

Rediscovering the Power and Import of the Humanities for Understanding and Mitigating Health Inequities

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Poetry and Knowledge (1945)

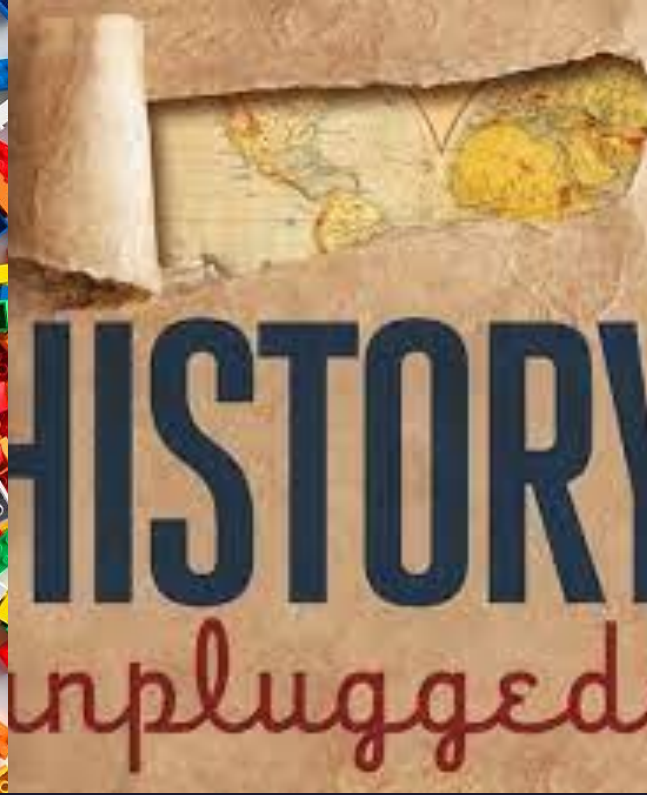
Aimé Césaire

Poetic knowledge is born in the silence of scientific knowledge... Science offers [us] a perspective on the world. But of a summary and superficial kind... All in all, scientific knowledge counts, measures, classifies and kills. But it is not enough to say that scientific knowledge is summary. We must add that it is impoverished and half-starved. To acquire it man has sacrificed everything: desires, fears, feelings, psychological complexes. To acquire this impersonal knowledge that is scientific knowledge, man has depersonalized himself, has deprived himself of individuality. An impoverished knowledge, I say, because at its origin, whatever may be its riches beside, stands an impoverished man.





Deconstruction



Guerrilla History
(Decolonization)



Literary Analysis



Symbolic
Thought

Introduction

To understand the origins of- and address health inequities, we have to understand the history of racism as the major social and structural determinant of health in the U.S.

WHAT IS **RACE**?

“*Race*” is a **narrative** that organizes our way of **seeing and being in the world** that first emerged in the 16th century as a European **religious *cum* natural philosophical system of classification** demarcating *civilized Christians* from *barbarous pagans*. As such a system it provided the moral justification, in European eyes, for the globalized system of colonial exploitation and enslavement that created our modern world.

“Systems of classification direct our thinking and order our behaviors.”

Stephen Jay Gould – *Hen's Tooth and Horse's Toes*

“We see what we look for; our stories tell us what to look for; we find it (whether it's there or not) and then we can act out the stories.”

Richard Waswo – “The History that Literature Makes”

European and American intellectuals gave “race” a **veneer of biology** in the 19th century, transforming it into **the assumption that a few, specific phenotypic features are good proxies** for innate **morphological and/or genetic differences** between groups of people so defined as “**rac**es”

**WHAT IS RACE,
CONT.?**

- Prior to the 16th century, **humans did not have a concept of race** and did not categorize each other according to phenotype.
- The primary method of categorization was by religion and/or ancestry.
- Through colonization, concepts of “by nature” difference were **conceptually mapped** onto physiognomies.

THINKING ABOUT DIFFERENCE

Our journey entails a need to understand how

Race

Renaissance Humanism

Colonialism

Capitalism

and the advent of **Science** as the primary method for the production of knowledge,

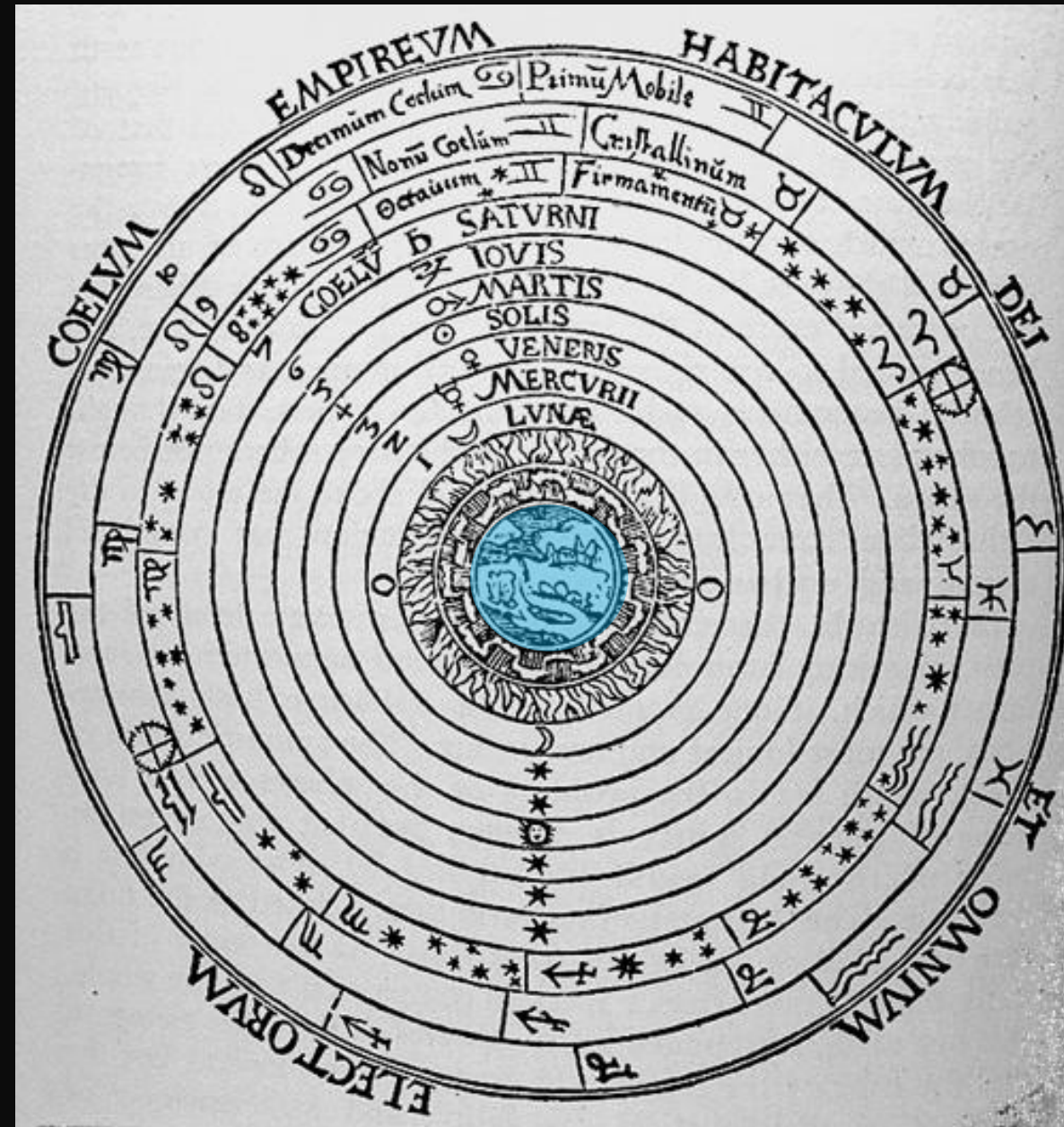
all come into being simultaneously. What is the relationship between these convergences?

Feudal, Medieval Europe

- All human endeavors organized around seeking **redemption** from Original Sin.
- Order of Knowledge grounded in a Christianized Greek philosophy/physics:
 - The element of earth is naturally submerged beneath the element of water except in cases of unnatural motion.
 - The earth itself, as the **realm of fallen flesh**, was “naturally” submerged beneath the heavenly bodies
- Analogously,
 - Lay persons were “naturally” submerged beneath the members of the clergy
 - Peasants were “naturally” submerged beneath members of the aristocracy
 - The lay intelligentsia were “naturally” submerged beneath the voluntarily celibate clergy/scholastics, who alone had access to “divine eternal truth.”

Ptolemaic Astronomy and Church Hegemony

- As the realm of “fallen flesh” the earth is fixed and immovable at the center of the universe.
 - Knowledge of the natural world was formulated in *adaptive* terms that **verified the organization of the social order**
 - Analogously, the clergy sat “naturally” atop the social hierarchy as those who had refrained from passing on *Original Sin*.
-



Revalorizing “Man” ...

“At last, the Supreme Maker decreed that this creature, to whom He could give nothing wholly his own, should have a share in the particular endowment of every other creature. Taking man, therefore, this creature of indeterminate image, He set him in the middle of the world and thus spoke to him:

‘We have given you, Oh Adam, no visage proper to yourself, nor any endowment properly your own, in order that whatever place, whatever form, whatever gifts you may, with premeditation, select, these same you may have and possess through your own judgment and decision. The nature of all other creatures is defined and restricted within laws which We have laid down; you, by contrast, impeded by no such restrictions, may, by your own free will, to whose custody We have assigned you, trace for yourself the lineaments of your own nature. **I have placed you at the very center of the world, so that from that vantage point you may with greater ease glance round about you on all that the world contains. We have made you a creature neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, in order that you may, as the free and proud shaper of your own being, fashion yourself in the form you may prefer.** It will be in your power to descend to the lower, brutish forms of life; you will be able, through your own decision, to rise again to the superior orders whose life is divine.’”

[Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on The Dignity of Man*, 1496]

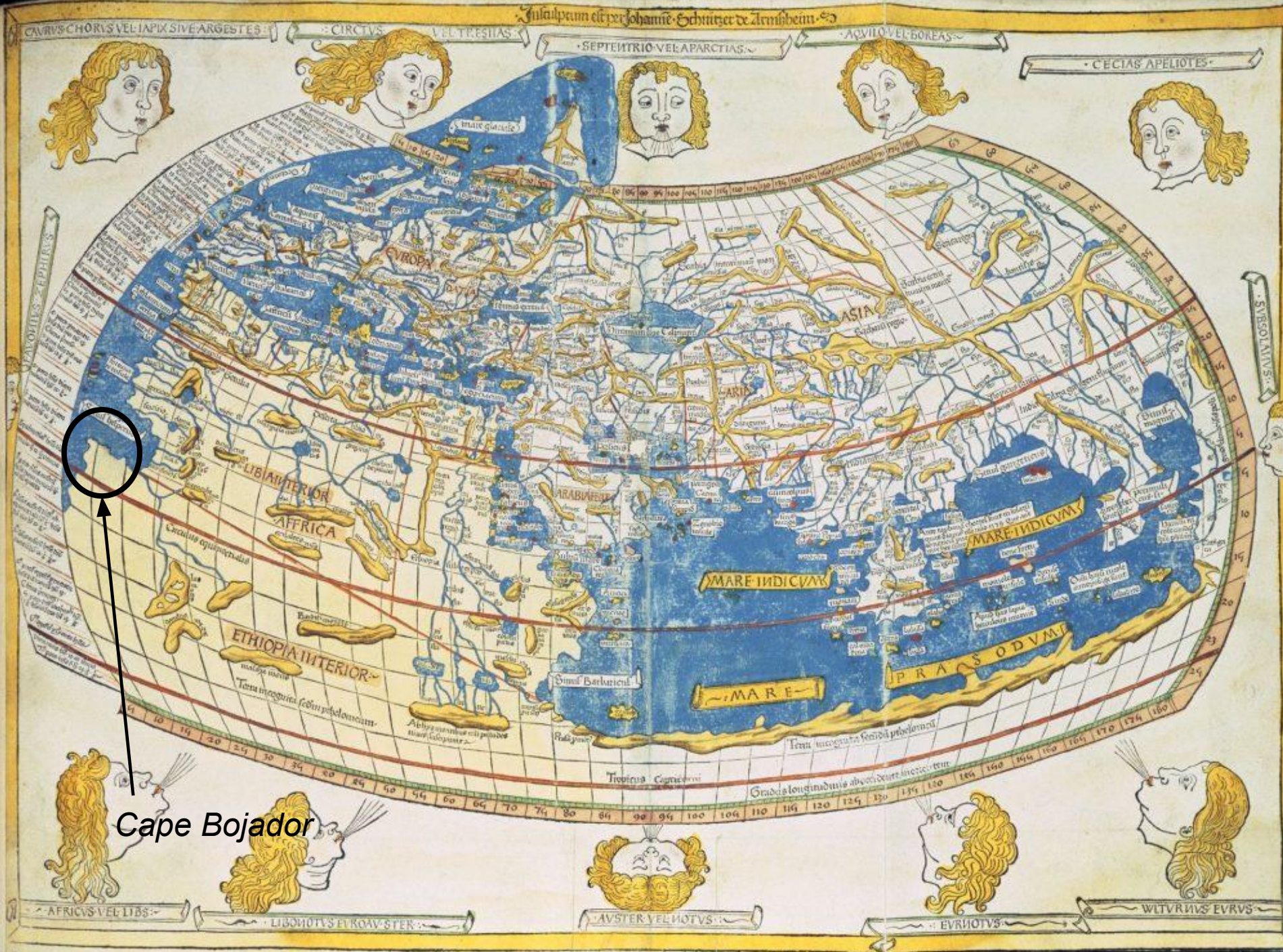
In the 15th Century, Lay humanists take up the **Nicene Creed** [*“Qui propter nos homines...”*] to challenge their *hopelessly fallen* status. *i.e., God made the world for us, knowable to us.*

*Credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem, factorem cæli et terræ, visibílium ómnium et invisibílium. Et in unum Dóminum Iesum Christum, Fílium Dei unigénitum, et ex Patre natum, ante ómnia sæcula. Deum de Deo, lumen de lúmine, Deum verum de Deo vero. Génitum, non factum, consubstantiálem Patri, per quem ómnia facta sunt. **Qui propter nos hómines** et propter nostram salútem descéndit de cælis...*

We believe in one God, Father almighty, maker of heaven and of earth, visible of all things, and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, only begotten Son of God, and of Father born before all ages. God from God, light from light, true God from true God. Begotten, not made, of one substance with Father, by whom all things were made. **Who for us humans**, and for our salvation descended from the heavens...

