RACIAL CLASSIFICATIONS OF THE SEVENTEENTH
AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

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The explorations of the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries brought Europeans in contact with many new peoples, and finally scholars became interested in the problem of finding order in the bewildering variety of peoples with whom they were confronted. This led to attempts at more or less exhaustive classifications of the races of mankind.

It will be seen from the material given that the early classifications did not differ essentially from those of the present day, either in regard to methodology or criteria. The greatest improvement has been in the refinement of the criteria used as the basis for classification, both qualitative and quantitative.

Bernier

The first classification of the races of man known to the writer was made by Francois Bernier (1620-1688), a French traveller.

"Although in the exterior form of their body, and especially in their faces, men are almost all different one from the other, according to the different districts of the earth which they inhabit,... still I have remarked that there are four or five species or races of men in particular whose difference is so remarkable that it may be properly made use of as the foundation for a new division of the earth.

"I comprehend under the first species ... all Europe, except a part of Muscovy. To this may be added a small part of [North] Africa ... and also a good part of [Western and Southern] Asia... For although the Egyptians, for instance, and the [East] Indians are very black, or rather copper-coloured, that colour is only an accident in them, and comes because they are constantly exposed to the sun; and for those individuals who take care of themselves, and who are not obliged to expose themselves so often as the lower class, are not darker than many Spaniards. It is true that most Indians have something very

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different from us in the shape of their face, and in their colour which often comes very near to yellow; but that does not seem enough to make them a species apart, or else it would be necessary to make one of the Spaniards, another of the Germans, and so on with several other nations of Europe.

"Under the second species I put the whole of Africa, except the coasts I have spoken of. What induces me to make a different species of the Africans, are, 1. Their thick lips and squab noses, there being very few among them who have aquiline noses or lips of moderate thickness. 2. The blackness which is peculiar to them, and which is not caused by the sun, as many think; for if a black African pair be transported to a cold country, their children are just as black, and so are all their descendants until they come to marry with white women. The cause must be sought for in the peculiar texture of their bodies, or in the seed, or in the blood—which last are, however, of the same colour as everywhere else. 3. Their skin, which is oily, smooth, and polished, excepting the places which are burnt with the sun. 4. The three or four hairs of beard. 5. Their hair, which is not properly hair, but rather a species of wool, which comes near to hairs of some of our dogs; and, finally, their teeth whiter than the finest ivory, their tongue and all the interior of their mouth and their lips as red as coral.

"The third species comprehends [the rest of Asia]... The people of all those countries are truly white; but they have broad shoulders, a flat face, a small squab nose, little pig's-eyes long and deep set, and three hairs of beard.

"The Lapps make the fourth species. They are little stunted creatures with thick legs, large shoulders; short neck, and a face elongated immensely; very ugly and partaking much of the bear...

"As to the Americans, they are in truth most of them olive-coloured, and have their faces modelled in a different way from ours. Still I do not find the difference sufficiently great to make of them a peculiar species different from ours. Besides, as in our Europe, the stature, turn of the face, the colour and the hair are generally very different, as we have said, so it is the same in other parts of the world; as for example, the blacks of the Cape of Good Hope seem to be of a different species to those from the rest of Africa. They are small, thin, dry, ugly, quick in running" (1).

Then, as might be expected from a Frenchman, he proceeds to consider the relative beauty of the women of each of these races (2).
Bradley

The pre-Linnaean systematist, Richard Bradley (1666-1732), also had a classification of human races.

"I proceed to take notice of the several Kinds of Men, whose Difference is remarkable.

"We find five Sorts of Men; the White Men, which are Europeans, that have Beards; and a sort of White Men in America (as I am told) that only differ from us in having no Beards. The third sort are the Malatoes, which have their Skins almost of a Copper Colour, small Eyes, and strait black Hair. The fourth Kind are the Blacks, which have strait black Hair: And the fifth are the Blacks of Guiney, whose Hair is curl'd, like the Wool of a Sheep, which difference is enough to shew us their Distinction; for, as to their Knowledge, I suppose there would not be any great Difference, if it was possible they could be all born of the same Parents, and have the same Education, they would vary no more in Understanding than Children of the same house" (3).

Linnaeus

Carl von Linné (1707-1778) included the races of man in his taxonomic system. In the first edition (Leyden, 1735) of the Systema Naturae he divided Homo into four varieties:

"Europaeus albesc.
Americanus rubesc.
Asiaticus fuscus.
Africanus nigr."

