

Jo: "Today, students are taught Darwin as the father of evolutionary theory. A genius scientist. They should also be taught Darwin as an Englishman with injurious and unfounded prejudices that worked his view of data and experience. Racist, sexist and white supremacists, some of them academics, use concepts..."

Erik: Wait, what, Jo, what are you reading?

Jo: It's an editorial from the journal Science.

Erik: Oh!

Jo: Wait, let me keep 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."

Erik: Like *Descent of Man*.

Jo: Yeah.

Jim: Yeah, I recognize this. This is an editorial that Agustin Fuentes published last year for the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the publication of *The Descent of Man*.

Erik: That doesn't sound much like a celebration given what Jo just read.

Jim: Well, generated a lot of, shall we say, Twitterverse controversy.

Jo: Which is why I was just reading it to you. Yeah. So so there was Fuentes published this piece and there was a whole bunch of blowback, including British psychologist Andrew Whiten and his colleagues. And this is what they said about it. Ready for another quote? Mm hmm. "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. That's the one we're talking about here, three quarters of which instead pilloried Darwin for his, quote, racist and sexist view of humanity..." (Whiten et al., 2021)

Erik: Yeah

Jo: "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 science."

Erik: Yeah, I hate to say that, but that's exactly what I thought a response would to be. I mean, any criticism of Darwin is going to be met with return fire from the scientific community.

Jim: Yeah.

Jo: All right. So, you know, this is like a fantastic point of entry into this controversy over Darwin and race, which is this is a controversy only in one corner of the world, but is important and has relevance, I

would argue to the many series that we have sort of started and never finished on eugenics. A couple episodes of.

Erik: We need to keep working on that.

Jo: This could be like eugenics episode two and....

Erik: I don't know, Jo, I don't know. It's so...

Jim: 1.3.

Jo: Yeah, 1.3, yeah.

Erik: Talking about Darwin though, is a very thorny topic. The dust kicked up by this particular article. I don't know. Do you really want to pick on good Saint Charles Darwin?

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

Erik: That's true. And so I'm Erik.

Jo: I'm Jo.

Jim: I'm Jim. And this is Speaking of Race, really, it is.

Jo: Okay, so let's let's do this. Jim, you've thought about Charles Darwin's concepts of race for a long time, so what's your take on this?

Jim: Well, I think a good place to start on this topic is with a comparison.

Jo: Hmm.

Jim: You know, I didn't really have any opinion about Darwin and what he thought about race until after I read Stephen Jay Gould's book *The Mismeasure of Man* (1981).

Jo: In 1981. Right, the year of my birth, incidentally, that that is this classic book that we've we've talked about this book a million times. Gould, who was a paleontologist, incidentally, argues in this book against the racism of interpreting group differences in intelligence, right? Especially the work of Morton, about whom we've also talked like a lot.

Erik: Yeah.

Jim: That's it. Yeah, I got a copy of that at the American Association of Physical Anthropologists annual meeting in Eugene

Jo: My hometown.

Jim: Jo's hometown. Yeah. In the spring of 1982, I bring up that book because it's been very influential in anthropology and physical anthropology in particular. I know it was for me, and that was one of the first times that I saw Darwin being characterized as anti-racist.

Jo: Mm hmm.

Jim: On page 36 of the text, Gould literally calls Darwin a "kindly liberal and passionate abolitionist." The epigraph of the book is also from Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle*. It's a piece of one of his sentences in the last chapter 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). That's on the title page.

Jo: Yeah, that's I mean, who hasn't heard that quote? Right. That's a very commonly repeated Darwin quote. And you know, if that's all we've got, Darwin does look pretty great if we're concerned about who's promoting racism and who isn't with that particular statement and a few others. Right?

Jim: Yeah. But you know, you go a little bit farther into the book and you see that Gould is talking about this American physician, Samuel George Morton.

Erik: Oh, yeah.

