

Great is whose sin?

Jo: "Today, students are taught Darwin as the "father of evolutionary theory," a genius scientist. They should also be taught Darwin as an English man with injurious and unfounded prejudices that warped his view of data and experience. Racists, sexists, and white supremacists, some of them academics, use concepts---"

Erik --- wait, what are you reading?!

Jo: It's an editorial in the journal *Science*. Here, it keeps going "-- white supremacists, some of them academics, use concepts and statements "validated" by their presence in *Descent* as support for erroneous beliefs, and the public accepts much of it uncritically."

Jim --- I recognize this—it's the editorial the biological anthropologist Agustin Fuentes published last year for the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the publication of Darwin's *Descent of Man*.

Erik: Doesn't sound like much of a "celebration"!

Jim: It certainly stirred up a lot of controversy!

Jo: British psychologist Andrew Whiten And colleagues said this about the piece:

In this 150th anniversary year of Darwin's "The Descent of Man", *Science* published one article celebrating the progress in human evolutionary science built on Darwin's foundations, along with a second, Editorial article, three quarters of which instead pilloried Darwin for his "racist and sexist view of humanity". ...We fear that Fuentes' vituperative exposition will encourage a spectrum of anti-evolution voices and damage prospects for an expanded, more gender and ethnically diverse new generation of evolutionary scientists.

Erik: Yikes. That's about what I would have expected. Any criticism of Charles Darwin is going to be met with some fierce return-fire.

Jo: I thought it would be a good point of entry into the controversy over Darwin and race...which definitely has relevance to the mini-series we started on Eugenics a couple of episodes ago. Maybe this would be Eugenics episode 2

Erik: Oooooo... I don't know. That's a thorny topic. I heard a little bit about the dust kicked up by Fuentes over this article. Do we really want to pick on Saint Charles Darwin?

Jo: I mean, this is "Speaking of Race," right?!

Erik: TRUE! Hi, I'm Erik ... Jo ... Jim ... Speaking of Race

Jo: Jim, I know you've thought about Charles Darwin's concept of race for years. What's your take on all of this?

Jim: A good place to start on this topic is, I think, with a comparison. I didn't really have an opinion about Darwin and race until I read Stephen Jay Gould's book, *The Mismeasure of Man* (1981).

Jo: That's the classic book where Gould, who was a paleontologist, argues against the racism of interpreting group differences in intelligence, right? Especially the work of Morton. We've talked about it before on the podcast. Like, a lot.

Jim: Yep. I first picked up a copy at the American Association of Physical Anthropologists annual meeting in Eugene in the spring of 1982. I'm bringing up that book because it's been incredibly influential, and it

was one of the first times I saw Darwin being characterized wholesale as antiracist. On page 36, Gould LITERALLY calls Darwin a “kindly liberal and passionate abolitionist”. And the epigraph of the book is also from Darwin’s Voyage of the Beagle. It’s a partial sentence reading: “if the misery of our poor be caused not by the laws of nature, but by our institutions, great is our sin” (Darwin, 1909 [1839], p. 526).

Jo: OK, so from the start Darwin looks pretty great if we’re concerned about who’s promoting racism and who isn’t.

Jim: Yes! A lot of the book is about Samuel George Morton, though—a founding father of physical anthropology according to no less an authority than Aleš Hrdlička (Aleš Hrdlička, 1943). Unlike Darwin, Gould portrayed Morton as one of the leading scientific racist bad guys of the 19th century and used him as an illustration of cultural (in this case racial) bias affecting scientific conclusions.

Erik: Yeah, Morton has come up about 3000 times on this podcast—including a whole episode devoted to him—in part because he’s been the villain of scientific racism for a long time. He’s the skull guy who filled the skulls from all over the world with buckshot or bird seed and thought he proved that white people had bigger skull capacity and stuff.

Jo: Yes, yes, we all remember. But I thought we were talking about Darwin here. Is the point, Jim, that Gould sort of used Darwin as this angelic foil against which to contrast Morton?

Jim: Yes, that’s exactly it. Mismeasure was very influential during my career, and especially so in framing Darwin as a hero and Morton as a villain. I’m guessing that if you surveyed a bunch of natural and social scientists about Darwin and Morton, they’d probably agree with those categorizations.

Jo: Yeah, even as someone who’s not deep into this field like you are, Jim, I’d consider that kind of received wisdom. It even pops up in that great new book by Joe Graves and Alan Goodman that we just interviewed them about—Racism not Race!