The last revision, that of the tenth edition (Stockholm, 1758-59) was more elaborate.

"1. Homo know thyself
Sapiens 1. H. Diurnus; varying by culture and place.
Ferus
Americanus on all fours, mute, hairy.
reddish, choleric, erect.
Hair black, straight, thick; Nosophtrils wide; face harsh, Beard scanty.
Obstinate, merry, free.
Paints himself with fine red lines.
lines
Regulated by customs.
white, sanguine, muscular.
Hair flowing, long. Eyes blue.
Gentle, acute, inventive.
Covered with close vestments.

Europaeus (4)
Astraticus
Governed by laws.
sallow, melancholy, stiff.
Hair black. Eyes dark.
Severe, haughty, avaricious.
Covered with loose garments.
Ruled by opinions.

Afer
black, phlegmatic, relaxed.
Hair black, frizzled. Skin silky.
Nose flat. Lips tumult.
Women without shame. Mammæ
lactate profusely.
Crafty, indolent, negligent.
Anoints himself with grease.
Governed by caprice.
Monstrous... 
Troglohytes

2. H. nocturnus
Homo sylvestris Orang Outang"
(5).

Blumenbach
Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840) undertook an ex-
amination of the races of man. In the first edition (1770) of
De generis humani varietat nativa be classified man into four
races.

"... although there seems to be so great a difference
between widely separate nations, that you might easily
take the inhabitants of the Cape of Good Hope, the Green-
landers, and the Circassians for so many different species
of man, yet when the matter is thoroughly considered, you
see that all do so run into one another, and that one vari-
ety of mankind does so sensibly pass into the other, that
you cannot mark out the limits between them (6). ... 
The first and most important to us (which is also the
primitive one) is that of Europe, Asia this side of the
Ganges, and all the country situated to the north of the
Amur, together with that part of North America, which
is nearest both in position and character of the inhabit-
ants. Though the men of these countries seem to differ
very much amongst each other in form and colour, still
when they are looked at as a whole they seem to agree in
many things with ourselves. The second includes that
part of Asia beyond the Ganges, and below the river
Amur, which looks towards the south, together with the
islands, and the greater part of those countries which are
called Australia. Men of dark colour, snub noses, with
winking eyelids drawn outwards at the corners, scanty,
and stiff hair. Africa makes up the third. There remains
finally, for the fourth, the rest of America, except so much
of the North as was included in the first variety” (7).
In the second edition (1781) he revised his classification by
dividing man into five races, to which he adhered in all subse-
quent works.

"Formerly in the first edition of this work I divided
all mankind into four varieties; but after I had more
accurately investigated the different nations of Eastern
Asia and America, and, so to speak, looked at them more
closely, I was compelled to give up that division, and to
place in its stead the following five varieties, as more
consonant to nature.

“The first of these and the largest [the Caucasian
(8)], which is also the primeval one, embraces the whole
of Europe, including the Lapps, whom I cannot in any
way separate from the rest of the Europeans, when their
appearance and their language bear such a testimony to
their Finnish origin; and that western part of Asia . . . ;
also northern Africa, and lastly, in America, the Green-
landers and the Esquimaux; for I see in these people a
wonderful difference from other inhabitants of America;
and, unless I am altogether deceived, I think they must
be derived from these Finns. All these nations regarded
as a whole are white in colour, and, if compared with the
rest, beautiful in form.

“The second variety [the Mongolian, (9)] comprises
the rest of Asia. . . . The inhabitants of this country are
distinguished by being of brownish colour, more or less
verging to the olive, straight face, narrow eyelids, and
scanty hair . . . .

“The third variety [the Ethiopian, (10)] comprises
what remains of Africa, besides that northern part which
I have already mentioned. Black men, muscular, with
prominent upper jaws, swelling lips, turned up nose, very
black curly hair.

“The fourth [the American, (11)] comprises the rest
of America, whose inhabitants are distinguished by their
copper colour, their thin habit of body, and scanty hair.

“Finally, the new southern world makes up the fifth
[the Malayan (12)] . . . ; the men throughout being of a
very deep brown colour, with broad nose, and thick hair”
(13).

“Each of these five principal races contains besides
one or more nations which are distinguished by their
more or less striking structure from the rest of those of
the same division. Thus the Hindoos might be separated
as particular sub-varieties from the Caucasian; the Chi-
inese and Japanese from the Mongolian; the Hottentots from the Ethiopian; so also the North American Indians from those in the southern half of the new world; and the black Papuans in New Holland, &c. from the brown Otaheitians and other islanders of the Pacific Ocean” (14).