Jim: He is viewed by many as one of the founding fathers of physical anthropology in the U.S., by no less an authority than Aleš Hrdlička (Aleš Hrdlička, 1943). And we'll talk more about him later. Unlike Darwin, Gould portrayed Morton as one of the leading scientific, racist bad guys of the 19th century. He used him as an illustration of cultural, in this case, racial bias, affecting scientific conclusions.

Erik: We have brought up Morton, like, I don't know, 3000 times on this podcast, didn't we do, I think it was like our second episode ever or something (Bindon, Peterson, & Weaver, 2017).

Jim: It's in there, yeah.

Erik: And he really is the villain of scientific racism for a lot of people. He's the skull guy. He's the guy who actually filled skulls with birdshot or mustard seed. And those skulls came from all over Egypt and South America. And what he was basically trying to do is prove that white people had bigger skull capacities than everybody else.

Jo: Yes, we all remember. But aren't we talking about Darwin? Like, what's the point, Jim? Is it that Gould sort of used Darwin as this angelic foil against which he's contrasting Morton as the bad guy?

Jim: That's exactly what I'm saying here. *Mismeasure* was a very influential book during my career.

Jo: Yeah.

Jim: And, and especially so in framing Darwin as a hero. Not that he needed much more adulation among the biologists, but also as framing Morton as a villain.

Jo: Mm hmm.

Jim: And I'm guessing that if you surveyed a bunch of natural or social scientists about these two people from the 19th century, they probably agree with those categorizations of Morton as bad Darwin as good on race.

Jo: Mm hmm. Yeah. I mean, it even actually popped up in that great new book by Jo Graves and Alan Goodman that we just interviewed them about *Racism, not Race* (Graves & Goodman, 2021). They talk about this, too.

Erik: Yeah. I mean, I guess that's not surprising, considering, I mean, the influence of Stephen Jay Gould in general, but especially of *Mismeasure of Man*. I mean, I don't know if you guys know this, but in 2006, Discover magazine ranked *Mismeasure of Man* as the 17th greatest science book of all time. But of course, you know, it was one in two, right?

Jo: No.

Erik: Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle* and *The Origin of Species* (Mullis, 2006). That's just kind of canonical.

Jo: Yeah.

Jim: Yeah. That's, that's the way it's got to be, I guess guys. But to get back to Darwin and the Fuentes commentary is that Gould's Darwin good Morton bad dichotomy isn't really a fair characterization of either of these two.

Jo: You're not trying to say Morton was like a good guy, are you?

Jim: Absolutely not. But but these two guys, Darwin and Morton, shared a lot more similarities than basically anyone in anthropology or the history of science, Erik, would tell you.

Erik: No, you're right.

Jim: And I think this really matters because it's a major oversimplification. It has this way of just completely ignoring the circumstances of their lives and a large part of what they actually thought and wrote about both publicly and privately.

Jo: Yeah.

Jim: And it allows Darwin to get off way easier than he should if you really read all of the things that he says.

Erik: No doubt you're right. And I guess I think that the reason why this similarity hasn't gotten as much attention as it should, other than just because of Stephen Jay Gould's book, is the fact that there is a really important difference between Darwin and Morton and we have to make sure that we acknowledge that up front, right? Morton was a creationist and a polygenist. He thought there were many different origins for each race of human beings. And Darwin, as we know, was an evolutionary monogenist. He thought there was just one origin, I guess couple or population.

Jo: As we talked about in our episode on monogenism and polygenism, right?

Erik: Very good.

Jo: So we talked about that...

Erik: Like five years ago.

Jo: So yeah, we know that polygenism was really bad because it made it really easy to justify unequal racial treatment with the underlying idea that races were like created in this inherently different manner, but that I think what might be missing from the you know Morton bad because he's a polygenist Darwin good because he's a monogenist thing is the realization that monogenic people were not necessarily un-racist.

Erik: Totally

Jo: right?

Erik: Yeah. But that difference is, in fact, the shorthand that we often use. Morton polygenist bad. Darwin monogenist good.

Jo: So Jim saying it's more complicated than that. Okay, let's do this. You've got me hooked. So what would be like if we're going to start out looking at this? I think what we're really trying to say is that we agree with Fuentes. So how about a basic example of what we're looking at here?