*Council of Nicea (A.D. 325) with additions by the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381). It was accepted in its present form at the Council of Chalcedon in 451

Ptolemaic Geography: Medieval Christian World Map, Pre-1434



- Christian lands sat “unnaturally” above water because held up by “God’s redemptive grace.”
- The areas beyond were described as “*terra nullius*” or “the torrid zone”:
- Seas were said to be boiling hot and *unnavigable*.
- Lands were also boiling hot, filled with ferocious beasts and, therefore, *uninhabitable*.
- These beliefs also reaffirmed **the organization of the social order**

Mare Tenebroso - The Sea of Darkness

“... This was a region of uttermost dread... where the heavens fling down liquid sheets of flame and the waters boil... where serpent rocks and ogre islands lie in wait for the mariner, where the giant hand of Satan reaches up from the fathomless depths to seize him, **where he will turn black in face and body as a mark of God’s vengeance** for the insolence of his prying into this forbidden mystery. And even if he should be able to survive all these ghastly perils and sail on through, he would then arrive in the Sea of Obscurity and be lost forever in the vapors and slime at the edge of the world.”

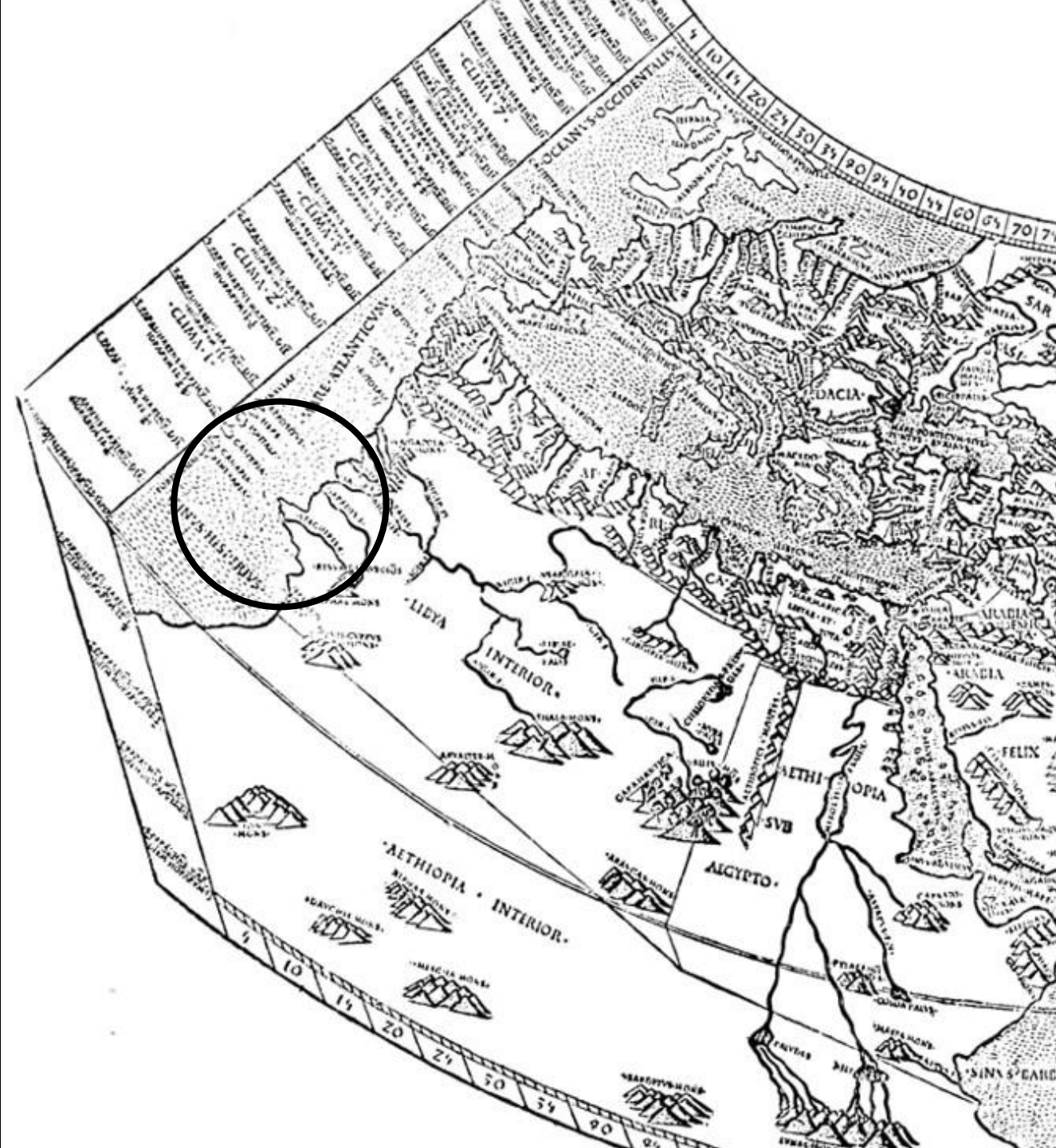
- Peter Forbath, *The River Congo: The Discovery, Exploration, and Exploitation of the World's Most Dramatic River*, (Boston: Houghtin Mifflin, 1991).



The Sea of Darkness by Olaus Magnus (October 1490 – 1 August 1557), a Swedish writer, cartographer, and Catholic ecclesiastic.

Cape Bojador

- Prince Henry of Portugal sent **15 expeditions** to navigate south of Cape Bojador from 1424 to 1434.
- Its Arabic name, *Abu Khatar*, means “**the father of danger**”
- Each returned in **failure**, as crews revolted and **refused to sail past the cape out of fear** of drowning in the burning seas.





- Cape Bojador represented a **symbolic, conceptual boundary**, not a *physical* boundary.
- This conceptual boundary was finally breached in 1434 by Portuguese sailors.
- Inspired by the Humanist motto of “**propter nos hómines.**”

RESULTS:

- Helped inspire other lay humanist intellectuals to make further conceptual breakthroughs that challenged the dictates of the Scholastics and the **theocentric order of knowledge** designed to affirm the social hierarchy with the Christian church at the top.
- These included **Columbus, Copernicus, and Vesalius.**



*“Mare totum navigable,
terra totum habitable”*

The same humanist motto of “*propter nos hómines*” inspired Columbus’ faith that God had made the whole of earth for Christian use and settlement, that the earth was uniform in temperance, and that he could, therefore, sail *west* to reach the *east*.

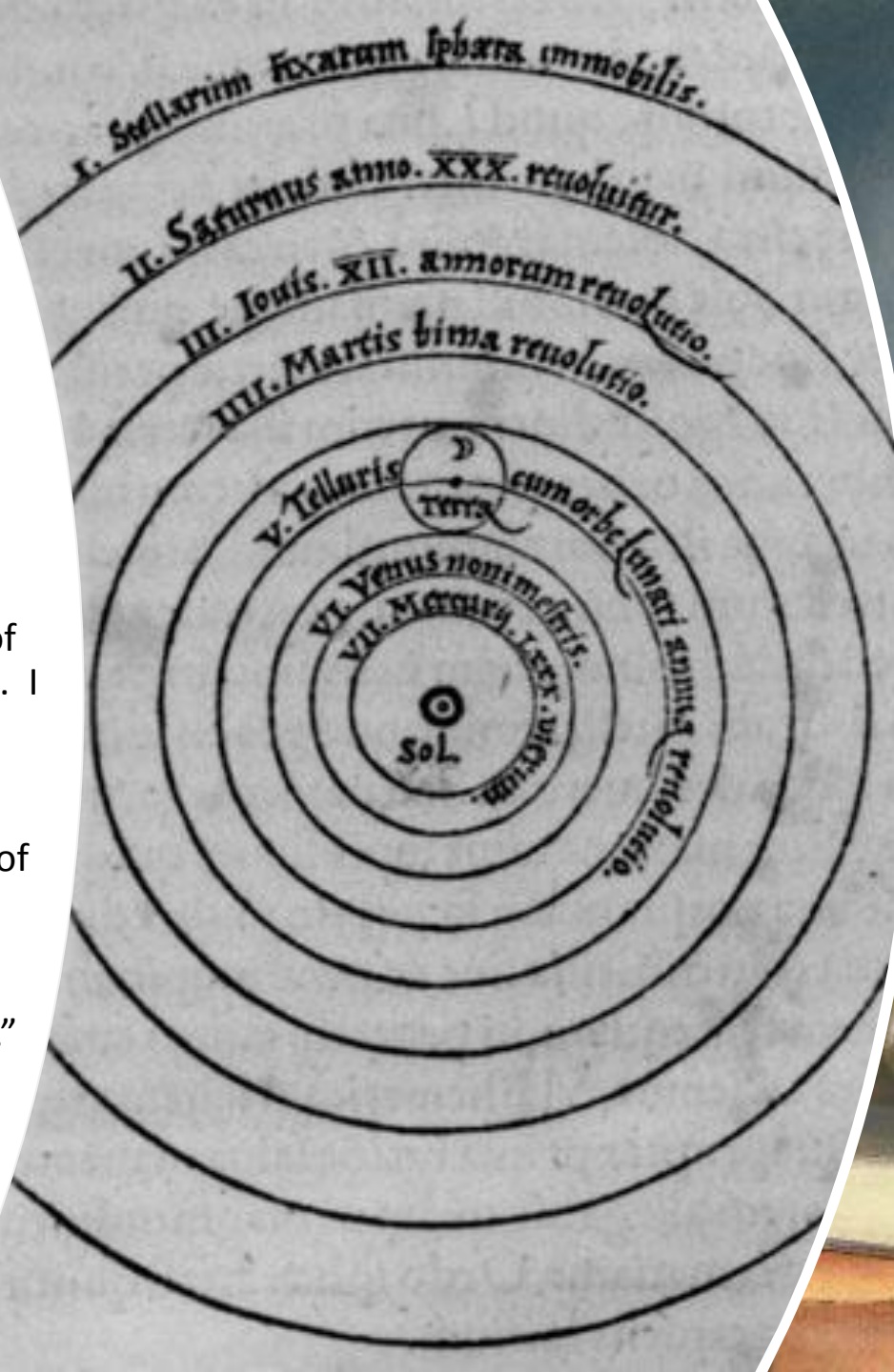
After reaching the Caribbean, in the margin of one of his notebooks Columbus wrote “*Mare totum navigable, terra totum habitable,*” later included in a letter he sent back to Queen Isabela of Spain, meaning “all seas are navigable, all lands are habitable.”

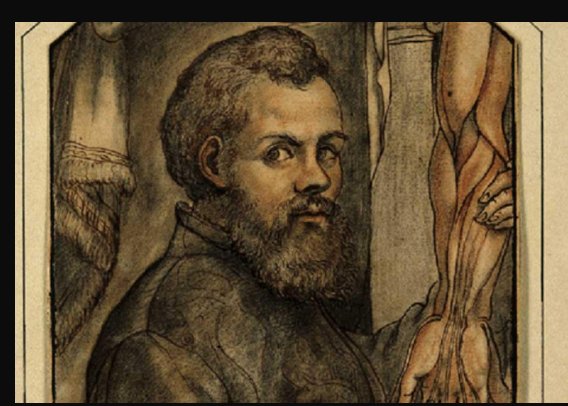
This confirmed homogeneity of the earth had far-reaching implications for other lay humanist scientists...

For Copernicus, the homogeneity of the earth suggested a likewise homogeneity of the heavens, making a scientific astronomy thinkable.