**Goldsmith**

In a hack work by Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774) six races are given.

“If we look round the world, there seems to be not above six distinct varieties in the human species, each of which is strongly marked, and speaks the kind seldom to have mixed with any other” (15).

“I have taken four of these varieties from Linnaeus; those of the Laplanders and Tartars from Mr. Buffon” (16).

“The first distinct race of men is found round the polar regions. The Laplanders, the Esquimaux Indians, the Samoed Tartars, the inhabitants of Nova Zembla, the Borandians, the Greenlanders, and the natives of Kamtschatka, may be considered as one peculiar race of people. . . .

“The second great variety in the human species seems to be that of the Tartar race. . . .

“To this race of men, also, we must refer the Chinese and the Japanese. . . .

“Another, which makes the third variety in the human species, is that of the southern Asiatics. . . . The nations that inhabit the peninsula of India seem to be the principal stock. . . .

“The fourth striking variety in the human species, is to be found among the negroes of Africa. . . .

“The inhabitants of America makes a fifth race. . . .

“The sixth and last variety of the human species, is that of the Europeans and the nations bordering on them” (17).

“. . . hair . . . colour differs in different tribes and races of people. The Americans, and the Asiatics, have their hair black, thick, straight, and shining. The inhabitants of the torrid climates of Africa have it black, short, and woolly. The people of Scandinavia have it red, long, and curled; and those of our own and neighboring countries, are found with hair of various colours” (18).

“The under jaw in a Chinese face falls greatly more backward than with us” (19).

**Camper**

According to Petrus Camper (1722-1789),
Table. Camper's comparative ratios of face breadth.

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<tr>
<td>Orang</td>
<td>19½:14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negro</td>
<td>27:20</td>
<td>20:18</td>
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<td>Calmuck</td>
<td>32:20</td>
<td>20:24</td>
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<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>29:23</td>
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"People are distinguished according to the grand divisions of the continents, into Europeans, Africans, Asiatics, and Americans" (20).

"Having contemplated the inhabitants of various nations with great attention, I conceived that a striking difference was occasioned . . . by the position of the inferior maxilla, . . . the breadth of the face, and the quadrangular form of this maxilla" (21).

The first observation led him to the discovery of the facial angle. For comparative purposes in its investigation, he developed the plane which served him as a standard for the measurement of skulls (22).

"[Camper's plane:] An horizontal line has been drawn through the lower part of the nose . . . and the orifice of the ear . . .; and the . . . skulls were arranged with care on the line . . .; attention being also paid to the direction of the jugale, or cheekbone" (23).

"[Summary on the facial angle:] The two extremities . . . of the facial lines are from 70 to 100 degrees, from the negro to the Grecian antique; make it under 70, and you describe an ourang or an ape; lessen it still more, and you have the head of a dog" (24).

On the breadth of the face, he gives comparative ratios which appear in the table at the end of this article.

Ferguson
Adam Ferguson (1723-1816) made this classification:

"Mankind may be referred to six different races.

"The European, the Samoide, the Tartar, the Hindoo, the Negro, and the American" (25).
REFERENCES

2. Ibid., pp. 151-55.
4. He classified man in Sweden as follows:

   "Classis I
   Quadrupedia
   I. Anthropomorpha
   Homo

The men inhabiting Sweden are

a. Goths, of tall stature, hair white and straight, the iris of the eye ashen blue.

b. Finns, muscular body, hair long and yellow, the iris of the eye dark.

c. Lapps, small thin body, hair black, straight, short, the iris of the eye blackish.

d. Variations and mixtures of a. and b. and the others who have immigrated into Sweden, in the way that may be seen over all Europe." Fauna Suecica (Leyden, 1748), p. 1.


10. Vide ibid., 5.
11. Vide ibid., 2.
14. BN, 1, 12.
16. Ibid., 2, 1, 11 (I, p. 232 n).
17. Ibid., 2, 1, 11 (I, pp. 232a-236b).
19. Ibid., 2. 1. 5 (I, p. 203a).
21. Ibid., intr. (p. 8).
22. Vide ibid., plates 1-3.
23. Ibid., 1. 3 (p. 33).
24. Ibid., 1. 3 (p. 42); vide ibid., intr. 1. 3-4.