Jim: Well, first off, you have to start out with the understanding that both of these were brought up in abolitionist families.

Jo: Oh, yeah.

Jim: Yet they both had very real strong ideas about the biological and the hierarchical nature of races.

Jo: Mm hmm.

Jim: They were both very clear about Anglo-Saxons being at the top of the heap and other races trailing far behind in terms of their intellectual moral development.

Jo: Okay. So they're anti-slavery, but that doesn't necessarily mean anti-racist. Okay, I get that. But what about the great is our sin thing? Like it's you know, it is definitely the case that Darwin openly talks about abhorring slavery like in no uncertain terms.

Erik: Wait, what's the quote again.

Jo: If the misery of our poor.

Erik: It's a pretty short quote, right?

Jo: Yes.

Erik: That makes my historians spidey senses tingle. When you have a short quote, there's probably going to be more context that we're possibly leaving out.

Jim: Here goes Erik with that context.

Erik: [Chuckle].

Jo: Listeners, Erik is currently arching his eyebrow.

Erik: That's right.

Jo: That's like the historian pose when they're ready to strike.

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

Jo: Yes and for sure, social media does not help with that.

Erik: That's a very good point. But even before social media, for how many generations of people quoted like, you know, tiny bits of scripture and then left out all the rest of the context, the surrounding scripture, in support of something that isn't what the text says at all. That's pretty common, right?

Jo: Yeah. Yes. I see your point. Is that why you're arching your eyebrows?

Erik: Right. Okay, let's, let's be honest, Darwin quotes can be a kind of scripture for some scientists. But if you unpack the whole paragraph where the great is our sin quote comes from the whole paragraph that Stephen Jay Gould does not quote, it's not really arguing against racism at all.

Jo: Okay.

Erik: Can I read it?

Jo: Yeah.

Jim: Please.

Jo: It's a paragraph, right? It's going to be long.

Erik: It's long.

Jo: Okay, I'm ready.

Erik: So this is from Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle* called when Darwin wrote it, the *Journal of Researches*. And this is just one day in that whole five year long journey.

Jo: Okay.

Erik: So here's the big quote. "It is argued," you know what, Darwin could get away with passive voice sentences. We can't do that.

Jo: For real.

Erik: "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 protested against, with noble feeling and strikingly exemplified by the ever illustrious Alexander von Humboldt. It is often attempted to palliate slavery by comparing the state of slaves with our poorer countrymen if the misery of our poor..." I assume he means like British poor. "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.

Jo: What?

Erik: "as well might..." I know. Right? Context is everything. "as well might the use of the thumbscrews be defended in one land by showing that men in another land suffered from some dreadful disease." The thumbscrews being a torture device used on slaves. "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 as it is in heaven! It makes one's blood boil, yet one's 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: Okay.

Erik: Sorry, that's a long quote.

Jo: So I guess what you're saying, Erik, is that when you really examine that quote, it's not really anti-racism, but it sure as heck is a pretty eloquent argument against slavery.

Erik: Absolutely. And I don't think there's any dispute that Darwin was anti-slavery. I mean, over and over and over again he repeats his horror, especially like in the 1845 update that he makes to his journal of researches. That's the thing that we now call the voyage of the Beagle and letters, private letters to his sister that he sent from on board the ship. Actually, Jo, you have a quote. Can you read this passage from one of the Darwin letters to his sister? Is that you flipping through papers?

Jo: Yes. Okay. Okay. Here's my long quote from Darwin's letter to his sister. He says, "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: And just to be clear, when he says wonderful there, what he seems to be saying is that he thinks the enslaved will rebel in Brazil just like they did in Haiti, and that that would be a good thing.

Jo: Okay. So, yes, he's very clearly anti-slavery. And I do think this is where the sort of Darwin, as you know,

Jim: Good guy.

Jo: As the good guy, the sort of hero of Gould's story comes from. So where's Morton on this, Jim?