Erik: I guess that’s not surprising considering the influence of Gould’s book. In 2006, Discover magazine ranked The Mismeasure of Man as the 17th-greatest science book of all time (Darwin’s Voyage of the Beagle and Origin of Species were numbers 1 and 2 on the list) (Mullis, 2006).

Jim: The point here, to get back to Darwin and the Fuentes commentary, is that Gould’s Darwin/good Morton/bad dichotomy is really not a fair characterization of either man.

Jo: Wait...you’re not trying to say Morton was, like, a good guy, were you?!

Jim: Definitely not, but these two guys—Darwin and Morton—share a lot more similarities than basically anyone in anthropology would tell you. And I do really think this matters because it’s a major oversimplification; it overlooks both the circumstances of their lives, AND a large part of what each of them thought and wrote about. And frankly, it allows Darwin to get off way easier than he should, if you really read all his work.

Erik: Probably the reason why this similarity hasn’t gotten as much attention as it should, other than just the influence of Gould’s book, is the fact that there IS one really important difference between Darwin and Morton that we want to make sure we acknowledge upfront. Morton was a creationist polygenist, and Darwin was an evolutionary monogenist.

Jo: And by that you mean that Morton thought separate human races were actually separate creations of God, while Darwin famously thought we all share a common ancestor from which we descended and evolved, like we’ve talked about in our episode on Monogenism and Polygenism. Right?

Erik: right

Jo: And yeah, we know that polygenism was really bad because it made it so easy to justify unequal racial treatment with the underlying idea that races were created inherently differently. But that doesn't mean that monogenist people were never racist.

Erik: Correct, but that difference often gets used as shorthand for Morton-bad Darwin-good.

Jo: But Jim's saying it's more complicated than that! Well, you've got me hooked. Can we start with a basic example of what you mean?

Jim: For starters, both of them were brought up in abolitionist families, yet both had very strong ideas about the biological and hierarchical nature of human races. They both were very clear about Anglo-Saxons being at the top of the heap and other races trailing far behind in terms of intellectual and moral development.

Jo: But—great is our sin! What about that? It is definitely the case that Darwin openly talks about abhorring slavery; I know that much.

Erik: True, but that oft-repeated 'great is our sin' quote makes my historian Spidey Senses tingle. It's awfully ... short.

Jo: Listeners, Erik is arching an eyebrow. That's like a historian's pose when they're ready to strike!

Erik: People take things out of context all the time, right?

Jo: Social media doesn't help with this.

Erik: Sure, and even before that—for how many generations have people quoted tiny bits of Scripture and left out the rest of the context in support of something that isn't what the text actually says at all. Right?

Jo: Good point. Is this why your eyebrow is arched?

Erik: Darwin quotes can be scripture for some scientists. But if you unpack that whole paragraph where the "great is our sin" quote comes from, it's not arguing against racism at all. Let's grab the whole quote that Darwin writes from his Beagle voyage.

It is argued that self-interest will prevent excessive cruelty ; as if self-interest protected our domestic animals, which are far less likely than degraded slaves, to stir up the rage of their savage masters. It is an argument long since pro tested against with noble feeling, and strikingly exemplified, by the ever-illustrious Humboldt. It is often attempted to palliate slavery by comparing the state of slaves with our poorer countrymen: if the misery of our poor be caused not by the laws of nature, but by our institutions, great is our sin; but how this bears on slavery, I cannot see; as well might the use of the thumb-screw be defended in one land, by showing that men in another land suffered from some dreadful disease. Those who look tenderly at the slave owner, and with a cold heart at the slave, never seem to put themselves into the position of the latter; what a cheerless prospect, with not even a hope of change! picture to yourself the chance, ever hanging over you, of your wife and your little children—those objects which nature urges even the slave to call his own—being torn from you and sold like beasts to the first bidder! And these deeds are done and palliated by men, who profess to love their neighbours as themselves, who believe in God, and pray that his Will be done on earth! It makes one's blood boil, yet heart tremble, to think that we Englishmen and our American descendants, with their boastful cry of liberty, have been and are so guilty: but it is a consolation to reflect, that we at least have made a greater sacrifice, than ever made by any nation, to expiate our sin. (Darwin, 1909 [1839], pp. 526-527)

Jo: OK, that's a pretty eloquent argument against slavery, though. Even if he's not technically arguing against racism.

