chpt. IV. *Gouvernement, habitudes, vertus, vices, guerres des sauvages qui habitoient le Canada*, pp. 10-39, esp. p. 20.

⁷⁰ Japan: see *Histoire*, vol. I, bk. 1, chpt. XXII. *Arrivée des Portugais au Japon. Religion, mœurs, gouvernement de ces îles*, pp. 130-134 [= Goggi nr 13]. In 1765, Diderot discussed Shintoism in his article «Japonais» in the *Encyclopédie*, vol. VIII, pp. 455-458, online, ARTFL Project, <https://artfl-project.uchicago.edu> (03/2022). Cf. *L'Encyclopédie et le Japon*, in H. Nakagawa, *Des Lumières et du comparatisme. Un regard japonais sur le XVIII^e siècle*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1992, pp. 237-267. In November 1778 the *Correspondance Littéraire* of Grimm and Diderot published a note on the *Recherches historiques sur l'état de la religion chrétienne au Japon relativement à la nation hollandaise*, de M. le Baron Onno Swier de Haren, transl. by H. Jansen, Couturier, Londres-Paris 1778, in *Correspondance de Grimm et de Diderot*, éd. par J.A. Taschereau, Furne, Paris, 1829-1831, vol. X, p. 118 (Nov. 1778). Cf. P. van der Vliet, *Onno Zwier van Haren (1713-1779)*, Verloren, Hilversum 1996, pp. 352, 358-363.

⁷¹ Duchet, *Anthropologie de Diderot*, in Ead., *Anthropologie et histoire*, cit., chpt. II.5, pp. 407-475.

⁷² G.C. Spivak, *Subaltern Studies, Deconstructing Historiography* (1985), in *The Spivak Reader*, ed. by D. Landry & G. Maclean, Routledge, London-New York 1996, pp. 203-235.

⁷³ Guinée: see *Histoire*, vol. III, bk. 11, chpt. XV. *Mœurs, habitudes & occupations des peuples de la Guinée*, p. 139.

⁷⁴ Orenoco women: see *Histoire*, vol. II, bk. 7, chpt. XVII. *Quelle fut la condition des femmes sur les bords de l'Orenoque, & quelle elle est encore*, p. 168 [= Goggi nr. 104].

⁷⁵ Marina Malinche: see *Histoire*, vol. II, bk. 6, chpt. VIII. *Navigations qui conduisent les Espagnols à la connaissance du Mexique*, p. 26.

⁷⁶ Polly Baker: see *Histoire*, vol. IV, bk. 17, chpt. XXI. *Sévérités qui se perpétuent dans la Nouvelle-Angleterre, après même l'extinction du fanatisme*, pp. 241-244 [= Goggi nr X (sic); cf. Goggi nr. 220]. Cf. Salverda, *Malouet*, cit., pp. 225-226.

⁷⁷ D. Diderot, *This is not a story*, transl. by P.N. Furbank, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1993, pp. 67-71.

religion-inspired male oppression and abuse of it – both highlighting the same point: European men, when they come to the colonies, will just impose their own barbaric norms and behaviour on people living there.

There are many other such countervoices throughout the *Histoire*, speaking out against the oppression and chains which those Europeans were bringing, driven on by their cramped and unnatural ideas, their murderous habits, their lust for power and loot. It is the *Histoire* which has lent those countervoices a pen and words while documenting their lives⁷⁸. As if Raynal and Diderot were out to construct an alliance amongst those at the receiving end of European oppression, fellow human beings who were desperately looking for freedom from those colonising European men. True Freedom, that is – for women, and for people of a different colour, of a different culture and different religion.