Jim: Well, here's a very interesting historical coincidence, right about in the middle of Darwin's voyage on the Beagle, Morton took a voyage to the West Indies on a boat called the Plato. We could name this the voyage of the Plato book, and Morton offers some similar types of comments in his diary. He left New York bound for Barbados in early January 1834.

Erik: Bom, bom, bom.

Jo: Why are you making our ominous sound, Erik?

Erik: I didn't know about this before, but the timing of that in January of 1834 is auspicious.

Jo: Why?

Erik: Okay, so that's right between the passage of and the enactment of one of the slavery abolition acts that ended slavery in the rest of the British colonies, including those in the Caribbean, like Barbados, a huge enslaving island.

Jim: Yeah.

Jo: OK.

Jim: Exactly. That's right. And Morton was thinking about that exact act while he was in Barbados. Here's an entry from his diary addressing 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.” (Morton, 1833-1837, pp. 7, 9)

Jo: Okay. Well, that that's pretty racist sounding. Yes. So, I mean, so far, Morton's actually not coming out looking so great.

Jim: No. No. And in a lot of this really goes in the same vein. It doesn't get a whole lot better at first. That entry 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." He goes on. Sorry about this. "The blacks of this island have in my eyes a very repulsive appearance."

Erik: Ah.

Jo: Mmm.

Jim: Yeah. "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)

Erik: Okay.

Jim: So it is an anti-slavery statement in the midst of really racist nonsense.

Erik: Right!

Jo: Oh, wow. Okay, that last sentence sort of turns out not to. Let's not exonerate Morton here, right? I mean, it's statements like this, I'm sure, along with his somewhat biased research, that are the reasons why Morton's considered a bad guy. And I will say so far anyway, Darwin seems to be coming out looking like a much less racist guy. I'm kind of like, I'm waiting for the part where you get around to complicating that idea.

Jim: Here's a good quotation out of the journal that Morton wrote, showing much more similarity with the types of things that Darwin was saying.

Jo: Okay.

Jim: This is when he was visiting 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 to 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..."

Jo: Mmm.

Erik: Yeah?

Jim": ...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: That's interesting. He even gets after American Christianity, just like Darwin did.

Jim: Yeah, he's going after it there. In all of the biographies, Morton is always described as Episcopal, and that's clearly the faith that he followed in his own adult life. But his mother was a Quaker before marrying his father and after the senior Morton died, when Sam was just six months old, she remarried back into the Society of Friends (Wood, 1853).

Erik: Oh, interesting.

Jim: Yeah. And they have maintained a strong abolitionist stance against slavery. And Sam Morton then was accepted as a member of The Friends. He was educated in Quaker schools, and he had both childhood and professional friends who were also members of the Society of Friends throughout his life.

Jo: Okay, so, I mean, given that background, I would expect Morton to be pretty vocal about the evils of slavery.

Jim: It's interesting because he was actually fairly reticent to discuss slavery. And this comes across in both his private communications and in his publications. Remember the statement before? Like he said, even Solomon would have trouble untangling slavery.

Erik: Right.

Jim: It's been suggested by some that by staying kind of opaque on the topic of slavery, Morton was able to keep his friendships and connections with people on both sides of the issue (Michael, 2020; Mitchell & Michael, 2019). But the most damning statement about slavery that I could find from his trip comes from his time on Martinique. This is a comment looking out his window, he says, “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)

Erik: He's not wrong.

Jo: Okay. And that's Morton, which...

Jim: Yeah.

Jo: ...frankly surprises me. I mean, we all, I think, understand that Darwin was very anti anti-slavery, but I did not really know before doing this episode that Morton is kind of leaning in that direction too. That said, we still have a lot of anti-black bias and Morton's descriptions of the slaves he's seen write all this stuff about like having a typical African countenance or whatever it was that he said. And I mean, I haven't seen that kind of blatant racism from Darwin at least not yet in our discussion here.

Erik: Right.

Jo: Right, you, you really haven't given us anything to support the stuff Fuentes is alleging against Darwin yet.

Jim: Slow your roll, Jo. Just, we got lots more stuff to go through. We, we haven't looked at Darwin's *Descent of Man* yet.