Erik: Yeah, you're right—and there's no need to dispute if Darwin was anti-slavery; he definitely was. Darwin repeated his horror in the 1845 update to his *Journal of Researches* that we know as "The Voyage of the Beagle," and even in a letter to his sister from on board the ship. Actually, Jo, could you read this passage from one of Darwin's letters to his sister?

Jo: Ooooo, now I get a long quote?

"I have watched how steadily the general feeling, as shown at elections, has been rising against Slavery.— What a proud thing for England, if she is the first Europæan nation which utterly abolishes it.— I was told before leaving England, that after living in Slave countries: all my opinions would be altered; the only alteration I am aware of is forming a much higher estimate of the Negro's character.— it is impossible to see a negro & not feel kindly towards him; such cheerful, open honest expressions & such fine muscular bodies; I never saw any of the diminutive Portuguese with their murderous countenances, without almost wishing for Brazil to follow the example of Hayti; & considering the enormous healthy looking black population, it will be wonderful if at some future day it does not take place.—"

Erik: Just to be clear, by "wonderful" there, he seems to be saying he thinks slaves *will* rebel in Brazil just like in Haiti and that would be a good thing.

Jo: Okay, so, yeah, Darwin seems pretty much to hate slavery and be glad to abolish it. How does Morton stack up on this one, Jim?

Jim: Well, here's an interesting historical coincidence. About in the middle of Darwin's Beagle voyage, Morton took a voyage to the West Indies—we could call that "The Voyage of the Plato"—and he offers some similar types of comments in his diary. Morton left New York, bound for Barbados, in early January 1834.

Erik: Dum, dum, dum

Jo: What are you making our ominous sound for?

Erik: The timing of that is especially auspicious—it's right between the passage and the enactment of the Slavery Abolition Act ending slavery in many British colonies, including those in the Caribbean islands, like Barbados.

Jim: That's right! And Morton was thinking about that act while he was in Barbados. Here's an entry from his diary addressing just that:

Barbados contains at least 82,000 slaves, all of whom however are prospectively free by act of Parliament...How the sudden acquisition of freedom will affect a vast population of uneducated minds is an experiment that remains to be decided. Slavery in this island, has been proverbially conducted with fewer features of oppression and barbarity than in the other West India islands, and hence the blacks can have no motive for reprisal or revenge. But they are uncultivated, and by nature indolent; and it is scarcely to be supposed that with the choice between idleness and industry they will not adopt the former and notwithstanding the restraint and coercion of the new laws, it is much to [be] feared that this fine island will be infested with needy vagabonds.

Jo: Ouch! That doesn't sound very good!

Jim: No, and it doesn't get a whole lot better, at first. He goes on:

The subject of slavery is trite and exhausted; nor if the wisdom of Solomon were to speak now, would it avail any thing; for the decree has gone forth. But I cannot help thinking, in concern with many others, that a more gradual emancipation, like that adopted in some of the United States, would have conduced equally to the happiness of the negro, and much more to the security of the masters and the prosperity of the colonies.

The blacks of this island have in my eyes a very repulsive appearance. They have the genuine African face, are bitter and stupid in their manner, and singularly uncouth in their deportment. The women, in particular, are thin and squalid, and I suspect degenerate to the last degree; to which the philanthropist will justly reply, that these are the unavoidable attributes of slavery; and that to improve the condition of the negro we must first remove his bonds. (Morton, 1833-1837, pp. 7, 9)

Jo: And that, folks, is one part of the reason why Morton is considered such a racist. I mean, right? So far, Darwin really is coming out looking like the much less racist guy. I'm still waiting for the part where you get around to complicating that idea.

Jim: Well, here's a start on the Morton side. Morton does engage the "philanthropists" idea that slavery needs to end before things can get better for the African population several times in the journal, for example as when he visited a college on Barbados, he says:

I nowhere saw [slaves] more carefully provided for: a chapel and school are devoted to their use; and on visiting the latter I was truly surprised at the proficiency which many of them had attained in spelling & reading. To the honour of the British nation the slaves have long been allowed all the advantages of elementary education, with permission to give as much of their attention to it as they please during their leisure days after they commence working in the fields. How different from the laws of the United States? And what a humiliating comment on the statutes of Connecticut, where a few psalm singing hypocrites can be found to enforce a diabolical law against the education of free coloured people. ([emphasis in the original] p. 23)

Erik: Oh—that's nice! He even gets after American "Christianity" there, like Darwin did.