In contrast, the scant attention paid to women in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* – just three pages⁷⁹ – is telling. The moral universes of Smith and Diderot appear to be on different planets. Indicative of the distance is the snapshot in Paris which the *Histoire* presents of the Necker family in their *Salon*, where Raynal and Diderot produced their *Éloge de Madame Necker*⁸⁰, praising her for the Hospice de la Charité which she founded in 1778 and where patients received exemplary care, i.e. one patient to a bed (instead of many more, as was usual, and for far less money than in the existing Parisian hospitals). The *Histoire* gives her – as a Swiss immigrant in France, a decent *citoyenne*, not a fancy aristocrat – high praise for this charitable initiative, made possible with Protestant money from her husband, the colonial banker and «intendant-général des finances en France»⁸¹, Jacques Necker. Around him, Diderot and others such as Galiani, Forbonnais and Montaudouin, subscribed to a pragmatic and eclectic liberalism – defined as «ni mercantiliste, ni physiocrate» by the economic journalist Jacques Accarias de Serionne in his *Journal de Commerce*⁸². Jointly with Necker's daughter, Germaine (later Madame de Staël),

Raynal and Diderot in their *Histoire* produced a short triptych on the Huguenots⁸³, highlighting their great contribution to French trade, industry and economy, and their subsequent expulsion and cruel persecution by the King and the Church of France. Thus, from Madame Necker's *Salon* via her regular guests Raynal and Diderot and her daughter, this Huguenot connection ran straight into the *Histoire*. Contact, conversation and writing brought them together in a meeting of minds around shared moral concerns, in the hope that doing good and charitable actions will set an example. Here too, Diderot made his pitch for the poor: the hospitals must be improved; the poor and the sick deserve decent, humane treatment; what really matters is to improve the world. Inclusive like Anacharsis Cloots and long before our *Médecins sans frontières*, Diderot was calling out: «Citoyens de l'univers, unissez-vous tous à moi»⁸⁴.

3.5. Freedom and Slavery

Our fourth fragment is taken from book 11 of the *Histoire*, especially chapter XXIV, where Diderot presents one of the hardest hitting of all his contributions. With its catechism-structure, this fragment offers a critical examination of all arguments to justify slavery, leading to Diderot's radical conclusion: There is no argument that can justify slavery, because liberty is a human being's basic and inalienable natural, civil and political right⁸⁵. During the Revolution, this was to become Diderot's most read fragment (though more so by politicians than by abolitionists)⁸⁶. However, as we saw, in book 13 of the *Histoire* it was Malouet who took on Diderot, claiming that, yes, slavery might be unjustifiable and an abomination – but alas, it is a necessity. In this respect, he followed the *Wealth of Nations* (1776). True, Adam Smith did mention the well-known emancipation of slaves by the Quakers in Philadelphia, but in the same breath he also recognised the necessity of using slaves for sugar production, even if this will raise

⁷⁸ Moky, *Enlightened Economy*, cit., p. 37: «Eighteenth-century Enlightenment thought, on the whole, was anti-Imperial, and regarded non-Europeans with a certain respect that seems to have eroded in the decades after 1830 and turned into a new wave of colonialism».

⁷⁹ J. Norman, *Smith on Women*, in Id., *Adam Smith What He Thought and Why it Matters*, Penguin, London 2018, pp. 196-199.

⁸⁰ Mme Necker: see *Histoire*, vol. III, bk. 12, chpt. XI. *Importance, gouvernement, population, cultures & autres travaux de Cuba*, p. 265 [= Goggi nr. 181].

⁸¹ *Histoire*, vol. III, s.v. «Necker», in *Table Alphabétique*, under N, p. 622.

⁸² H. Hasquin, *Jacques Accarias de la Serionne, et le Journal de Commerce* (1974), in Id., *Population, Commerce et Religion au Siècle des Lumières. Etudes sur le 18ème siècle*, Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, Bruxelles 2008, pp. 155-167.

⁸³ Huguenots: see *Histoire*, vol. IV, bk. 16, chpt. IX. *La France pouvait retirer de grands avantages de la Louysiane. Fautes qui ont empêché ce succes*, pp. 107-108 [Goggi nr. 246]. Cf. Salverda, *Malouet*, cit., pp. 226-227.

⁸⁴ *Histoire*, vol. III, bk. 12, chpt. XI. *Importance, gouvernement, population, cultures & autres travaux de Cuba*, p. 266 [= Goggi nr. 181]. Cf. R. Mortier, *Anacharsis Cloots ou l'utopie foudroyée*. Stock, Paris 1995

⁸⁵ Jimack, *History*, cit., p. 158. Cf. *Histoire*, vol. III, bk. 11, chpt. XXIV. *Origine & progrès de l'esclavage. Argumens imaginés pour le justifier. Réponse à ces argumens*, pp. 186-205 [= Goggi nr. 171/172].