“For a long time, then, I reflected on this confusion in the astronomical traditions concerning the derivation of the motions of the universe’s spheres. I began to be annoyed that the movements of the world machine, **created for our sake** [*propter nos*] by the best and most systematic artisan of all, were not understood with greater clarity by the philosophers, who otherwise examined so precisely the most insignificant trifles of this world.”

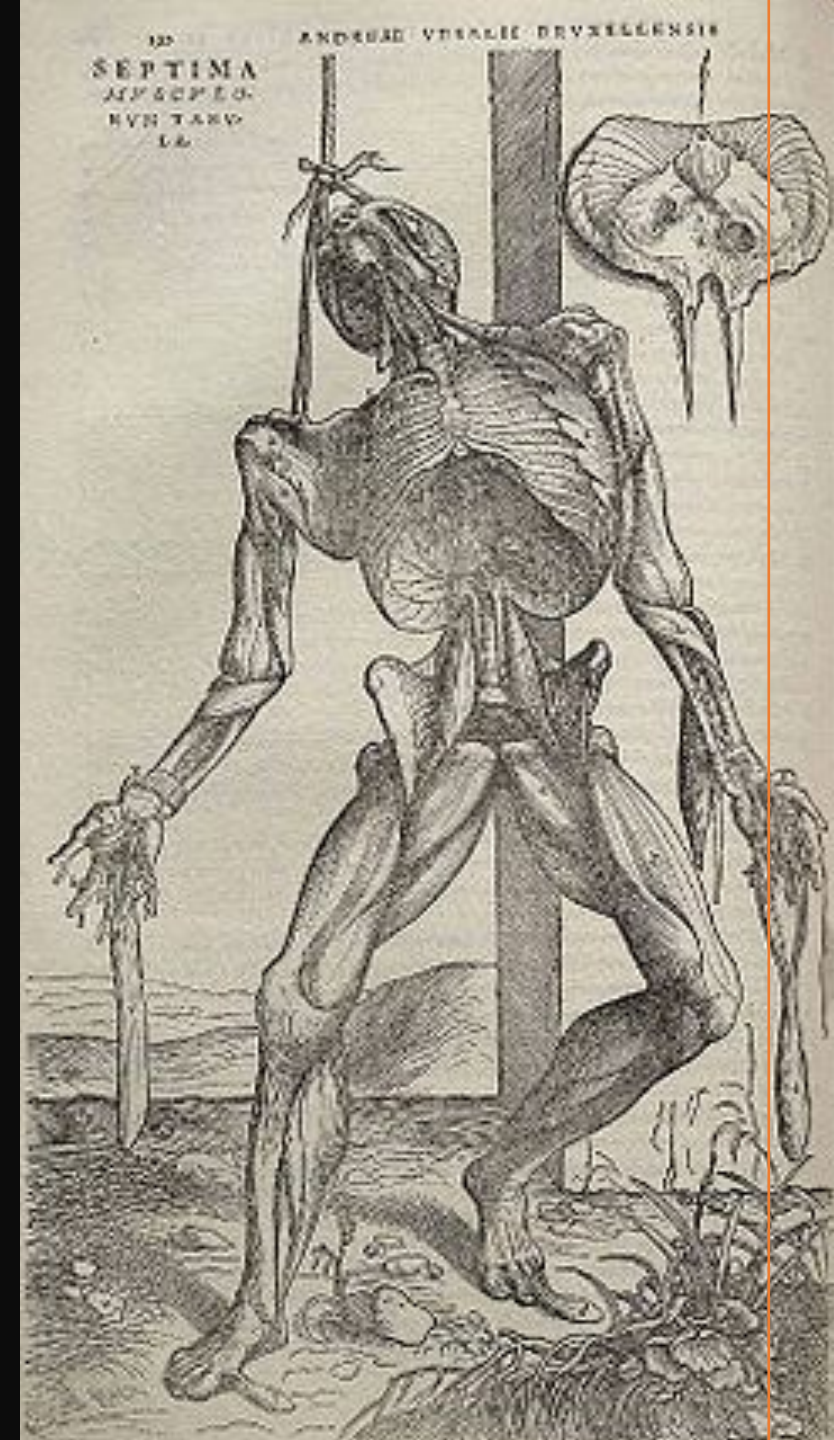
[Nicolaus Copernicus, *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies*, 1543].





Vesalius

- For medieval Europe, their **Christianized Greek order of knowledge** also included Galen's teachings.
- The Church decreed that Galenic texts were in accordance with Christian faith and further investigation was pointless.
- To challenge Galen was to challenge the Church's authority.
- Anatomy instruction at the time included a **Lector** who read and commented on an authoritative text (based on Galen). The **Ostensor** pointed out to the **Surgeon** the area to be dissected.
- The procedure followed the text, the truth of which was not questioned, and **what was seen in a dissected body was said to confirm the text, even if it didn't.**
- Also inspired by the Humanist motto of "**propter nos homines,**" in his *De fabrica* Vesalius criticized this dependence on authoritative texts. In his view, an anatomist must be able to **trust his own eyes** more than authoritative text.



A portrait of Christopher Columbus, showing his face and upper torso. He is wearing a dark, heavy robe over a white shirt. The background is a textured, light-colored wall.

First Impressions...

“On the thirty-third day after leaving Cadiz I came into the Indian Sea, where I discovered many islands inhabited by numerous people. I took possession of all of them for our most fortunate King by making public proclamation and unfurling his standard, no one making any resistance...

The inhabitants of both sexes of this and of all the other island I have seen, or of which I have any knowledge, always go as naked as they came into the world, except that some of the women cover their private parts with leaves or branches, or a veil of cotton, which they prepare themselves for this purpose. They are all, as I said before, unprovided with any sort of iron, and they are destitute of arms, which are entirely unknown to them...

- Columbus' letter to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, 1493

A portrait of Christopher Columbus, showing him from the chest up. He is wearing a dark, heavy robe over a white garment. He has a serious expression and is looking slightly to the right. The background is a textured, light-colored wall.

First Impressions...

“*They do not practice idolatry*; on the contrary, they believe that all strength, all power, in short all blessings, are from Heaven, and I have come down from there with these ships and sailors...

This is a circumstance most favorable for what I believe our most serene King especially desires, that is, *their conversion to the holy faith of Christ*; for which, indeed, so far as I could understand, they are very ready and prone...

With 50 men *we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want.*”

•- *Columbus' letter to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, 1493*



The *other* Result of the Humanist Motto “*propter nos hómines*”:

The view that **the entire earth** and everything in it, including all other non-Christian peoples, exists as **a resource** to be conquered, used and exploited to the benefit of European Christians and the glorification of a Christian empire.

The Birth of Racial Thinking



Creating “Savages”

- Columbus’ letter set off a scramble of further expeditions, from Spain, Portugal and Britain.
- Through maps, atlases, and published diaries of their exploits, Europeans explored the world and experienced descriptions and images of Native peoples, flora and fauna.
- The experiences were often **fictional**, derived from not so much from what they saw as **what they expected to see**.
- Although the European image of Native Americans varied between the mid-sixteenth and late-eighteenth centuries, they were all used as part of an ongoing campaign to encourage support for further colonial exploits.
- In the process, Native Americans were referred to as either **barbarians** or **savages**, not because they were, but because **they had to be**.



UNTRUE CHRISTIANS, INFIDELS, IDOLATERS, NEGROS AND NATIVES

- The peoples encountered south of Cape Bojador were interpreted as **“enemies of Christ”** because of their belief in non-Christian gods and **irrational savages** because of their lack of Greco-Roman civic organization.
- Based on European’s Christian/Aristotelian hierarchical thinking, being **“infidel savages”** meant that they were *legitimately* enslavable according to **Aristotelian “natural law,”** and their land *legitimately* exploitable for the wealth and glory of Christian monarchs.
- This same categorical thinking was employed in the Americas in the early contacts with the **Arawaks**, the **Taíno**, and the **Cenù** peoples.

Enemies of Christ...

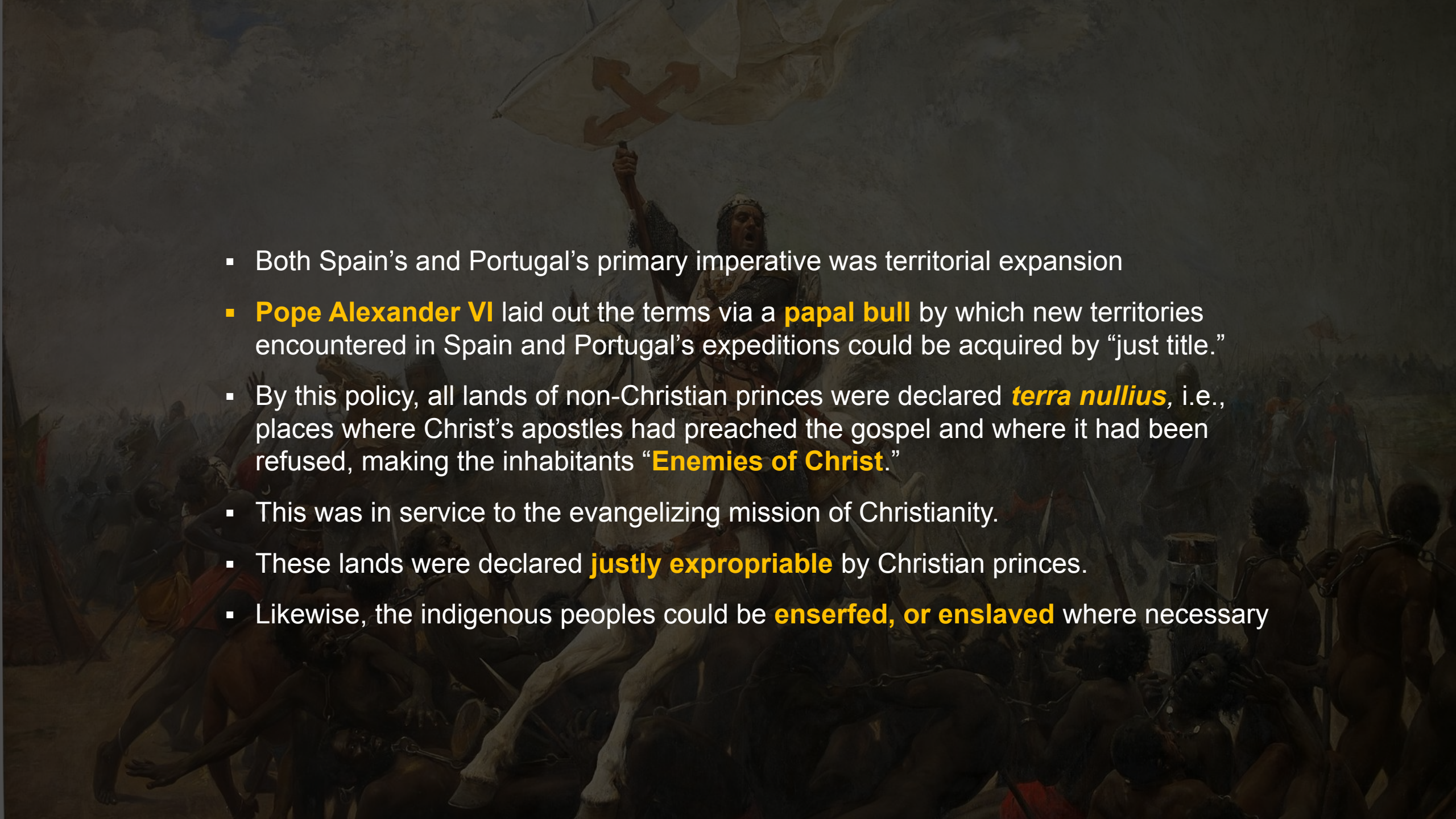
“¹⁸ For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ*: ¹⁹ whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame; who set their mind on earthly things.”

Philippians 3:18-19

...to
...having on the breast-
shod with the preparation
...the shield of faith,
...to
...know my affair
...a beloved brother
...shall mak
22 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our hearts, that he might comfort your hearts.
23 Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jē'-šūs Christ.
24 Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jē'-šūs Christ in sincerity. Ā'-mēn.

LETTER OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE Philippians

...the servants of
...the saints in Christ
...Philip'-pī, with the
...peace, from God
...the Lord Jē'-šūs
...my remembrance
...mine for you all
...gospel from
...ing, that he
...in you will
...Christ:
...ink this of
...heart; inas-
...the defence
...he all are
...ly I long
...Christ.
...e may
...ge and
brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel;
13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;
14 And many of the brethren are manifest waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.
15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:
16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:
17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.
18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ will be preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.
19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the gift of the Spirit of Jē'-šūs Christ.
20 According to my hope to my shame and

- 
- Both Spain's and Portugal's primary imperative was territorial expansion
 - **Pope Alexander VI** laid out the terms via a **papal bull** by which new territories encountered in Spain and Portugal's expeditions could be acquired by "just title."
 - By this policy, all lands of non-Christian princes were declared **terra nullius**, i.e., places where Christ's apostles had preached the gospel and where it had been refused, making the inhabitants "**Enemies of Christ.**"
 - This was in service to the evangelizing mission of Christianity.
 - These lands were declared **justly expropriable** by Christian princes.
 - Likewise, the indigenous peoples could be **enslaved, or enslaved** where necessary

Origin Narratives...