Jo: Okay.

Erik: But I hear what you're saying, Jo. I think part of the issue here is that we all secretly assume that being anti-slavery is the same as being against racism or being anti-racist. And I'm just not sure that that's the case. It is true that Darwin hated cruelty. He really, really, really hated cruelty to humans or to animals.

Jo: Okay.

Jim: Just like Morton's discomfort with the cruelty of bondage, as he said.

Erik: But I don't think the same is true about Darwin's perspective about race. So maybe it's time to go down to those weeds a little bit.

Jo: All right, let's let's put on our historical spelunking gear.

Erik: Okay. Spelunking fast on a helmet. Okay. So facts, you guys. Some Darwin quotes from the *Descent of Man*.

Jo: You faxed. You faxed.

Jim: Hey, we had one of those in Samoa back in 1976 before it was cool to have one.

Erik: I was trying to revive faxes, sort of like vinyl records, and you know how eight tracks all like a sort of mix tape.

Jo: Can you fax me a mixtape?

Erik: Yes, I will fax you a mix tape now that no one uses Spotify.

Jo: Why don't you just use your Wonka vision? All right, send us a little comedy.

Erik: Yes, I will use the Wonka vision. But you've seen what it does. It makes everything very, very small.

Jim: I have my progressive lenses on, so I'll be okay.

Erik: Okay. All right. Okay. Okay. So you have your quotes. Can you read them?

Jo: Yes. Okay. So this is a quote from *Descent of Man*.

Erik: All right class turned to page 74. And Jo, could you read, please? Okay.

Jo: Okay. I'm raising my eyebrow disapprovingly.

Erik: Very good.

Jo: Here we go. So this is what Darwin says. Hmm. "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;" by which he means Native Americans "in Asiatics 87.1; and in Australians only..." and by this he means Aboriginal Australians "81.9 cubic inches." (Darwin, 1871, p. 74)

Erik: Sounds familiar.

Jo: Yeah. Okay. Yes. I will admit that does not actually sound very anti-racist and I honestly had no idea that Darwin used the skull measurement stuff in his writing. And it's worth noting this is not Morton's stuff, but it's stuff from a sort of a contemporary of...

Erik: Right! We assume that when there's this kind of cubic inches measurement that it's going to be Morton. But this is Darwin. So we're just getting started though. If you flip your books over to page 153, I know they're very, very tiny because they've been sent through Wonka vision. You'll see why Darwin thought those cranial capacities were so important to mention. You want to read it?

Jo: I thought you were our professional quote reader.

Erik: I know, but you get to do it now.

Jo: Okay.

Jim: We'll up your salary.

Jo: So I need more salary. Okay, here's. Here's the.

Erik: I need sponsorships.

Jo: Page 153. Here we go. "All we know about savages show that from the remotest times successful tribes have supplanted other tribes." Oh, boy. Okay. "Relics of extinct or forgotten tribes have been discovered throughout civilized regions of the earth, on the wild plains of America and on the isolated islands of the Pacific Ocean. At the present day, civilized nations are everywhere supplanting barbarous nations...and they succeed mainly ... though 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).

Erik: There you go.

Jo: I see why you're making me read these quotes.

Erik: I know you don't like to do that.

Jo: They're bad.

Erik: All right, so I'm going to take this one. It's another icky one. This is from page one, 184. And what, 185 in *Descent of Man*. All these quotes are from *Descent of Man*, by the way.

Jo: Okay.

Erik: "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."

Jo: Oh!

Erik: "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 now as between the negro or [Native] Australian and the gorilla." (Darwin, 1871, pp. 184-185).

Jo: Oh!

Erik: Yeah.

Jim: Yeah, that Chapter seven of *The Descent of Man*, that's the one where he does all the discussion of race in there, comparison of races. People usually regard the beginning of it positively because he comes out and he argues against polygenism. He makes the case fairly strongly for monogenism.

Erik: And again, that makes a great shorthand for Darwin is good because he's arguing for common descent and Morton must be bad because he's arguing for different descent trees for different races. But as you can probably see by now, there's actually a lot more to their writings than just these particular things that scientists pick over and over and over again. You want to read the next one, Jim?