⁸⁶ Y. Benot, *Traces de l'Histoire des deux Indes chez les anti-esclavagistes sous la Révolution*, in *Lectures de Raynal, L'Histoire des deux Indes en Europe et en Amérique au XVIII^e siècle*, éd. par H.J. Lüsebrink et M. Tietz, Voltaire Foundation, Oxford 1991, pp. 141-156.

production costs⁸⁷. For Smith this wasn't really a problem, though, since the profits on sugar were higher anyway than in any other cultivation process – and so one could afford «the expence (sic) of slave cultivation». As he saw it, this was just a problem of cost, and that could be resolved by money. Some see this as Smith's economic argument against slavery⁸⁸, but that is doubtful, as necessity and cheap availability will soon prevail to justify the use of slaves. Money, after all, will buy you anything, and the frontispiece of volume III of the *Histoire* just shows us how. On the beach of Barbados we see «un Anglais de la Barbade, vend sa Maitresse» (sic). This is the infamous story of the Englishman Inkle just after he'd been saved from death by the native Yarico, who also became his lover. There, just before his return to England, he sells her as a slave for a bag full of money. Ever since, the story of Yarico and Inkle⁸⁹ – a story of heartless greed and cruel betrayal first reported as long ago as 1657 – has been around, commemorating a disgraceful act, kept alive until today in a long tradition of music, stories and poetry – most recently the Yarico musical in 2015 in London, even a monument to her in Barbados⁹⁰.

As for the core issue in book 11, what Diderot presented is a tightly argued reasoning leading to the conclusion that there is no argument that can justify slavery. Slavery is a truly monstrous institution which violates the first human right there is, viz. the right for anyone to exist and to have pleasure in life. This is the basic humanitarian position of Diderot's Radical Enlightenment – a passionately held, secular moral standpoint, expressed in prophetic tone and style – at a time when the whole idea of freedom for slaves was still 'chimérique'. Diderot was quite radical here, though with a proviso: «Nous examinons les choses en philosophes»⁹¹. So yes, 'en philosophe' he destroyed the intellectual foundations of slavery, but left it to others to deal with the business of abolition. No less important than Diderot's reasoning, therefore, is what Raynal added concerning the Quakers. Already in his Sumatra chapter in book 2 Raynal had criticised the duplicity of the Dutch. Now, in clear opposition to Adam Smith, Raynal

added – for the first time in the 1777 Maestricht edition of the *Histoire* by Dufour and Roux⁹² – the letter of the Pennsylvanian Quakers who cut right through that Dutch dilemma by asking: «Quoi, tu veux être libre et tyran tout à la fois?»⁹³.

Thus, with their *Histoire*, the two jointly laid the radical groundwork which enabled the next generation of *Amis des Noirs*, foremost among them Condorcet and Grégoire, to get the abolition of slavery through the National Assembly in February 1794⁹⁴.

3.6. «Hommes, vous êtes tous frères!»

Our fifth and final point is to do with what happened after Diderot passed away in 1784. That same year, in Berlin, Immanuel Kant published his answer to the question: *Was ist Aufklärung?* (What is Enlightenment?), with crucial adhortations such as «Humans, dare to know!» and «Overcome your own limitations and prejudice, your self-imposed blind spots and the blinders you are wearing». No less impressive is the fully-fledged theory he developed of knowledge and knowledge production, based on his well-known idealisations and categories, which have been very influential in defining the crucial notion of cognitive subject in the Western tradition⁹⁵. However, with respect to slaves, non-whites and women, Kant took exception, since in his view these could not possibly be part of the ideal cognitive subject.

This position, developed, intellectually underpinned and validated by Kant, has been attacked by Gayatri Spivak in her *Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999). Coming from the field of Subaltern Studies in India⁹⁶, she took issue in particular with Kant's notion of «der Rohe Mensch», the primitive person, who must be excluded from the Kantian cognitive subject as being inherently incapable of engaging in higher intellectual pursuits

⁸⁷ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, cit., bk. 3, pp. 383-384.

⁸⁸ R.J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism: A Historical Introduction*, Blackwell, Oxford 2001, pp. 82-87.