18 Now the sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. And Ham was the father of Canaan.

19 These were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated.

20 And Noah began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard.

21 Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent.

22 And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside.





This is where it gets awkward...

23 But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both of their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father.

24 So Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him.

25 Then he said: "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants he shall be to his brethren."

26 And he said: "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem, and may Canaan be his servant."

27 May God enlarge Japheth, and may he dwell in the tents of Shem; and may Canaan be his servant."



JAPHETH

HAM

SHEM

LEGEND

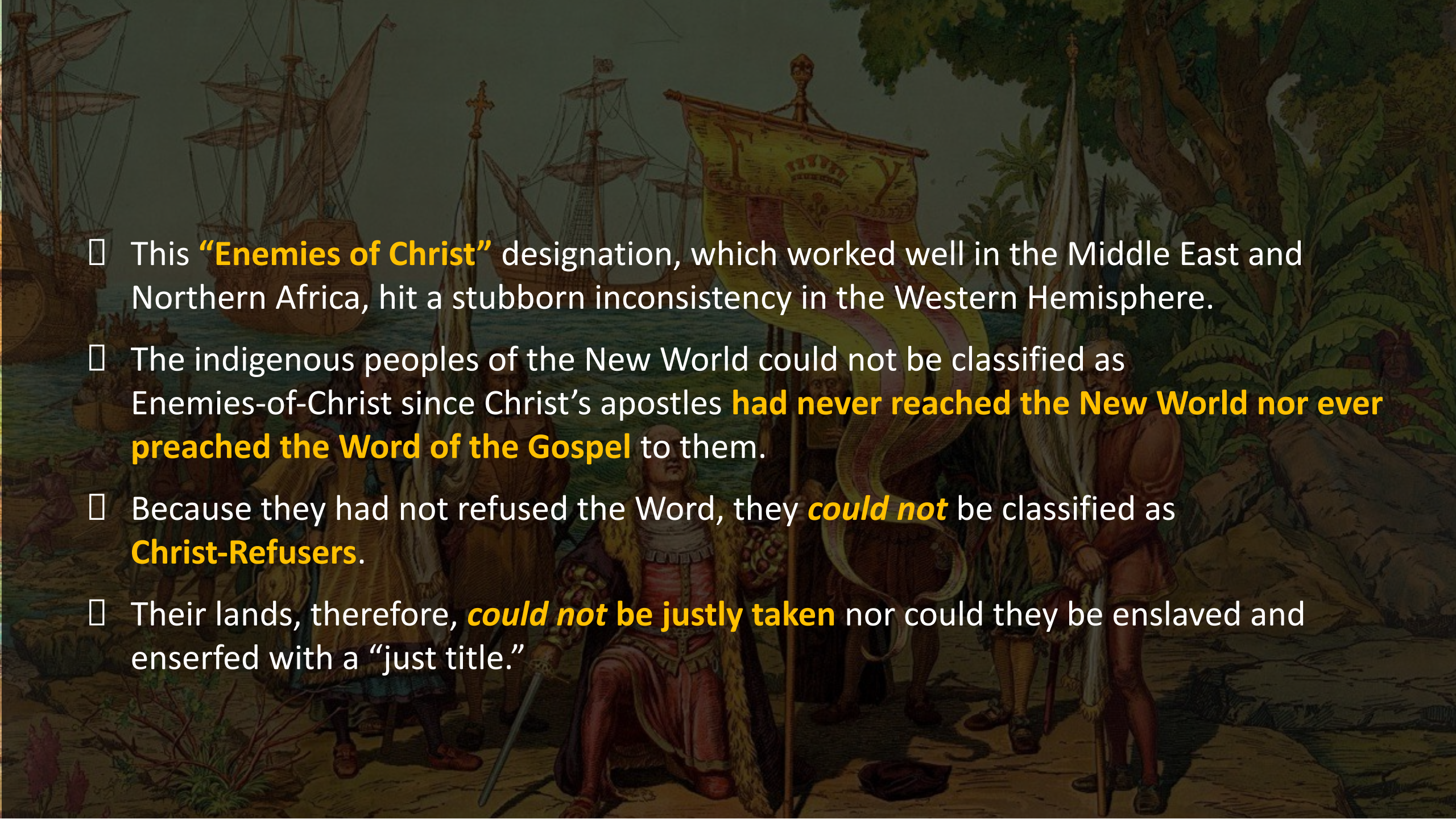
- City
- City (uncertain location)
- LUD Descendants of Japheth
- PUT Descendants of Ham
- UZAL Descendants of Shem

Entire inset area dominated by the descendants of Ham

CANAAN

- ARVADITES
- ZEMARITES
- ARKITES
- SINITES
- SIDONIANS
- AMORITES
- PERIZZITES
- HITTITES
- HIVITES
- JEBUSITES
- GIRGASHITES



- 
- This **“Enemies of Christ”** designation, which worked well in the Middle East and Northern Africa, hit a stubborn inconsistency in the Western Hemisphere.
 - The indigenous peoples of the New World could not be classified as Enemies-of-Christ since Christ’s apostles **had never reached the New World nor ever preached the Word of the Gospel** to them.
 - Because they had not refused the Word, they **could not** be classified as **Christ-Refusers**.
 - Their lands, therefore, **could not be justly taken** nor could they be enslaved and enserfed with a “just title.”

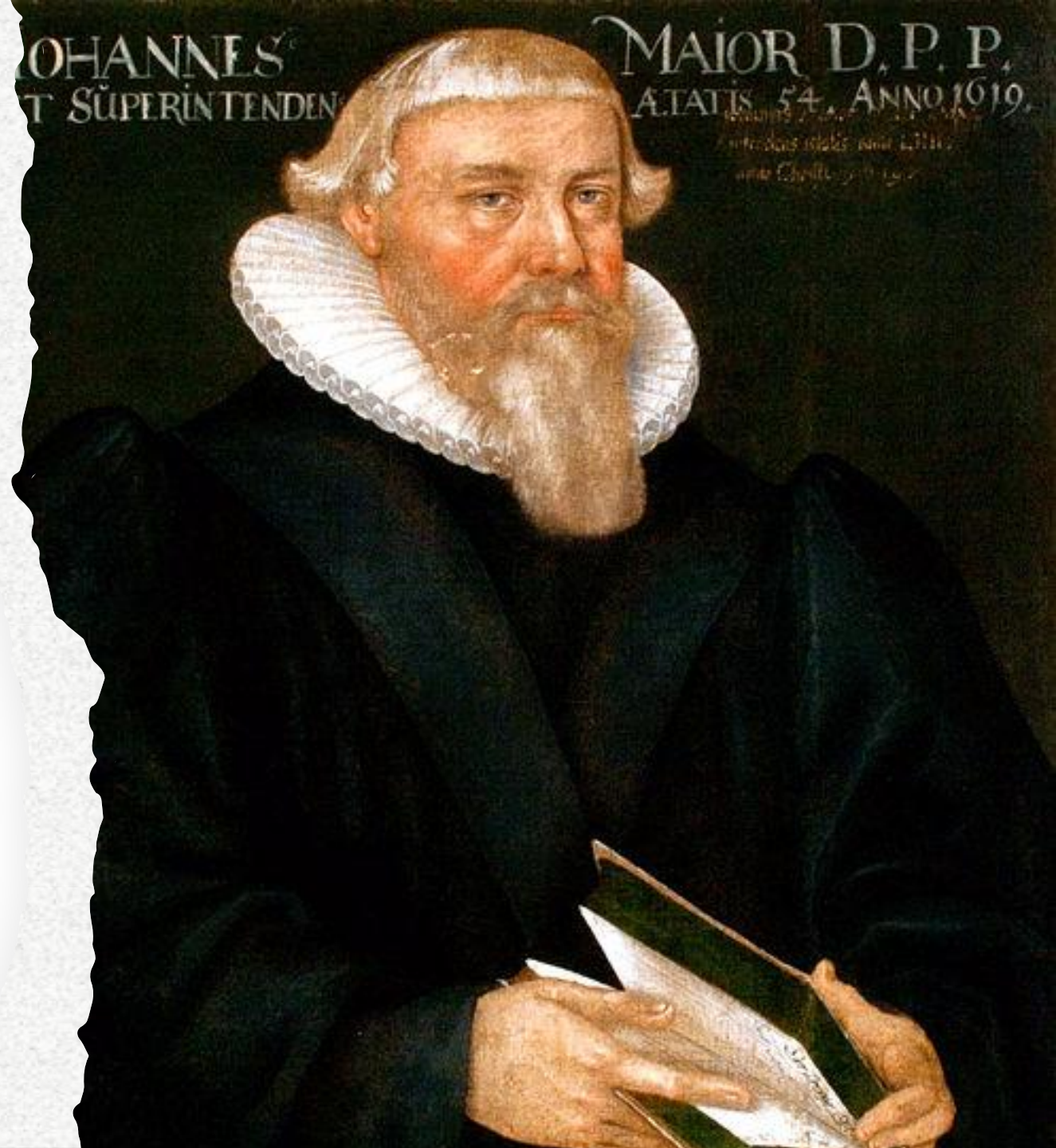
- Spain attempted to get around this obstacle by constructing a judicial document called the **Requisition (*Requerimento*)** in **1510**, a hybrid theologico-judicial document, written in Latin and read aloud to indigenes by a notary.
- This ensured that **Indigenous peoples literally *heard* the Word of Christ**, so they could be **later classified as having refused it, and therefore as Enemies-of-Christ**.
- It proclaimed that **Christ**, who was king over the world, had **granted sovereignty to the Pope** who had, in turn, **granted the lands of their “barbarous nations” to the King of Spain**, who then sent the expedition members as his emissaries.
- The colonizers **gave them the choice** of accepting Spain’s sovereignty over their lands, and their acceptance of Christ’s Word and with it, conversion to Christianity.
- If they accepted, they would be unharmed. **Should they refuse, (thereby making themselves Enemies-of-Christ), they would be attacked, captured, justly enslaved, their lands justly expropriated.**



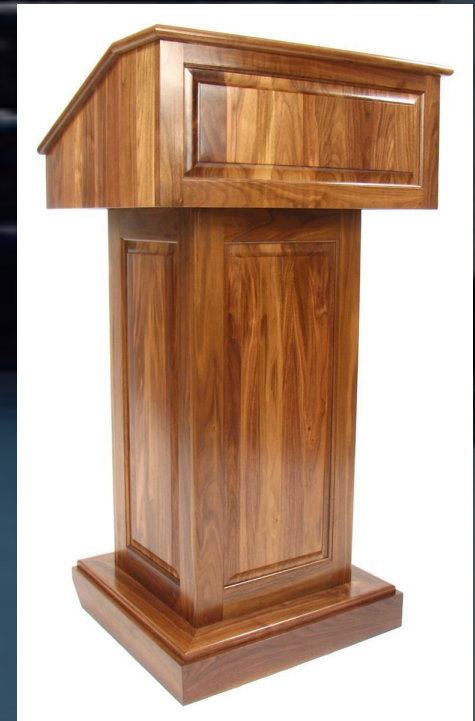
by-nature

1519

“These people live like beasts on either side of the equator. And this has now been demonstrated by experience, wherefore the first person to conquer them, justly rules over them because they are *by-nature*. As the Philosopher says in the first book of the *Politics*, it is clear that some men are by nature slaves, others by nature free; and in some men it is determined that here is such a thing [i.e., a disposition to slavery] and that they should benefit from it. And it is just that one man should be a slave and another free, and it is fitting that one man should rule and another obey, for the quality of leadership is also inherent in the natural master. On this account, the Philosopher says in the aforementioned book that this is the reason why the Greeks should be masters over the barbarians because by nature, the barbarians and slaves are the same.”



The Valladolid Debates (1550–1556)



Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda (1494 – 1573)

- Humanist, philosopher, royal historian and chaplain
 - Defender of the Spanish empire's right of conquest, of colonization, and of evangelization in the Western hemisphere.
 - Argued that the vast difference that existed between the Europeans and the Indigenous people was clear evidence of the latter's **lack of natural reason**.
 - Of particular focus was the practice of **human sacrifice** by the Aztecs.
 - Due to this **lack**, he argued that they had been determined by nature to be the “**natural slaves**” of the Spaniards.
-



D. F. BARTOLOME DELAS CASA

Nacido en 1484.

Murió en 1566.



Bartolomé de las Casas (1484 – 1566)

- He arrived in Hispaniola as a layman then became a Dominican friar, priest, bishop, and historian.
 - His writings chronicle the first decades of colonization of the Caribbean, describing the atrocities committed by the colonizers against the indigenous people.
 - In 1515 he gave up his Indian slaves and *encomienda*, and argued, before King Charles I, that the **Spaniards had no “just title”** to dispossess and enslave the “natives.”
 - Argued that the Aztec practice of human sacrifice was not evidence of *a lack of reason*, but rather an *error of reason*, believing that it was just and necessary to ensure the “good of the commonwealth.”
 - Advocated for the **importation of Africans** instead as slaves, believing that they truly possessed no rationality.
-

Depiction of Spanish atrocities in Las Casas's "*Brevisima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*," 1552.