Jim: Yep. Morton is always described as Episcopal, but his mother was Quaker before marrying his father. After the senior Morton died, when Sam was just 6 months old, she remarried back into the Society of Friends that steadfastly maintained an abolitionist stance. He was accepted as a member of the Friends, he was educated in Quaker schools, and he had both childhood and professional compadres who were Society of Friends members throughout his life (Wood, 1853).

Jo: I'd expect him to be very vocal about the evils of slavery given that upbringing!

Jim: Morton was actually pretty reticent to discuss slavery, in both his private communications and his publications, viewing it as somewhat imponderable. Like he says, even Solomon would have trouble with it. It's been suggested that by staying opaque on the topic of slavery, Morton was able to successfully remain professionally connected with colleagues on both sides of the issue (Michael, 2020; Mitchell & Michael, 2019). But the most damning statement about slavery that I could find is this one from his time on Martinique:

Among this motley variety of Human nature I observed several Africans...thought I, if each of these bondsmen of Africa was to be interrogated on the subject of his private history, what a tale of suffering and outrage would be unfolded! (p. 29)

Jo: Ok, so in my accounting, Darwin's super anti-slavery, and actually, Morton seems to lean that way too. That part surprises me, I have to admit. But clearly we have a very strong anti-black bias in Morton's descriptions of the slaves he sees in Barbados. We don't have that kind of blatant racism from Darwin, at least not yet. I mean, you've given us nothing here to support the stuff Fuentes is alleging against Darwin.

Jim: Whoa, whoa, whoa. Lots more to go. We haven't even looked at Darwin's *Descent of Man* yet, let alone any of Morton's skull measurements!

Erik: I think part of the issue here is that we're secretly assuming that being anti-slavery is the same as being against racism or being anti-racist. And I'm not at all sure that's the case. Darwin hated CRUELTY, for sure.

Jim: Like Morton's discomfort with the cruelty of bondage!

Erik: Darwin hated it against humans and animals. But I'm not so sure about race. It might be time to go down into those weeds a bit.

Jo: Oh boy, everyone, put on your historical spelunking gear.

Erik: Okay, so I've faxed some Darwin quotes from the *Descent of Man* over to you --

Jo: FAXED?!?

Jim: We had one of those in Samoa back in 1976, before it was even cool.

Erik: I thought I would revive faxes, sort of like vinyl records and 8-tracks have come back now that no one uses Spotify anymore.

Jo: How about you just use your Wonka-Vision and send us a copy of *Descent of Man* to read from?

Erik: Oh, yeah, that's a good idea. It makes it reeeaaaally small, though.

Jim: I have progressive lenses, so I should be okay.

Erik: Okay, so class turn your texts to page 74. And, Jo, could you read, please.

Jo: I'm raising my eyebrow disapprovingly at you. Darwin says

The belief that there exists in man some close relation between the size of the brain and the development of the intellectual faculties is supported by the comparison of the skulls of savage and civilised races, of ancient and modern people, and by the analogy of the whole vertebrate series. Dr. J. Barnard Davis has proved, by many careful measurements, that the mean internal capacity of the skull in Europeans is 92.3 cubic inches; in Americans 87.5; in Asiatics 87.1; and in Australians only 81.9 cubic inches. (Darwin, 1871, p. 74)

Jo: OK...I admit, that doesn't sound very anti-racist! I had no idea Darwin used the skull measurement stuff. Actually this isn't Morton's skull stuff, but stuff from a contemporary of his.

Erik: We're just getting started. Flip over to page 153 and you'll see why Darwin thought those cranial capacities were important to mention.

Jo: OK, these aren't very good, though.

All we know about savages...shew that from the remotest times successful tribes have supplanted other tribes. Relics of extinct or forgotten tribes have been discovered throughout the civilized regions of the earth, on the wild plains of America and on the isolated islands in the Pacific Ocean. At the present day, civilized nations are everywhere supplanting barbarous nations...and they succeed mainly ... thought their arts, which are the products of the intellect. It is, therefore, highly probable that with mankind the intellectual faculties have been mainly and gradually perfected through natural selection. (Darwin, 1871, p. 153).

...I see why you keep making me read the quotes this time....

Erik: Well okay then, I'll take this icky one along the same lines:

At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate, and replace, the savage races throughout the world. At the same time the anthropomorphous apes...will no doubt be exterminated. The break between man and his nearest allies will then be wider, for it will intervene between man in a more civilized state ... even than the Caucasian, and some ape as low as a

baboon, instead of as now between the negro or Australian and the gorilla (Darwin, 1871, pp. 184-185).