⁸⁹ For this story and the names of Inkle and Yarico, see: Raynal, *HDI*, vol. III (2020) bk. 14, chpt. VIII. *Conspiration formée à la Barbade par les esclaves*, p. 453, esp. nn. 84-87.

⁹⁰ Outram shows a copy of the Yarico and Inkle frontispiece of the *Histoire*'s vol. III (*Panorama*, cit., p. 149).

⁹¹ *Histoire* vol. IV, bk. 18, chpt. XLII. *Les colonies étoient en droit de se séparer de leur metropole indépendamment de toute mécontentement*, p. 393 [= Goggi nr. 298].

⁹² Ehrard, *Lumières et Esclavage*, cit., p. 205, n. 52.

⁹³ Cf. *Histoire* vol. IV, bk. 18, chpt. XXXII. *De quelles espèces d'hommes se sont peuplées les provinces de l'Amérique Septentrionale?*, pp. 359-361. Here the Quaker letter cried out over the abominable treatment of our enslaved fellow beings: «& nous sommes chrétiens, & nous sommes anglois!». Similarly, already in 1765 in the *Encyclopédie* and on the very same topic, Diderot cried out: «et nous sommes raisonnables et nous sommes chrétiens!» (s.v. «Humain», vol. VIII [1765], p. 347).

⁹⁴ Benot, *La Révolution française*, cit., p. 240. For an enlightening juxtaposition of the key texts by Malouet, Grégoire, Condorcet, Bénézet and Brissot, see: Dorigny, *Raynal, les droits de l'homme et l'esclavage*, cit., pp. 131-136.

⁹⁵ A. Lilti, *L'Héritage des Lumières. Ambivalences de la modernité*, EHESS/Gallimard Seuil, Paris 2019, pp. 286-294. But also: Y. Benot, *La Modernité de l'esclavage: essai sur la servitude au cœur du capitalisme*, La Découverte, Paris 2003, pp. 226-228.

⁹⁶ Young, *Postcolonialism*, cit., pp. 62, 63, 69, 355, 415.

such as philosophy and science⁹⁷. Spivak's criticism is based on the fact that Kant developed this notion of the 'Raw Man' from negative ideas current in his time, on Australian aborigines as non- or subhuman.

This Kantian idealisation of the cognitive subject has been criticised also by the philosopher Richard Popkin, who noted how Kant, in his *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1764), had accepted Hume's view on the differences between whites and blacks. In agreement with Hume⁹⁸, Kant wrote: «So fundamental is the difference between the two races of men, and it appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as in color». What Kant asserted there has been called by Popkin his «theory of the natural and irremediable inferiority of blacks». As Popkin added, «in so doing, Kant established what was to be a most dire way of considering racial differences for the next two centuries: Apparent differences between racial groups were conceived of as essential differences that could never be overcome»⁹⁹.

Yet another attack on Kant came from performance artist Coco Fusco, who described the practice, common since the early days of the European conquest, of taking aboriginal samples of people from Africa, Asia and the Americas to Europe for aesthetic contemplation, scientific analysis and entertainment. Fusco details these in a long list of non-Europeans kidnapped from every continent over the last 500 years, who «have been taken to be exhibited in the taverns, theatres, gardens, museum, zoos, circuses, and world fairs of Europe, and the freak shows of the United States». As she adds: «Those samples took the place of Savages in European mythology; or served as proof of natural superiority of European civilization; or of its ability to exert control over and extract knowledge from the primitive world; and ultimately of the genetic inferiority of non-European races»¹⁰⁰.

This critique of Kant's racist ideas and cognitive philosophy by Spivak, Popkin and Fusco – all three from outside Europe – is in line with the *Histoire* itself, whose authors had taken a moral line that is quite different from that of Kant. Diderot, in book 11, imagined