Remorse...

Near the end of his life, after realizing the unjust and **rapacious methods used by the Portuguese to acquire African slaves**, Las Casas admitted that the terrible **effects of his proposal to “import Black slaves in order to liberate the Indians”** had so put his soul in mortal danger that “he was not certain that his ignorance at the time or even the purity of his motive” would suffice “to absolve him” when he found himself “before the Divine Judge”.



Imagined Savages

By the 17th century, the image of the “savage” had been solidified in European literature and in the travel diaries of missionaries and colonial administrators:

- Savages are identified with the landscape they inhabit; they are literally "sprung from the land itself";
- They are totally uncivilized, have no fixed housing, no social conventions nor arts *because* they do not plow, plant, harvest, or store **their food**;
- Instead, they live by gathering and hunting.



Imagined Civilization



- Civilization comes from elsewhere;
- It consists of dominating the land, planting fields and buildings upon it, and extracting profit from it;
- Any non-dominating human identification with uncultivated land is *ipso facto* primitive and savage;
- Therefore, the displacement and/or destruction of such savages in the name of civilization, which is progress, is morally justified

“The whole earth is destined to furnish sustenance for its inhabitants; but it cannot do this unless it be cultivated. Every nation is therefore bound by the natural law to cultivate the land which has fallen to its share, and it has no right to extend its boundaries or to obtain help from other Nations *except* in so far as the land it inhabits can not supply its needs Those who still pursue this idle hunting mode of life occupy more land than they would have need of under a system of honest labor, and they may not complain if other more industrious Nations, too confined at home, should come and occupy part of their lands.”

•Emmerich de Vattel, *Le Droit des Gens (The Law of Nations: Or, Principles of the Law of Nature Applied to the Conduct and Affairs of Nations and Sovereigns*, 1758)

LE DROIT
DES GENS,

O U

P R I N C I P E S

D E L A

LOI NATURELLE,

Appliqués à la conduite & aux affaires des
NATIONS & des SOUVERAINS.

PAR M. DE VATTEL.

Nihil est enim illi principi Deo, qui omnem hunc mundum regit, quod quidem in terris fiat, acceptius, quam consilia cætusque hominum jure sociati, quæ civitates appellantur. CICER. Somn. Scipion.

Nouvelle Edition Augmentée, Revue & Corrigée.
Avec quelques Remarques de l'Editeur.

TOME PREMIER



A A M S T E R D A M,

Chez E. VAN HARREVELT.

M D C C L X V.



RACE in The Age of “Natural History”:

Naturalists, Classifiers, Systematists and
Taxonomies of *Race* in the 17th – 18th
Centuries

French Traveler, Physician, and Gassendist philosopher, François Bernier

- Wrote extensively critiquing astrology, follower of philosopher Pierre Gassendi
- In **1684**, anonymously wrote "*Nouvelle division de la terre par les différentes espèces ou races qui l'habitent*" ("**New Division of the Earth by the Different Species or 'Races' that Inhabit It**")
- By contrast, most 16th and 17th century anthropological and travel literature **ordered people of the known world in terms of religion**, language, customs, and politics, and made only incidental use of physiognomies in their criteria.
- All previous European human classifications followed the longstanding tradition of grouping people by biblical genealogy.



JOURNAL DES SCAVANS,

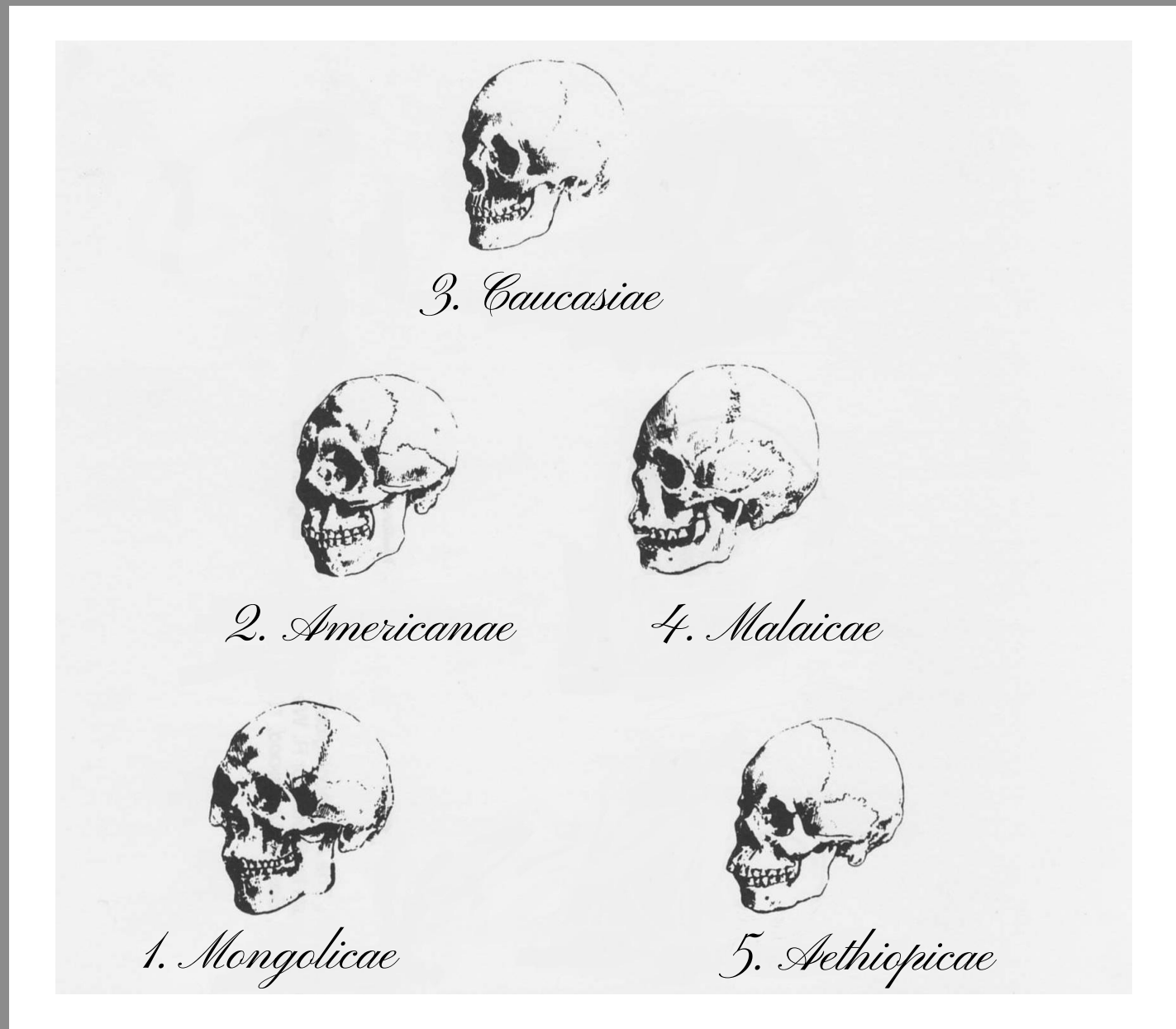
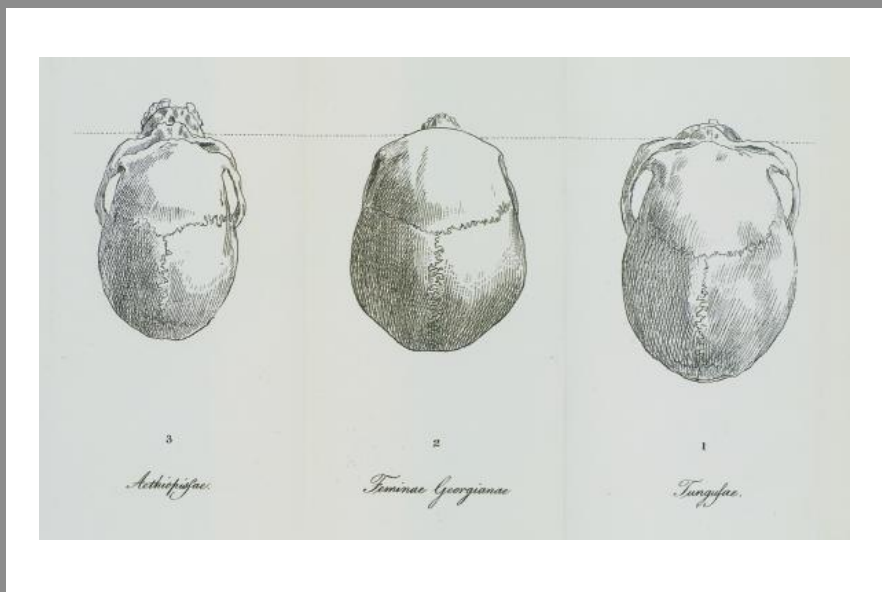
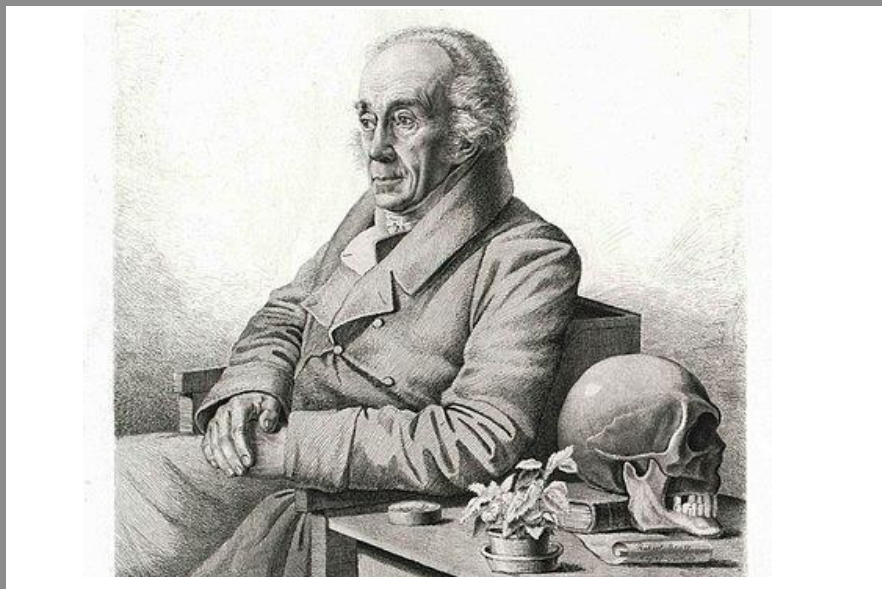
ou
RECUEIL SUCCINT ET ABREGÉ DE TOUT
*ce qui arrive de plus surprenant dans la Nature, & de ce qui se fait
ou se découvre de plus curieux dans les Arts & dans les Sciences.*

DU LUNDY 24. AVRIL M. DC. LXXXIV.

NOUVELLE DIVISION DE LA TERRE,
*par les différentes Espèces ou Races d'hommes qui
l'habitent, envoyée par un fameux Voyageur à
M. l'Abbé de Lu ***** à peu près en ces
termes.*