Jim: It's chapter 7 of the *Descent of Man* that gets all the attention, because that's where Darwin talks about race explicitly. And people usually regard the beginning of it positively because he comes right out and says that monogenism is more accurate than polygenism.

Erik: --which, again, makes great short-hand for Darwin-good/Morton-bad, but as you can probably see by now, there is a LOT more to their writings than these consistent stances.

Jim: Yes. Here's a quote on page 208 of *Descent of Man*:

Now when naturalists observe a close agreement in numerous small details of habits, tastes, and dispositions between two or more domestic races ... they use this fact as an argument that they are descended from a common progenitor ... and consequently that all should be classed under the same species. The same argument may be applied with much force to the races of man. (Darwin, 1871, p. 208).

Jo: Okkkk.....

Jim: And that's why Darwin designated human races "subspecies" rather than "species." But he also says in this chapter that conflict with civilized Europeans will make many non-white tribes extinct. That's a kind of natural selection of the intellect, Darwin says. You need sexual selection to account for racial differences in the skin, hair, dress, language, etc. But to know why whites are superior, you just need to assume it's some sort of intellectual advantage.

Erik: *Descent of Man* is full of these sorts of arguments. I counted a dozen in part 1 of the book. And what's weird to me is that Stephen J. Gould really downplays that fact that in *Mismeasure of Man*. Even though that entire book is about scientific arguments over intelligence.

Jo: OK, so let's do another little check in on our big ideas here. Darwin and Morton are both anti-slavery. Turns out Darwin really does believe in a racial hierarchy, though, and is pretty convinced that white people are going to make tribes go extinct because of their "superior intellect". It seems like Morton, given his skull research, would probably agree with that stance. AND he's willing to go on record being blatantly anti-black, like with his statement from the diary about black "repulsiveness" and everything. But what about Darwin? Surely he never went straight-up anti-black, did he?

Jim: Oh, he did. Yes, he did. In another of his letters to his sister from the *Beagle*, he has this to say:

We here saw the native Fuegian; an untamed savage is I really think one of the most extraordinary spectacles in the world.— the difference between a domesticated & wild animal is far more strikingly marked in man.—in the naked barbarian, with his body coated with paint, whose very gestures, whether they may be peacible or hostile are unintelligible, with difficulty we see a fellow-creature. No drawing or description will at all explain the extreme interest which is created by the first sight of savages.— It is an interest which almost repays one for a cruize in these latitudes; & this I assure you is saying a good deal.—...I feel quite a disgust at the very sound of the voices of these miserable savages. (Darwin, 1833)

Jo: Oh wow, ok. Phew. Are we now at a point where we can say that while Darwin was anti-slavery, he definitely was not anti-racist?

Jim/Erik: Yes, definitely.

Jo: And that despite common characterization, Morton wasn't really all that different?

Jim/Erik: Uh huh, ya. Etc.

Jo: I have to ask—how on earth did Gould justify ignoring both the blatant racism in that Darwin quote you just read, Jim, as well as his ideas about evolution and intelligence? I mean, Gould's whole book was about how white supremacy made its way into scientific ideas about intelligence! How is Darwin the hero of that story?!

Erik: When it comes to Darwin and race, one popular argument is to call Darwin a “man of his time.” His views on racial hierarchy were in line with others -- he shouldn't be judged by modern standards.

Jo: That doesn't sound fair—but some of the folks who got so agitated by Fuentes's piece said the same thing about Darwin. Like here's a response from historian of science Robert Richards at the University of Chicago: “Fuentes himself performs a complementary prejudicial interpretation of Darwin's accomplishments, reading the *Descent* as if it were produced in our own awakened intellectual environment. He consequently accuses Darwin of blatant racism, while ignoring Darwin's anti-slavery declarations in the *Voyage of the Beagle* and his “abomination” of that institution in his *Autobiography*.”

Jo: So where does that leave Morton—was he just a man of his time too? I never hear that excuse applied to get him out of playing the role of villain.