a «grand homme» who would lead the black slaves to their freedom¹⁰¹, and Raynal wanted a statue for Bartolomé de Las Casas, the 16th-century Spanish bishop who, shocked by the terrors of colonisation in the Caribbean¹⁰², posited Reform and Radicalism as the only two humane options for the future¹⁰³. Here, therefore, they both should have the last word – Raynal: «Eh, ne sommes nous pas tous frères?», and Diderot: «Hommes, vous êtes tous frères»¹⁰⁴.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In exploring the Diderot fragments above, and the many more which Gianluigi Goggi has carefully analysed, we get a ringside view of the ongoing discussions and the tensions being addressed within the *Histoire*. Were the Chinese wise rulers, as Raynal held, or violent despots, as Diderot claimed? Were the Dutch – as Raynal held – beneficent not only to their own folk but also to the Hottentots, or was Diderot right to chastise them, from a humanitarian point of view, as a cruel and violent colonial occupation force? Were women worldwide doomed to live in conditions of double colonisation, or should they have real freedom from oppression – by men, by colonisers, by Europeans? Was slavery an unjustifiable abomination, as Diderot argued, or were slaves, in spite of this moral imperative, 'necessary', as claimed by the majority of economists, colonial administrators and planters? So: should we go for reform rather than abolition? Would it be better, for civilising purposes, to delay abolition, as advocated by Kant, Raynal and Malouet (certainly after their pro-slavery co-publication of 1785)? Or, if white Europeans were actually not naturally and essentially superior to non-whites, shouldn't we accept the moral principle of the abolitionists, that all humans are equal and ought to be treated as such?

⁹⁷ G.C. Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA) 1999. Cf. *Summary of Gayatri Spivak's talk to the World Bank 1999*, <<http://www.dannybutt.net>> (04/2022). Also: Young, *Postcolonialism*, cit., esp. chpt. VI. *Las Casas to Bentham*, pp. 77-87.

⁹⁸ Hume's view was shared by Malouet, and under his influence from 1785 also by Raynal, cf. Benot, *La Révolution française*, cit., pp. 38-39.

⁹⁹ R.H. Popkin, *Eighteenth-century racism*, in *The Pimlico History of Western Philosophy*, ed. by R.H. Popkin, Pimlico, London 1999, pp. 508-515. Cf. W. Lim, 'The Racial Contract': Interview with Philosopher Charles W. Mills, «Harvard Political Review», 29 October 2020.

¹⁰⁰ C. Fusco, *English is Broken Here. Notes on Cultural Fusion in the Americas*, The New Press, New York 1995. Cf. Abbattista, *European Encounters*, cit.

¹⁰¹ *Histoire*, vol. III, bk. 11, chpt. XXIV. *Origine & progres de l'esclavage. Argumens imaginés pour le justifier. Réponse à ces argumens*, pp. 204-205 [= Goggi nr. 172]. In the second edition of the *Histoire* (1774), this «grand homme» was named the «Spartacus nouveau» by Sébastien Mercier, who in *L'An 2440* (1771) dedicated his statue «Au Vengeur du Nouveau Monde», cf. Benot, *Diderot*, cit., p. 214. The *Histoire*, vol. III, bk. 12, chpt. XXVII. *Désordres qui règnent dans les colonies Hollandaises*, pp. 307-308, refers to: «une grande ame dans un corps d'ébène, une tête forte sous la toison d'un nègre». This is the Black Spartacus of S. Hazareensingh, *Black Spartacus, The Epic Life of Toussaint Louverture*, Allen Lane, London 2020, esp. p. 99.

¹⁰² *Histoire*, 1780, vol. II, bk. 8, chpt. XXIII. *Ancienne condition des Indiens, & leur état actuel*, pp. 297-298.

¹⁰³ Young, *Postcolonialism*, cit., p. 75.

¹⁰⁴ Raynal: see *Histoire*, vol. II, bk. 6, chpt. XVIII. *De la culture de la cochenille*, p. 78. Diderot: see *ibidem*, vol. III, bk. 11, chpt. IX. *Origine de la piraterie sur la côte septentrionale de l'Afrique. Moyens de la réprimer*, p. 122 [= Goggi nr. 164].

These were some of the crucial global issues addressed by Diderot in the *Histoire* of 1780 – the outcome of ten years of slaving away after he finished the *Encyclopédie*, during which, step by step, his political ideas became increasingly radical, starting from Galiani's *Dialogues sur le Commerce des Blés* (1770), via his own *Pages contre un tyran* (Frederick II, 1771); his *Fragments politiques* (1772) and his *Observations sur le Nakaz* (1774) for Catharine II; to his advice *Aux Insurgents de l'Amérique* (1778)¹⁰⁵. And now, at the end of book 19, Diderot contributes a chapter, not as one might expect on *Philosophie, Beaux-Arts & belles-lettres*, or *Morale*, but, surprisingly, on *Impôts*¹⁰⁶ – a hardhitting political text, including his *Dialogue with a Vizir*, against despotic rulers and their extortionate taxation practices, and pleading for a just and fair taxation system for all in French society – written, perhaps, with Voltaire's story *L'homme aux quarante ecus* (1768) in mind, another «serious treatise on political economy cast in the form of a story», «one of the most complex of Voltaire's writings» and «closely akin to Diderot's masterpieces», as Besterman put it¹⁰⁷.