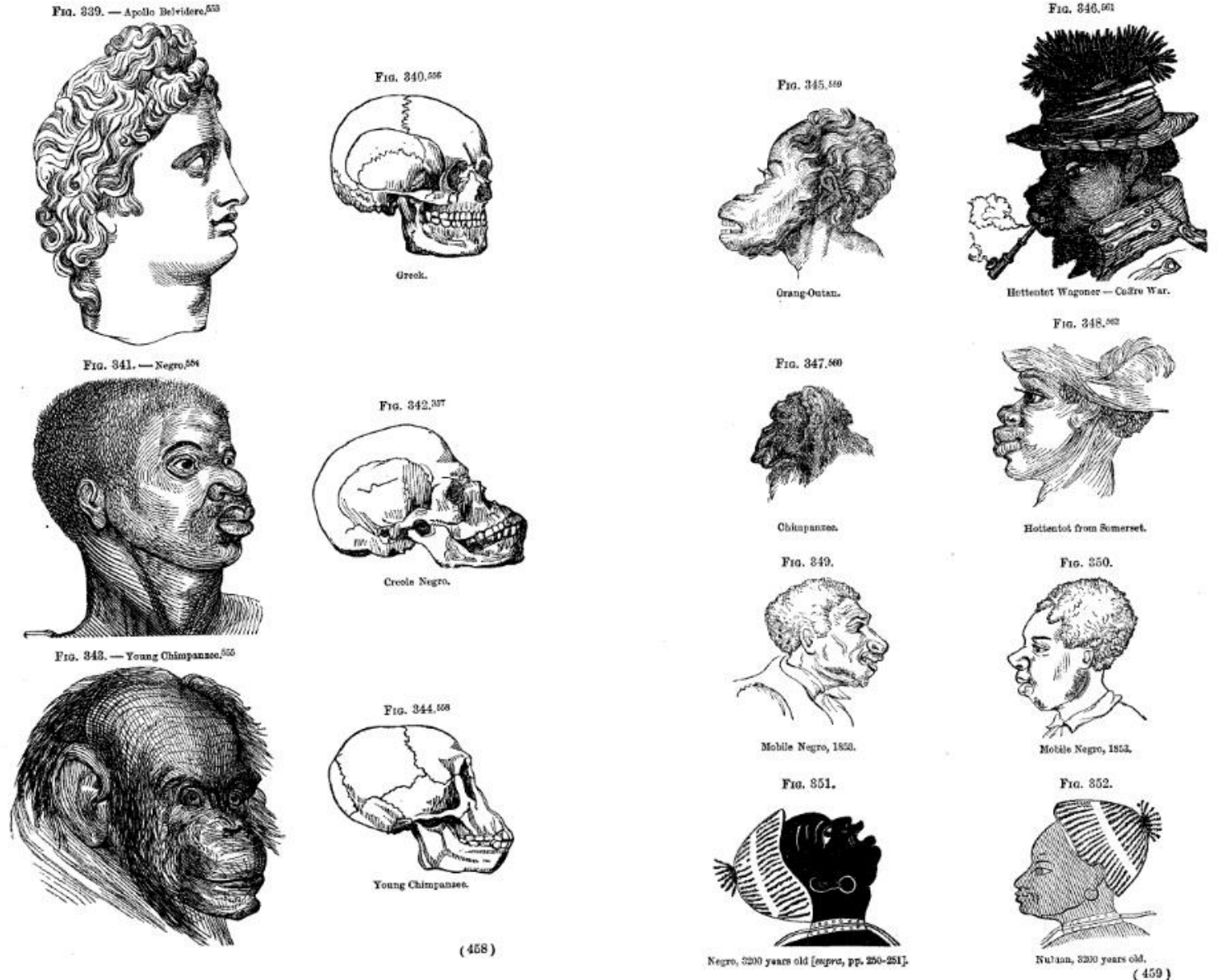
Les Geographes n'ont divisé jusqu'icy la Terre que par les différens Pays ou Régions qui s'y trouvent. Ce que j'ay remarqué dans les hommes en tous mes longs & fréquens Voyages, m'a donné la pensée de la diviser autrement. Car quoy que dans la forme extérieure du corps, & principalement du visage, les hommes soient presque tous différens les uns des autres, selon les divers Cantons de Terre qu'ils habitent, de sorte que ceux qui ont beaucoup voyagé peuvent souvent sans se tromper distinguer par là chaque nation en particulier; j'ay néanmoins remarqué qu'il y a sur tout quatre ou cinq Espèces ou Races.

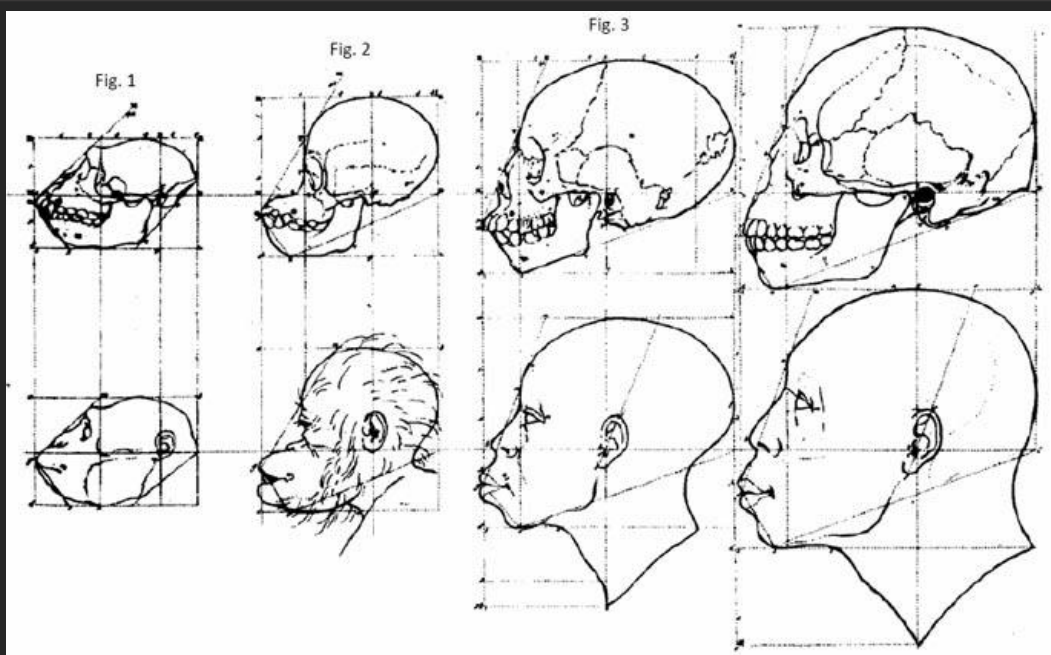
“Hitherto, geographers have divided the Earth only into the different Countries or Regions therein; but my own observations among humankind during all my lengthy travels have given me the idea of dividing it in another way. For although men are almost all distinct from one another as far as the external form of their bodies is concerned, especially their faces, according to the different areas of the world they live in, and while they differ so clearly that people who have travelled widely can thus often distinguish unerringly one nation from another, nevertheless **I have observed that there are in all four or five Species or Races among men whose distinctive traits are so obvious that they can justifiably serve as the basis of a new division of the Earth...**



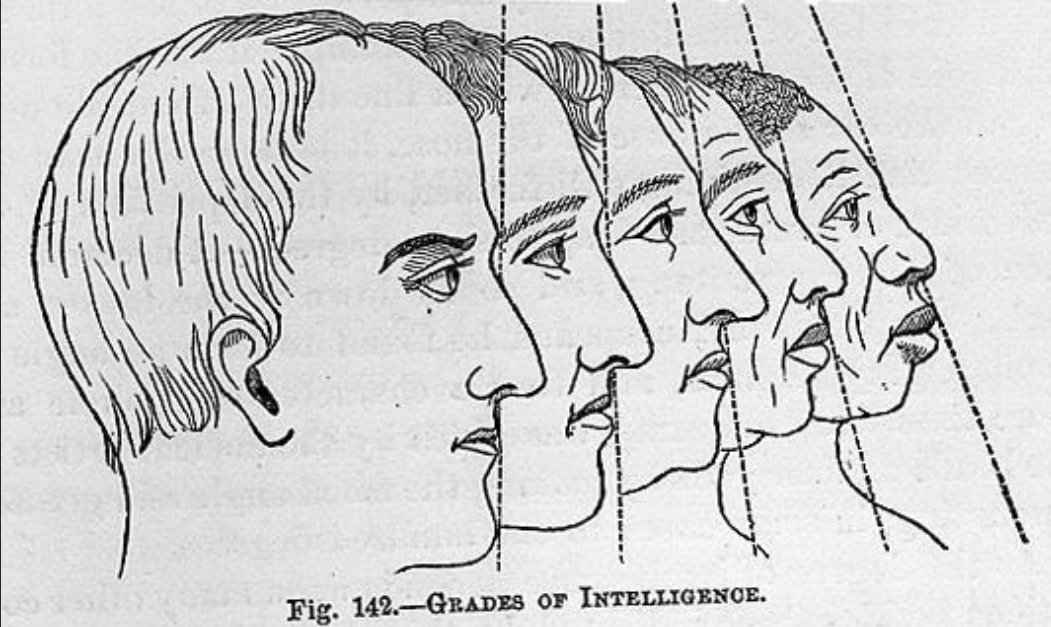
Nott & Gliddon,
Types of Mankind, 1856

- Skulls became such an important symbol for indicating racial difference because contrasting skulls was a way to **contrast the primitive simplicity of the Negro brain with the civilized complexity of the White brain.**
- Highlighting skulls was also a way to indicate that such differences were **proven by the science of comparative anatomy.**





Camper, P., *Dissertation on the Natural Varieties Which Characterize the Human Physiognomy*, 1792.

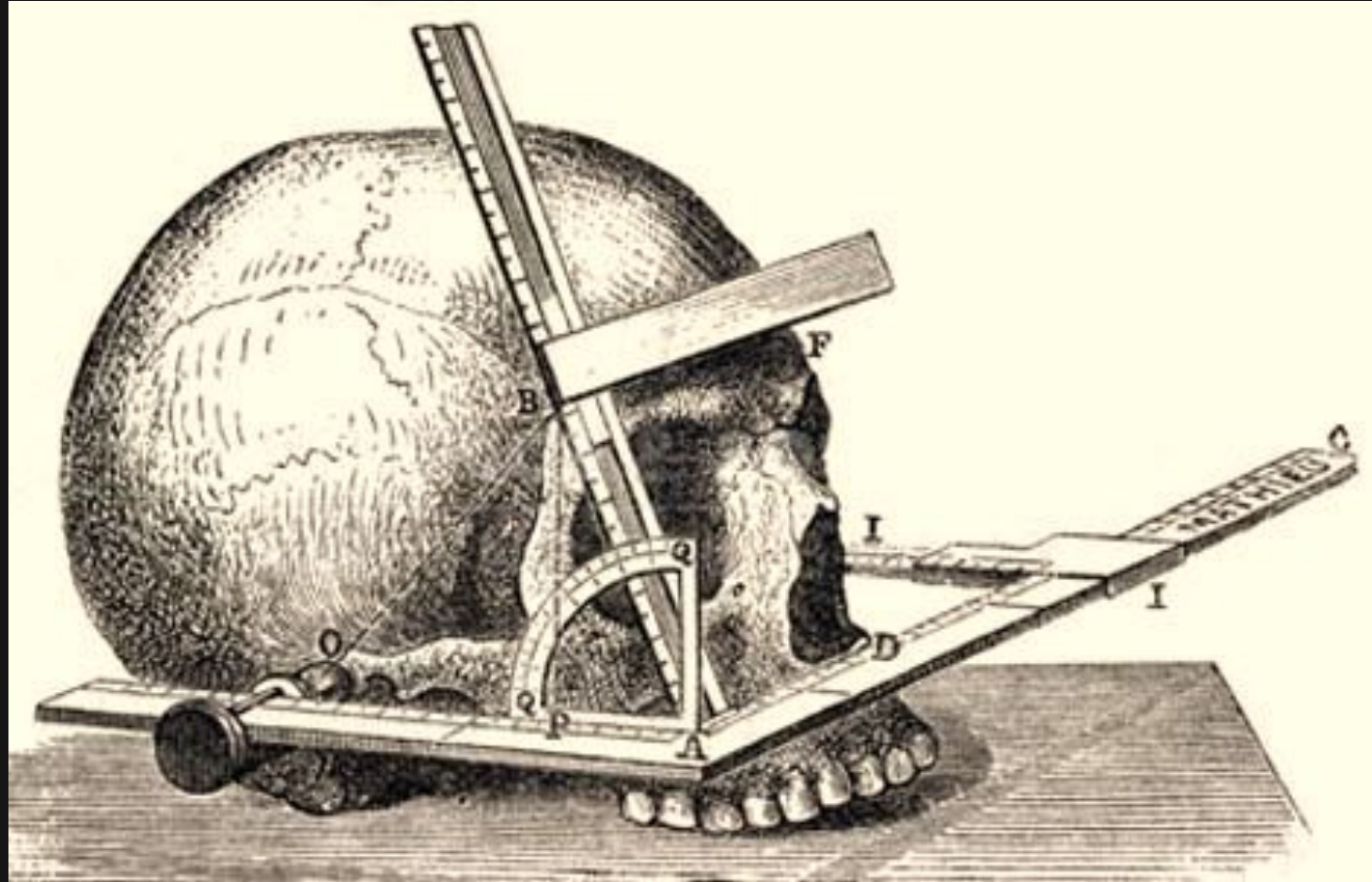


J. P. Jeffries, *The Natural History of the Human Races*, (New York, 1869), 347.



R. Dexter, "The facial angle," *Popular Science Monthly* 4:588, 1874

- Broca thought that **prognathic facial angle** and the **cephalic index** (relationship between the brain's length and width), were *more important* than brain size as the main indicators of intelligence.
- Skulls that measured closer to a right angle indicated higher intelligence.
- He also thought the cephalic index was directly proportional with intelligence, with the most intelligent European group being “long headed,” while the least intelligent Negro group being “short headed.”



Goniometer as designed by **Dr. Paul Broca (1824-1880)**, physician, anatomist, anthropologist, and pioneer of modern neurosurgery, the study of localized brain function, and anthropometry. Founder in the field of craniometry.



- The advent of evolutionary theory in the mid 19th century firmly enshrined the concept of **race** in a **veneer of biology**
- Darwin's ***Origin of Species*** (1859) largely eschewed questions of human evolution, but planted the seed for his ***Descent of Man*** (1871), which helped solidify the reimagining of the human species as a purely organic organism.



Narratives of Evolution

Darwin's theory of evolution provided two things for the late 19th century European intellectual tradition:

1. A scientific explanatory model of **biological change over time**, that brought all natural life together under one theoretical framework;
2. A new **secular origin narrative** of life on earth that subsequent European and American intellectuals used to frame colonial and industrial age social hierarchies within a discourse of biological determinism.