Jim: It's interesting that Gould didn't give a similar defense for Morton's ideas, given the similarities we've been looking at here! --but others have done so. Aleš Hrdlička, first director of physical anthropology at the Smithsonian and founder of the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, gave the “man of his time” defense for Morton, back in 1919, and as recently as 1943. In the earlier defense Hrdlička said:
[*Crania Americana*] includes a chapter on phrenology, though it is the physiological phrenology of Morton's time and has no trace of the charlatanism later associated with the name; but these defects are slight when contrasted with the large bulk of astonishingly good work and the number of sound conclusions. (Aleš Hrdlička, 1919, p. 33)

Erik: And while that might be true, yes—they were men of their time—that argument breaks down a little bit when you look at what people around Darwin and Morton were doing. For example, Darwin's own grandfather, Erasmus Darwin, as well as his co-discoverer of evolution by natural selection, Alfred Russel Wallace, were repulsed by the immorality of British imperialism and colonial policy and how it supported brutal slavery, leading to the near extinction of numerous aboriginal populations. If we accepted the man “of his time” argument, that would mean no voices familiar to Darwin were contesting the repulsive, racist policies. But there were such voices, and Darwin absolutely knew about them. He just chose to ignore them!

Jim: Morton also had a contemporary skull measurer, the German anatomist Friedrich Tiedemann whose data were remarkably similar to Morton's, but Tiedemann came to a very different conclusion, three years before Morton published his *magnum opus*, *Crania Americana*. Tiedemann said:

As the facts which we have advanced plainly prove that there are no well-marked and essential differences between the brain of the Negro and European, we must conclude that no innate difference in the intellectual faculties can be admitted to exist between them. This has been denied by philosophers, naturalists, and travelers, who assert that the Ethiopian race is naturally inferior to the European in intellectual and moral powers. The data upon which such an opinion is based are either erroneous suppositions and false deductions from anatomy and physiology, or superficial observations on the intellectual and moral faculties of the Negroes, made by partial or prejudiced travelers. (Tiedemann, 1836, p. 520)

Jo: So they both were aware of less racist science but chose to maintain their beliefs in biological races ranked from the Anglo-Saxons down!

Erik: When you put it that way, Fuentes' critiques of Darwin really do seem spot-on. I think that becomes really obvious when you compare how similar his stance was to the often-vilified Morton. But you wouldn't

know that if you just went with popular opinion about Darwin that circulates with the “great is our sin” quote, or with Gould’s characterization.

Jo: But where does this leave us with Morton? Would we still keep him in the villain slot and just edge Darwin a little closer, or does Morton deserve a little bit of exoneration?

Jim: Well, if you’re going to exonerate Darwin, you could use similar arguments to exonerate Morton. He certainly provided the measurements, and his interpretations were based on a hierarchical racial ranking, both within and between his five races. But I think in his own mind, his purpose was much more sciencey than racist. He was following others who were trying to measure the differences between races. So he dedicates *Crania Americana* to the well-known monogenist: “To James Cowles Prichard...of Bristol, England, the Learned and Ingenious Author of “Researches into the Physical History of Mankind,” the following work, which is designed to illustrate a portion of the same interesting inquiry, is most respectfully dedicated.” Prichard was arguing for the unity of humans, based on physical observations and measurements, most of which were made by others. So Morton was adding to the data that scientists like Prichard were using—at least, I think that’s what Morton thought! What set most people’s jaws on edge was his adoption of the polygenic model of multiple creations—but for him, as he notes in *Crania Americana*, the time frame available for racial changes—for him this meant deriving dark Africans from light Caucasians—was less than a thousand years based on ancient Egyptian illustrations (p. 88).

Jo: So was he just being a man of his time—albeit a polygenist man?

Jim: About the same as Darwin, really.

Erik: OK, so let me take a stab at some take-home points.

--First, I think this example shows how history is often oversimplified, especially the history of people’s ideas.

--I think a big point we can take away from this comparison between Darwin and Morton is that Morton was arguably no more racist than Darwin was, even though he’s often characterized that way. And Darwin was really no LESS racist than Morton. That means the characterization of Darwin as this saint-like antiracist figure is incorrect.

Jo: Yeah, and just to be clear, we’re not looking to exonerate Morton here, but rather to provide more nuances to Darwin’s treatment of race. This doesn’t mean we should cancel Darwin. But it does mean we shouldn’t lambast people like Fuentes for pointing out Darwin’s biases. What he said was quite accurate.

Erik: Maybe the biggest take-home point we can leave listeners with is that Darwin’s race scholarship provides an important example of how deeply the current of scientific racism has shaped modern thought. If we can make people realize, “Hey, even *Darwin* was part of it!” then it helps illustrate how this was the air scientists were breathing back then. It helps us understand why ideas about biological race have been so sticky.

Jo: Which is, like, the main point of our podcast. So, good job us!

Outro: I’m Jim, I’m Erik, I’m Jo....

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