With the new public discourse he developed in his fragments, we see Diderot operating as «l'homme du questionnement»¹⁰⁸. Throughout the *Histoire* this is the point: Diderot and Raynal addressed those questions head-on, thus making explicit the real world context within which trade and commerce are having to operate. While the two regularly came to different views, their debates did shape the frame of relevance which matters when studying the European expansion. What really made the *Histoire* was their dynamic cooperation and exchange – Raynal's great, synthetic, commercial and statistic sweep across all those empires, peppered by the critical and imaginative flashes of liberal political and democratic insight which the mercurial Diderot added to the mix. In the process, two different moral universes were coming to the fore¹⁰⁹. On the one hand, the dominant Moderate Enlightenment with the elite liberalism and capitalism of Turgot, Smith and Malouet and many others, who all battled to free themselves from absolute monarchy and despotism, but did nothing to extend their

fight to include freedom for women, blacks and slaves. And on the other, Diderot's Radical position: freedom is a basic human right for everybody in the world; and there is not a single argument that could possibly provide a justification for slavery. His moral imperative therefore is: we must fight despotism and slavery, if we are to move forward to a humanitarian and democratic society. Here, at the end of the *Histoire*, culminates the deeply moral questioning which runs right through it. It is for such a better future that Diderot invited everyone to come and engage in a dialogue about the real world issues at stake here. Even the cruellest European would be welcome to a discussion of the following question:

*Arrêtons-nous ici, & plaçons-nous au tems où l'Amérique & l'Inde étoient inconnues. Je m'adresse au plus cruel des Européens, & je lui dis. Il existe des régions qui te fourniront de riches métaux, des vêtemens agréables, des mets délicieux. Mais lis cette histoire, & vois à quel prix la découverte t'en est promise. Veux-tu, ne veux-tu pas qu'elle se fasse? Croit-on qu'il y eût un être assez infernal pour répondre: JE LE VEUX. Eh bien! Il n'y aura pas dans l'avenir un seul instant où ma question n'ait la même force!*¹¹⁰

À quel prix? Nowhere else but in the 18th century could one read such searing political prose as in the radical fragments which Diderot contributed to the think-tank or debating club which he turned Raynal's *opus magnum* into – simply by asking questions that are still valid, and still with us today.

The European Expansion may have started for good reasons of commerce, trade and exploration. But today, when we ourselves go out to the Two Indies, we are having to face two critical questions: (i) Know Thy Self, and (ii) What About The Other? – Socratic questions, which confront us with the fact that everyone we encounter in the world is our fellow human being, free, like us, never a slave, never an inferior subaltern, and all belonging to the *societas humana*. This gives us a clear moral and social-humanitarian categorical imperative¹¹¹. But it sits uneasily alongside the commercial imperative of modern capitalism, which has become a core part of modern imperialism since the Enlightenment¹¹².

It is this tension which the authors of the *Histoire* have made explicit through the discussions in their book

¹⁰⁵ Strugnell, s.v. «Politique», cit., pp. 410-417.

¹⁰⁶ *Histoire*, vol. IV, bk. 19, chpt. X. *Impôts*, pp. 635-659.

¹⁰⁷ Th. Besterman, *Voltaire* (1969), Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1976³, pp. 516-517.

¹⁰⁸ H. Hasquin, *Politique, économie, et démographie chez Diderot: aux origines du libéralisme économique et démocratique* (1980), in Id., *Population, Commerce et Religion*, Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, Bruxelles 2008, pp. 21-36, esp. p. 35: «l'homme du questionnement».