*I.e., evolution became an explanatory model used to frame both **racial and socioeconomic hierarchies** as **natural and biologically ordained**.*

- The error in logic was to imagine that our **social arrangements** are **biologically determined** in the same way as our eye color.

ON
THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES

BY MEANS OF NATURAL SELECTION,

OR THE
PRESERVATION OF FAVOURED RACES IN THE STRUGGLE
FOR LIFE.

By CHARLES DARWIN, M.A.,

FELLOW OF THE ROYAL, GEOLOGICAL, LINNÆAN, ETC., SOCIETIES;
AUTHOR OF 'JOURNAL OF RESEARCHES DURING H. M. S. BEAGLE'S VOYAGE
ROUND THE WORLD.'

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

1859.

Three aspects of evolution:

1. **The Theory**: biological/morphological change over time.
2. **The Mechanism**: natural selection
3. **The Driver** (of the mechanism): competition over scarce resources

“A struggle for existence inevitably follows from the high rate at which all organic beings tend to increase... It is the **doctrine of Malthus** applied with manifold force to the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms.”

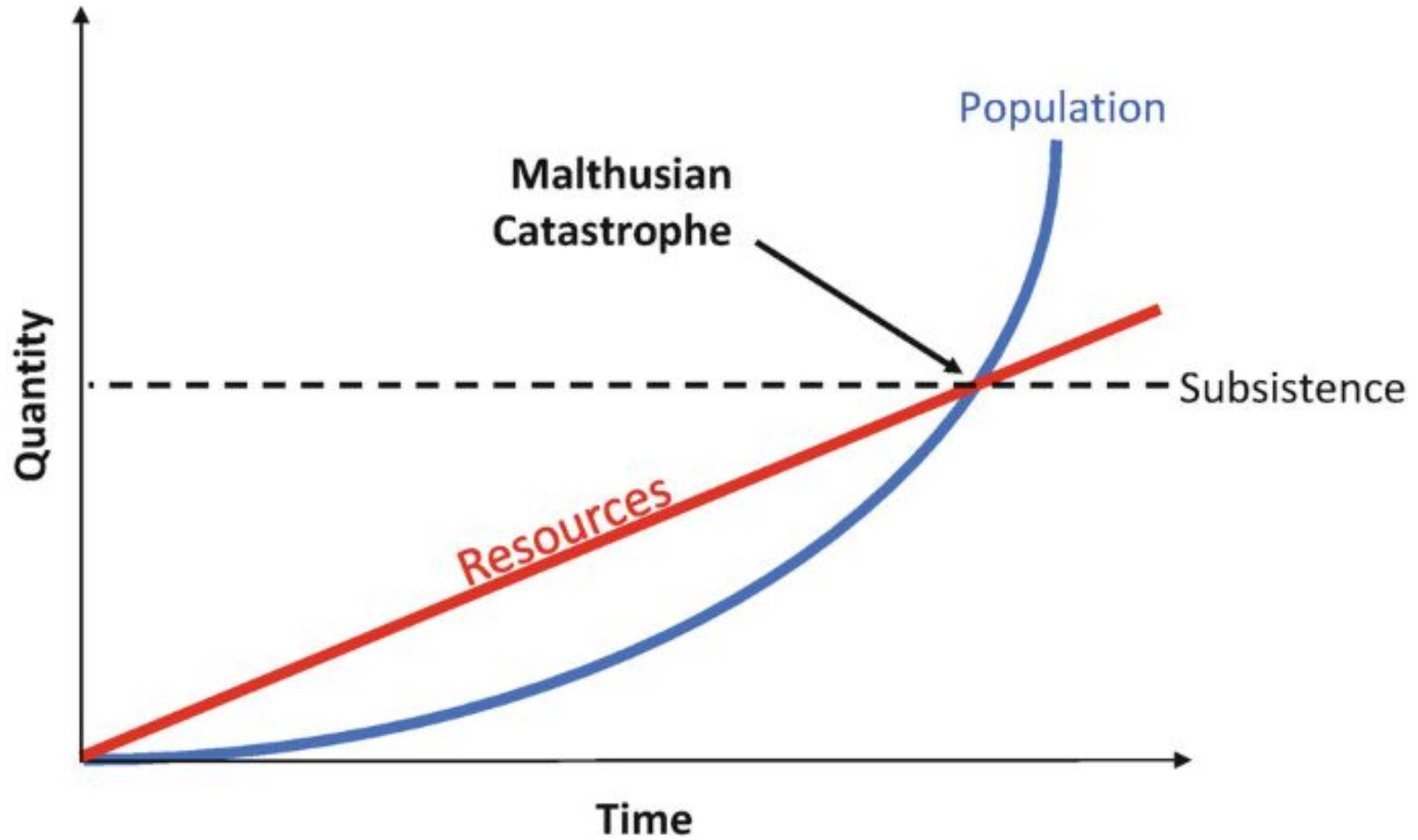
- Darwin, *Origin of Species*, pg. 63



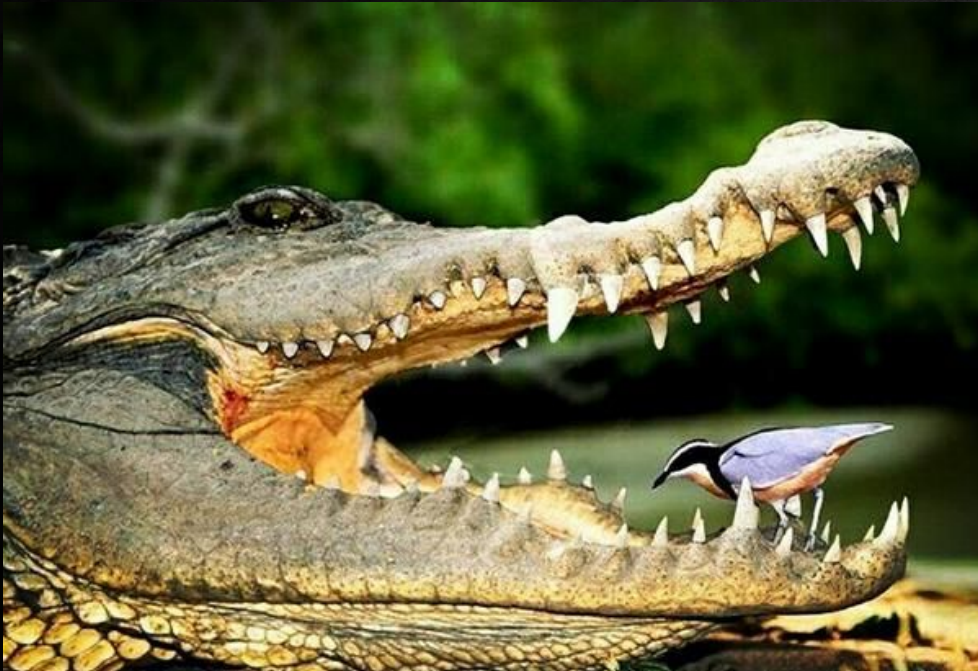
Thomas Malthus

1766-1834

- Malthus was an English cleric, political economist and demographer.
- Worked as an economist for the infamous British East India Company
- He was also founder of the Statistical Society of London
- Wrote ***An Essay on the Principle of Population*** in 1798, where he philosophized that natural scarcity would always act as a population check on humanity:
“The power of population is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man.”
- Darwin reads Malthus while on the Voyage of the Beagle in the early 1830s, which helps him formulate his theory for the ***driver*** of evolution by natural selection.