Jim: Oh, sure. Let me get in on the fun. Here's a quote from 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).

Erik: There you go.

Jo: Okay.

Jim: And that's why Darwin designated human races as subspecies rather than species, which Morton would have. But yeah, but he also says in this chapter that conflict with civilized Europeans will make many nonwhite tribes extinct. That's a kind of natural selection of the intellect, according to Darwin. Now he thinks that you need sexual selection to account for the physical racial differences that we see in skin and hair and dress and language. But to know why whites are superior, you just need to assume it's some sort of intellectual advantage.

Erik: Right.

Jo: Okay.

Erik: And the sad thing is *Descent of Man* is actually full of these sorts of arguments. I counted over a dozen just in the first part of the two part book.

Jo: Wow.

Erik: What's weird to me is that Stephen Jay Gould, who I read voraciously growing up, I mean, he led me to anthropology to begin with before I became a historian. But Gould really downplays that fact in *Mismeasure of Man*, which was one of my favorite books growing up. Even though that entire book is supposedly about scientific arguments over intelligence, he totally leaves out what Darwin says about intelligence.

Jo: And I'm sure that some of the things Fuentes was alluding to about white supremacists using Darwin's work are exactly the kinds of things we were just reading, right?

Erik: Exactly.

Jo: Blatant arguments for like white intelligence out-competing nonwhite.

Erik: And driving non-whites extinct, right?

Jo: Yeah. Right. Okay. Okay. So let's do another little check in on our big ideas here. So what I'm gathering so far.

Erik: Should write something up on the board.

Jo: I know I should. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. So Darwin and Morton are both anti-slavery.

Erik: Yes, absolutely.

Jo: We can agree on that.

Jim: Yeah.

Jo: Most people don't know that about Morton, but it seems to be the case.

Erik: Yeah.

Jo: People definitely know that about Darwin, but it turns out Darwin really does seem to believe in a racial hierarchy and he's pretty convinced that white people are going to make tribes go extinct because of their superior intellect.

Erik: Yeah, right. Yeah.

Jo: Probably. Morton would agree with that stance, given his research on skulls. Right. So maybe they're similar in that way. And Morton's willing to go on record being blatantly anti-black, like with his statements from the diary about black repulsiveness and all that. So what about Darwin? Surely he never went straight up anti-black, did he?

Jim: In another of his letters to his sister while he was on the voyage, 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..."

Jo: Wow.

Jim: "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 their voices of these miserable savages." (Darwin, 1833)

Erik: There you go!

Jo: Oh, wow!

Jim: Huh.

Jo: Oh, okay. I mean, yes, that's. That's pretty unequivocal and reminds me of, like, the sort of innate disgust that Louis Agassiz wrote about when in another episode.

Erik: Exactly the first time that Agassiz comes from Switzerland to United States and runs in to visit America. Yeah, that's right.

Jo: He explicitly says, like I can't imagine us being the same.

Erik: Yeah, exactly.

Jo: Right. Just like that. That's pretty shocking to know that Darwin was saying this.

Erik: Definitely.

Jo: So are we now at a point where we can say that while Darwin was for sure anti-slavery, he definitely was not anti-racist?

Erik: I hope that's clear by now. Yeah.

Jo: And that despite the sort of common characterization of Morton as the really bad guy and Darwin as the good one, Morton really wasn't all that different from Darwin, if at all.

Jim: I think so.

Erik: It's fair.

Jo: Okay. So I mean, I do have to ask how on earth Gould justified ignoring both the blatant racism of the kind that you just read, Jim, in Darwin's work and his ideas about evolution and intelligence, as you said, Erik, that whole book, *Mismeasure of Man*, was about how white supremacy got into scientific ideas about intelligence. So how how is Darwin the hero of that story?

Erik: I mean, let's be honest. When it comes to Darwin and race, what you hear over and over and over again is he was just a man of his time. His views on racial hierarchy were just the same as other people in the Victorian era. We can't judge him by our modern ethical anti-racist standards or anything like that.