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment*, cit., *Introduction*. On 'moderate' versus 'radical', see esp. pp. 3, 6, 11-12, and 16. See further: P. Gallo (ed), *Histoire des deux Indes: Raynal et ses doubles*. Brill, Leiden 2022.

¹¹⁰ *Histoire*, vol. IV, bk. 19, chpt. XV. *Réflexions sur le bien & le mal que la découverte du Nouveau Monde a fait à l'Europe*, p. 705 [= Goggi nr. 352].

¹¹¹ For this Socratic inspiration of Diderot's thought, see *Histoire* 1780, vol. IV, bk. 19, chpt. XIII. *Philosophie*, p. 680. Cf. C. Vincent, *Diderot en quête d'éthique (1773-1784)*, Garnier, Paris 2014, p. 14, n. 4. And: Blum, *Virtue*, cit., pp. 81-82.

¹¹² D. Tricoire, *Enlightened Colonialism: Civilization Narratives and Imperial Politics in the Age of Reason*, Palgrave, London 2017.

– so the whole world would know and understand this too. They did so by giving a voice to those very many human beings who had (and often still have) no say in the matter – the poor, the needy, the hungry, the workers, the slaves, the women – all those who, even today, are often not heard and not included. For despite what Smith and Kant said, they do matter. It is this democratic and inclusive insight which is the revolutionary political contribution of the *Histoire* to Enlightenment debate.

So now, finally, to answer Anthony Pagden's opening question. Andrew Curran rightly says that Diderot's «dogged quest for truth makes him the most compelling 18th-century advocate of the art of writing freely». Diderot wrote for us, his «interlocutors of the future», and «has now become the most relevant of Enlightenment philosophers»¹¹³. Equally, Jonathan Israel's massive volumes on the Radical Enlightenment have made accessible the eye-opening, life-enhancing, Prospero-like qualities of that endlessly fascinating mind of Diderot – a political thinker who was, in the words of Anthony Strugnell: «the only significant theorist of revolution before 1789»¹¹⁴, operating from deep moral commitments, who yet remained the experimental philosopher he always was, putting his ideas before us – by questioning both *le pour* and *le contre*, thus challenging us to make up our minds.

What is at stake here is his point: if we are to be free, we do need to be able to think and write freely. Here we have another of Diderot's questions which still matter today: How to ensure the «extension de la sphère des Lumières?»¹¹⁵. Think how Diderot himself did this in the *Encyclopédie*: by spreading clarity, as in a good dictionary. It is as we saw above, where the *Histoire* put the Quaker challenge to its readers, viz. that in all honesty, we cannot be free and tyrants at the same time. Now think. So, first, take the Stoic philosophy, traditionally held by nobles, aristocrats and ruling elites, and say out loud: «I will not be a slave». Next, make sure that each and every person in the world will learn to say this, and practice it too, so we can all share this maxim as our universal basic human right¹¹⁶.

It is for this inclusive human rights perspective that Paolo Quintili has called Diderot «a revolutionary stoic»¹¹⁷. A man for our time, who keeps inspiring us to

do likewise, while we are learning to handle things that change and must change further, on our way to a better world. In their *Histoire*, Raynal and Diderot demonstrated that trade and commerce, contact and exchange, whether between individuals, peoples or nations, are never neutral and value-free. Free trade and fair trade, and the quite different economic models and choices underpinning them, both form an integral - but very unequal - part of the world in which humankind is learning to live together – and will always require open, critical, political and philosophical debate, exchange and moral judgment.

Here we have Diderot's invitation to us: to come along, continue our dialogue, develop morally acceptable solutions, and together realise our full human potential. For the benefit of us all.

¹¹³ Curran, *Diderot*, cit., pp. 402 and 7.

¹¹⁴ Strugnell, *Diderot's Politics*, cit., p. 229.

¹¹⁵ Lilti, *L'Héritage*, cit., pp. 265 and 376.

¹¹⁶ P. Quintili, *Le stoïcisme révolutionnaire de Diderot dans l'Essai sur Sénèque par rapport à la Contribution à l'Histoire des deux Indes*, «Recherches sur Diderot et sur l'Encyclopédie», 36, 2004. Cf. Lilti, *L'Héritage*, cit., p. 386.

¹¹⁷ Quintili, *Le stoïcisme révolutionnaire*, cit., p. 11, n. 21.