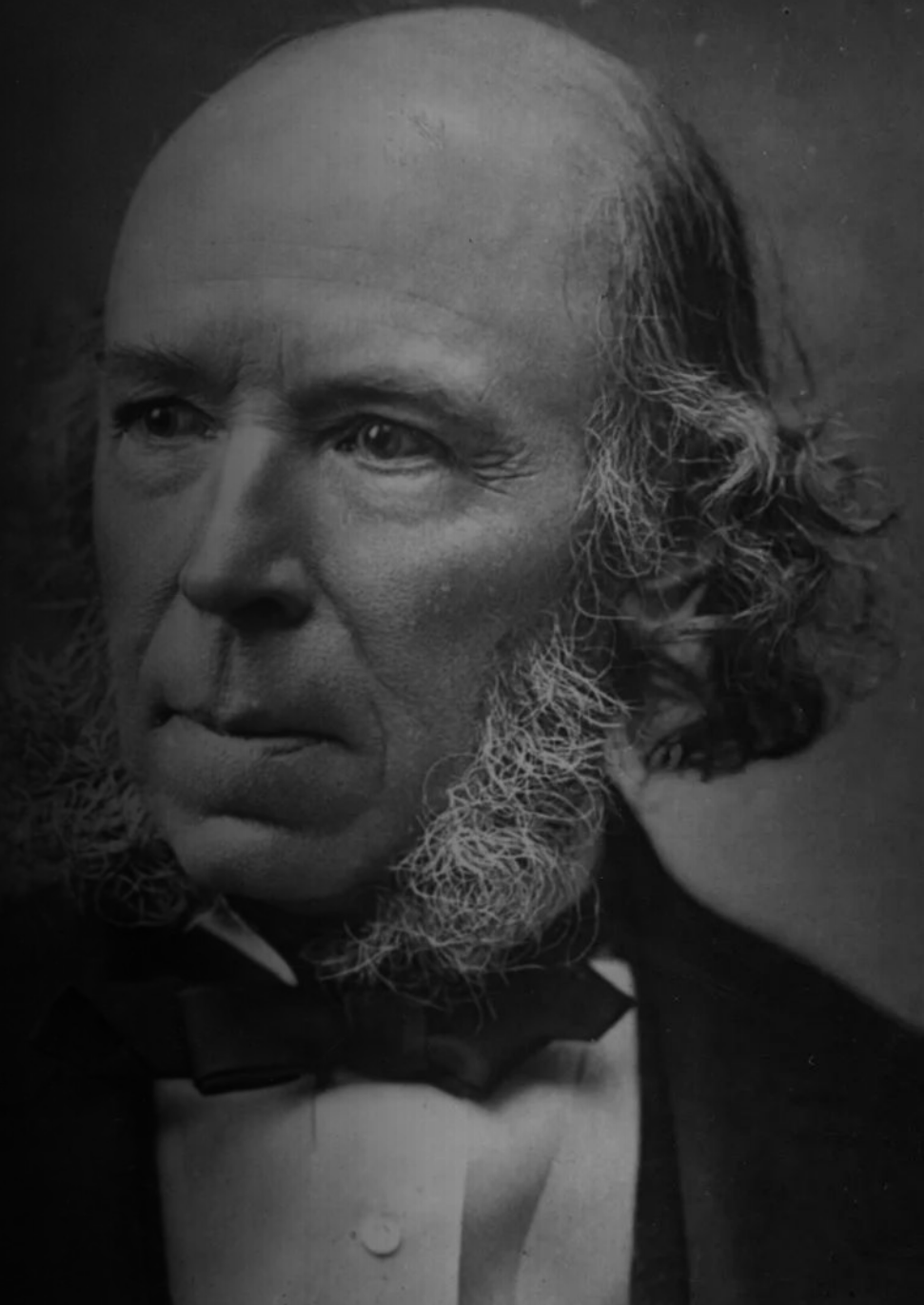
Deconstructing “Natural” Scarcity



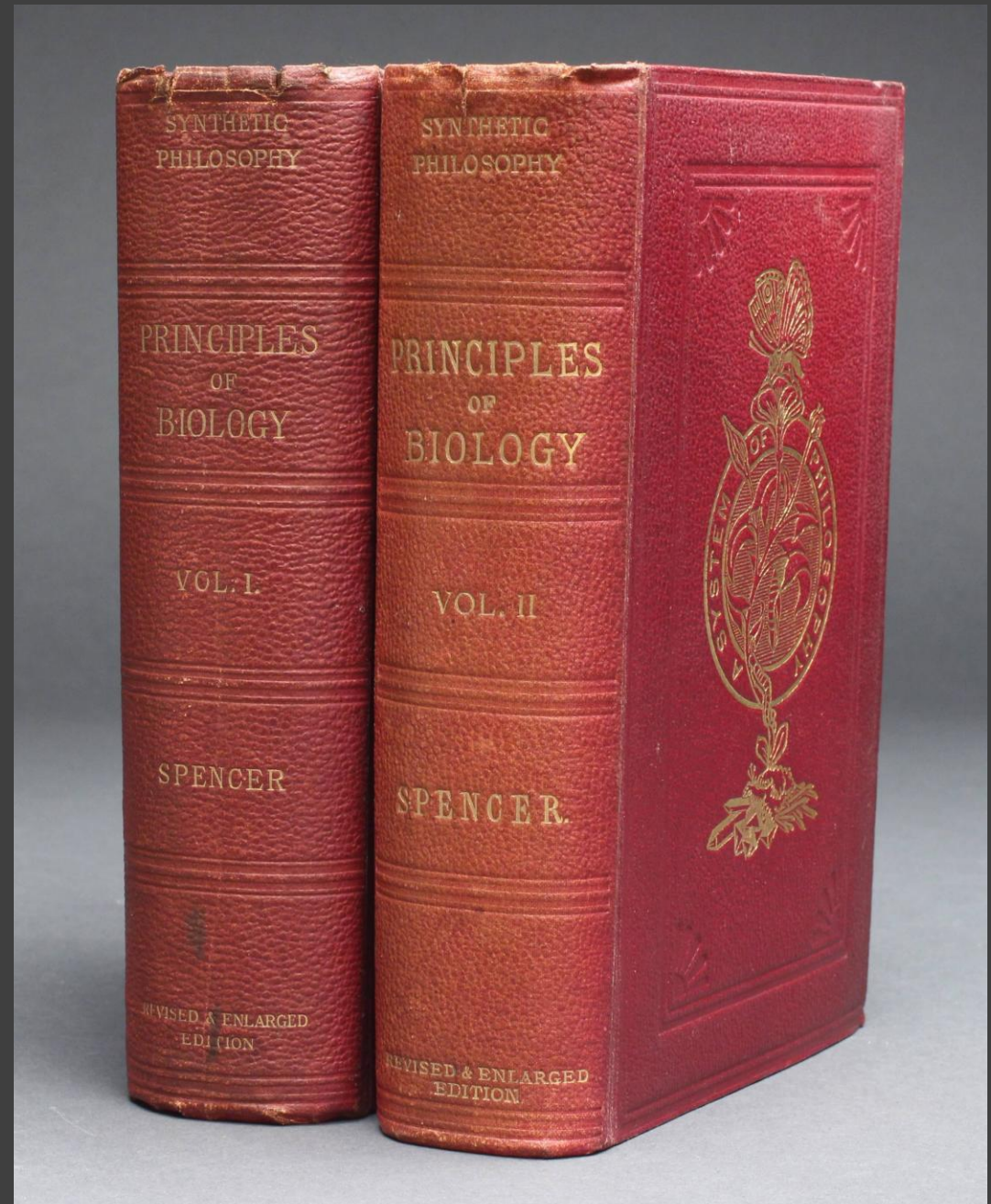
- The “scarce” resource state that Malthus described was not the *natural* state of the entire planet, but more **the perspective from the colonial seat of the British Empire**, which had grown accustomed to extrapolating spices, nostrums, foods, and servants from around the world to meet their *desires*, not needs.
- While reading Malthus aboard the Beagle, Darwin had an “AHA!” moment and wrote: “*One may say there is a force like a hundred thousand wedges trying [to] force every kind of adapted structure into the gaps in the œconomy of nature, or rather forming gaps by thrusting out weaker ones.*” (Darwin, Notebook D, Sept. 28, 1834)
- After reading Malthus, Darwin adopted a myopic vision that **only saw competition in nature**, while virtually ignoring all the cooperation and symbiosis that exists far more frequently.
- Though Darwin himself was very conservative in extrapolating his theories to the racial and class hierarchies endemic to British society during his time, the scholars who read him gleamed **a new origin narrative** that could help **explain/justify the European colonial stratification of humanity**...

Putting the “Social” in Darwinism

- Herbert Spencer (1820 – 1903) was an English philosopher, psychologist, biologist, anthropologist, and sociologist, and one of the most-discussed thinkers of the Victorian era.
- His writings influenced the development of British economic theory, and the scientific disciplines of sociology, psychology, and biology.
- His magnum opus, *The Synthetic Philosophy* (1896), was a comprehensive work containing volumes on the principles of biology, psychology, morality, and sociology.
- The aim was to demonstrate that the principles of evolution by natural selection apply to human societies, social classes, and individuals as well as to biological species developing over geologic time.

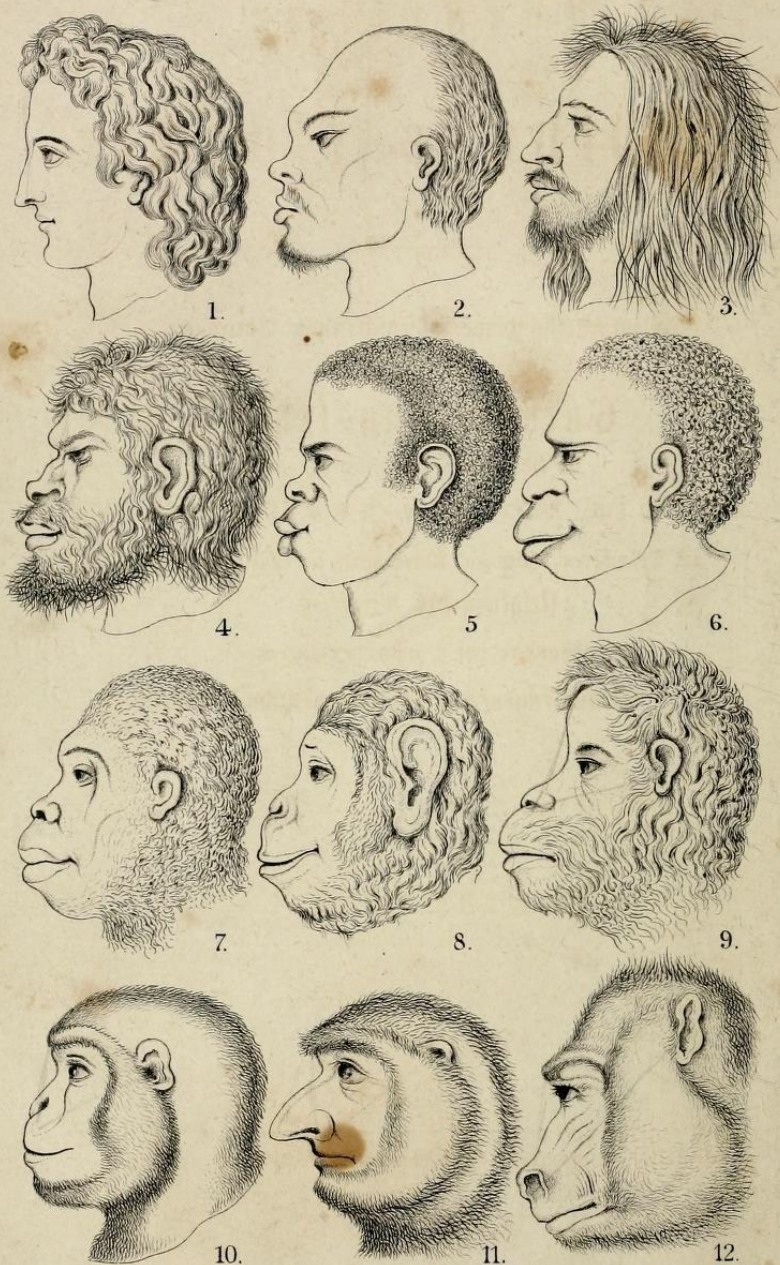


- Spencer's writings were invoked to justify *laissez-faire economics* and the minimal state, which he argued best promoted unfettered competition between individuals and the gradual improvement of society through the "*survival of the fittest*," a term he originated in *Principles of Biology* (1864) after reading Darwin's *Origin of Species*.
- His works were translated into German, Italian, Spanish, French, Russian, Japanese and Chinese, and into many other languages and he was offered honors and awards all over Europe and North America.



“The law is the survival of the fittest... The law is not the survival of the 'better' or the 'stronger,' if we give to those words any thing like their ordinary meanings. It is the survival of those which are constitutionally fittest to thrive under the conditions in which they are placed... This survival of the fittest which I have here sought to express in mechanical terms, is that which Mr. Darwin has called 'natural selection,' or **the preservation of favoured races** in the struggle for life.”

Herbert Spencer, *The Principles Of Biology*, Pt. 3, Ch. 12



Die Familiengruppe der Katarrhinen (siehe Seite 555).

German zoologist **Ernst Haeckel's** illustration showing select human "species" and some of their ape relatives.

- Went through **eleven editions** between **1868 and World War I** and was translated into a dozen languages;
- It was "perhaps the chief source of the world's knowledge of Darwinism."

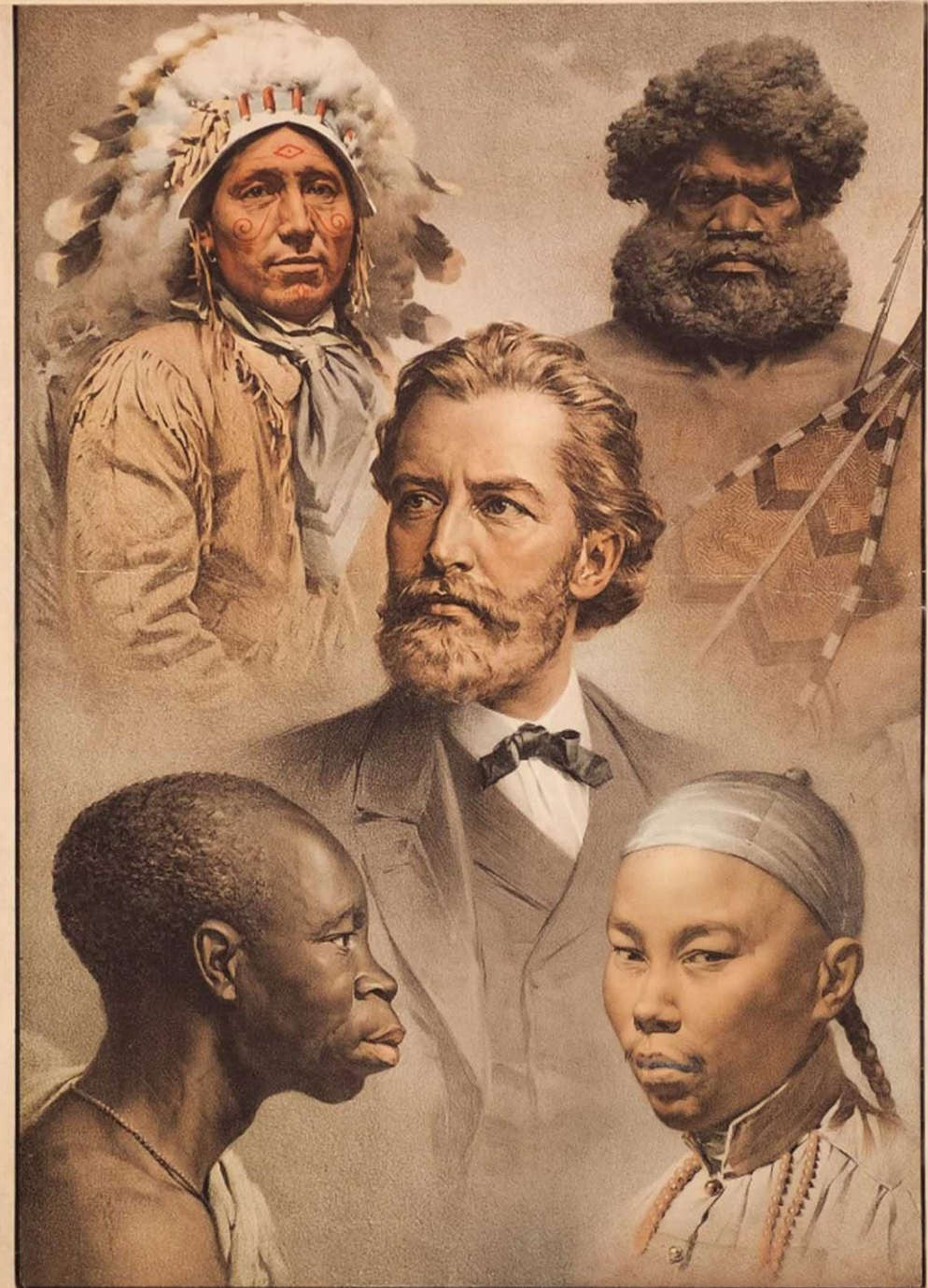
From *Natürliche Schöpfungsgeschichte*, (*Natural History of Creation*), 1868.

THE EVOLUTION OF RACIAL THINKING

- For 16th – 18th century Europeans, **skin color** became an easy **proxy** for those who could be **legitimately colonized** due to their “irrational nature” and non-Christian beliefs.
- In the 19th – 20th centuries, **Race is biologized** into a belief of innate differences in bio-genetic “fitness” in **intelligence, physical ability, adaptive behavior, and health**.
- In the Late 20th – 21st centuries: Race is **sanitized** into a proxy for **geographic ancestry**, ~ implies genetic differences in susceptibility to disease and some ancestry-linked genetic mutations.

The Endurance of “Race”

*The markers of race continue to be the **phenotypic differences** that have taken on high symbolic value in Western culture, but there is **no biological or genetic justification** for categorizing such phenotypic differences into groups.*



Question:

WHY DO WE REMAIN SO
ENCHANTED WITH EXPLANATORY
MODELS THAT USE *RACE AS A*
PROXY FOR BIO-GENETIC
DIFFERENCE?

Answer:

Such models *excuse* us from
dealing with the social justice
issues that underlie the social
determinants of health.



“Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfill it, or betray it.”

Frantz Fanon, Wretched of the Earth, (New York: Grove Press, 1963 [1961]), 145.

What is the mission of your generation?

Thank You!

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