Jo: I mean, yeah, we don't want to be presentist, right? But and some of the people who got really agitated by Fuentes's piece said the same thing about Darwin.

Erik: That's not surprising.

Jo: Right, you want to hear a quote?

Erik: Yes.

Jo: Okay. This is a response letter to Fuentes from historian of science, Robert Richards at the University of Chicago. Who's a big deal, right, Richards? Is he a big deal?

Erik: Bob Richards, I know Bob Richards. Yes, he's a big deal.

Jo: Okay. Well, here's a quote. "Fuentes himself performs a complimentary 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, quote, abomination of that institution in his autobiography."

Erik: I Told You So. That's what everybody says.

Jo: Right. Okay. Well, let's let's engage this. Where does this leave us? I mean, was Morton also just a man of his time? I never hear that excuse being applied to sort of exonerate him or get him out of...

Erik: That's a great point.

Jo: playing the role of the villain.

Jim: That's true. You don't ever hear that about Morton, but you used to. It's been a while since somebody has given that kind of defense for Morton's ideas. Aleš Hrdlička, we talked about him earlier in this episode.

Erik: Physical anthropologist.

Jim: Yes, physical anthropologist. First director of physical anthropology at the Smithsonian and the founder of the American Journal of Physical Anthropology. He gave the man of his time defense for Morton back in 1919, in the first issue of the American Journal of Physical Anthropology. He also reiterated that as recently as 1943. In the first defense, Aleš Hrdlička said that Morton's major work, "[*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..."

Erik: Okay.

Jim: "...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).

Jo: Okay.

Erik: So sure. I mean, I guess it's true. They were men of their time, right? But I don't know. I think that argument breaks down a little bit when you look at what the other people around Morton and Darwin were actually doing.

Jo: Okay.

Erik: In fact, I mean, here's what's weird.

Jim: Yeah.

Erik: Darwin's own grandfather, Erasmus Darwin, the first Darwin to write about evolution, interestingly enough. And he kind of also talks a little bit about natural selection before his grandson, Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace, the co-discoverer of natural selection with Charles Darwin. The two of them were both repulsed by the immorality of British imperialism, colonial policy, how that supported slavery, how that was going to lead to the near extinction of Aboriginal populations. So if we accepted that man of his time argument that would mean no voices familiar to Darwin were contesting that repulsive, racist policies of the day and ways of talking about the physiognomy of African-Americans and Africans. But of course there were such voices and the sad thing is Darwin absolutely knew about those voices, he just chose ignore them.

Jo: Hmm.

Jim: Unfortunately, we have to say the same thing for Morton. In addition to his friends from the Society of Friends, there was a contemporary skull measurer, of whom he was very familiar, the German anatomist Friedrich Tiedemann.

Erik: Oh, yeah.

Jim: Yeah.

Jo: Right. We've mentioned him before.

Jim: His data were very similar to Morton's, but Tiedemann came to a very different set of conclusions. Three years before Morton published his magnum opus, the *Crania Americana*, Tiedemann said in his

work, "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 differences 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)

Erik: And when did Tiedemann write that?

Jim: 1836, three years before *Crania*.

Erik: And 20 years before *The Origin of Species*. Wow. Yes.

Jo: Okay. So they were, in fact, that is, Darwin and Morton, surrounded by, or at least knew of people who were less racist in their understandings of like racial hierarchy or its or its lack, but chose to maintain their beliefs in biological races ranked from Anglo-Saxons on top downward. Right?

Erik: I mean, it does seem like they knew it.

Jo: Yeah.

Erik: And when you put it that way, it makes it sound like Fuentes's critique of the *Descent of Man* is kind of spot on.

Jo: Yeah.

Erik: I think it becomes really obvious when you compare how similar his stance was to Morton's stance...

Jo: You mean Darwin's?

Erik: even though Morton is always the villain. Yeah.

Jo: Darwin's and Morton's?

Erik: Darwin's got to wear the white hat and Morton's got to the black hat. But they still seem like they're saying sort of the same things. You wouldn't know if you just went with popular opinion about Darwin that circulates with that one quote that you read at the beginning, Jo. The one that goes great is our sin.

Jo: Mm hmm.

Erik: Or if you just read Gould's *Mismeasure of Man*.

Jo: So where does this leave us? Like. Is Morton still to stay in the villain slot? We're just edging Darwin a little closer to that spot. Or does Morton at this point deserve a little bit of exoneration?

Jim: Well, if you're going to fully exonerate Darwin, you could use the same kinds of arguments to exonerate Morton.

Jo: But we don't really want to do that either.

Jim: The thing is, his interpretations were so incredibly racially biased. Yeah, but really in his own mind, I really think that he was just trying to be sciencey. The thing that gets us so far off on Morton is not just the fact that he was a polygenist, but the fact that his work then got taken up by people who then used it to promote the retention of slavery in the U.S. specifically Nott and Glidden.

Erik: Yeah, Josiah Nott.

Jim: Yeah, but but the thing is, Morton really felt that he was doing the work of science. So, for instance, his dedication in *Crania Americana* was actually written to a well-known monogenist to James Cowles Pritchard of Bristol, England.

Erik: Oh yeah.

Jim: Yes. And Morton goes on, "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."

Erik: That's crazy.

Jim: Yeah. You know, I mean, he really thought that what he was doing was God's work. You know, he was he was performing science. At least his motives were as pure as Darwin's in spite of the fact that they were both racist as hell.

Erik: Even though Prichard was arguing for monogenism and Morton was arguing polygenism.

Jim: Yes.

Erik: Huh.

Jo: Okay. So. So Morton was also a man of his time.

Erik: Annnnnnk!!!

Jo: He was a polygenist.

Jim: No, no, no.

Erik: All right. So you take a stab at some take home points.

Jo: Yes. Do it.

Erik: 'Cause this is confusing, right? They have so many overlapping things and yet we've been sort of trained to see in this oversimplified way. I mean, history is often oversimplified, especially the history of people's ideas.

Jo: Okay.

Erik: So I think one of the big points that we can take away from this comparison between Darwin and Morton: Morton was arguably no more racist than Darwin was, even though Morton is characterized as this progenitor of scientific racism.

Jo: Okay.

Erik: And Darwin was really no less racist than Morton, even though Darwin is usually held up as this saint-like anti-racist figure. That's just clearly incorrect.

Jo: Okay. Yeah. And again, let's be careful that we're not looking to excuse or exonerate Morton.

Erik: No!

Jo: But actually, we're looking to provide more nuances to Darwin's treatment of race.

Jim and Erik: Yeah.

Jo: And I will also say that this doesn't mean we want to, like cancel Darwin, though,

Erik: No!

Jo: Right? But it does, I really think it means we should not be lambasting people like Fuentes for pointing out Darwin's biases.

Erik: Right.

Jo: Like what what Fuentes said was actually quite accurate.

Erik: So maybe the best thing that we can leave listeners with is that Darwin's race scholarship is a really important example of how deeply the current of scientific racism was and how much it shaped modern thought, even in evolutionary biology.

Jo: Yeah.

Erik: Much more than people realize or would admit. I mean, hey, even Darwin was part of it.

Jim and Jo: Yeah.

Erik: It just helps to illustrate how this was the air that scientists are breathing back then. It helps us understand why ideas about biological race, they keep sticking around even in the 21st century.

Jo: Which I'll point out is like the main point of our podcast, right? Figuring out why those ideas stick around. So I guess good job us.

Erik: All right.

Jim: I think that's about all we have time for on this episode, right? I'm Jim, the physical anthropologist.

Erik: I'm Erik, the historian of science.

Jo: And I'm Jo, the cultural anthropologist. And you have been listening to Speaking of Race. Find us on Facebook at SORpodcast, on Twitter and Instagram at Speaking of Race and wherever you get your podcasts.

Erik: And we're probably going to be canceled now.

Jim: By the biologists at least. Yeah.

Erik: Oh well.

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