**Sources Packet .**

|  |
| --- |
| **Document 1:** “The Specific Rationality of Medieval Magic,” Richard Kieckhefer “’Magic’ could be used as a polemical term in medieval Europe as well as in antiquity. When Thomas Becket was reported working posthumous miracles, his adversaries ‘spread it around everywhere that the monks of Canterbury did these things by magical incantations and by such devilish arts that they seemed rather than were miracles.’ When heretics claimed to perform miracles, orthodox propogandists called their deeds magic.” (pg. 815) “Anthropology has accustomed us to conceive of magic as distinct from both religion and science. In a medieval context, however, the question is not so much the relationship between magic and either science or religion but its relationship to approved religion and to ordinary science: demonic magic is itself essentially religious (or perhaps irreligious but at least not nonreligious), while natural magic could easily be combined with devotional practice. The terms 'magic’ and ‘religion were both current in medieval discourse, but they could not usually have been viewed as opposites or even as essentially distinct categories.” (pg. 821).  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Document 2:** “Documents in the Case of Galileo: Indictment, Sentence, and Abjuration of 1633,” The Catholic Church of Rome**Indictment**Whereas you, Galileo, son of the late Vincenzio Galilei, of Florence, aged seventy years, were denounced in 1615, to this Holy Office, for holding as true a false doctrine taught by many, namely, that the sun is immovable in the center of the world, and that the earth moves, and also with a diurnal motion; also, for having pupils whom you instructed in the same opinions; also, for maintaining a correspondence on the same with some German mathematicians; also for publishing certain letters on the sun-spots, in which you developed the same doctrine as true; also, for answering the objections which were continually produced from the Holy Scriptures, by glozing the said Scriptures according to your own meaning; and whereas thereupon was produced the copy of a writing, in form of a letter professedly written by you to a person formerly your pupil, in which, following the hypothesis of Copernicus, you include several propositions contrary to the true sense and authority of the Holy Scriptures; therefore (this Holy Tribunal being desirous of providing against the disorder and mischief which were thence proceeding and increasing to the detriment of the Holy Faith) by the desire of his Holiness and the Most Emminent Lords, Cardinals of this supreme and universal Inquisition, the two propositions of the stability of the sun, and the motion of the earth, were qualified by the Theological Qualifiers as follows:1. The proposition that the sun is in the center of the world and immovable from its place is absurd, philosophically false, and formally heretical; because it is expressly contrary to Holy Scriptures.
2. The proposition that the earth is not the center of the world, nor immovable, but that it moves, and also with a diurnal action, is also absurd, philosophically false, and, theologically considered, at least erroneous in faith.

Therefore . . . , invoking the most holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ and of His Most Glorious Mother Mary, We pronounce this Our final sentence: We pronounce, judge, and declare, that you, the said Galileo. . . have rendered yourself vehemently suspected by this Holy Office of heresy, that is, of having believed and held the doctrine (which is false and contrary to the Holy and Divine Scriptures) that the sun is the center of the world, and that it does not move from east to west, and that the earth does move, and is not the center of the world; also, that an opinion can be held and supported as probable, after it has been declared and finally decreed contrary to the Holy Scripture, and, consequently, that you have incurred all the censures and penalties enjoined and promulgated in the sacred canons and other general and particular constituents against delinquents of this description. From which it is Our pleasure that you be absolved, provided that with a sincere heart and unfeigned faith, in Our presence, you abjure, curse, and detest, the said error and heresies, and every other error and heresy contrary to the Catholic and Apostolic Church of Rome.1633 A.D. |
| **Document 3:** “Reading 8: The Science of Race,” *Facing History & Ourselves*In the 1700s and early 1800s, scientists in Europe and the Americas studied “race science”—the idea that humankind is divided into separate and unequal races. They tried to explain the contradiction between the belief in human equality expressed during the American and French Revolutions and the emergence of slavery in the United States and several European countries. Prominent scientists from many countries built upon each other’s conclusions. They included the following:* Carolus Linnaeus, an eighteenth-century Swedish naturalist, was among the first scientists to sort and categorize human beings. He regarded humanity as a species within the animal kingdom and divided the species into four varieties: European, American, Asiatic, and African.
* Petrus Camper, an eighteenth-century Dutch professor of anatomy, believed that the ancient Greeks had come closer than other people to human perfection. He used Greek statues to establish standards of beauty and ranked human faces by how closely they resembled his ideal.
* Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, a German scientist, coined the term *Caucasian* in 1795 “to describe the variety of mankind that originated on the southern slopes of Mount Caucasus” along Europe’s eastern border. He claimed it was the “original” race and therefore the most “beautiful.”
* Samuel George Morton, an American anthropologist, theorized in the mid-1800s that intelligence is linked to brain size. After measuring a vast number of skulls from around the world, he concluded that whites have larger skulls than other races and are therefore “superior.”

The work of important scientists like Samuel Morton gave racism legitimacy. Journalists, teachers, and preachers began to popularize their findings. Historian Reginald Horsman, who studied the leading publications of the time, notes: “One did not have to read obscure books to know that the Caucasians were innately superior, and that they were responsible for civilization in the world, or to know that inferior races were destined to be overwhelmed or even to disappear.”  Not surprisingly, those who questioned scientists like Morton were ignored or marginalized. German professor Friedrich Tiedemann attempted to replicate Morton’s work during this period but could not reproduce the results. He also found no evidence for the racial hierarchy—a kind of racial ladder on which Caucasians always stood at the top and Africans at the bottom—that Morton had claimed to uncover. Tiedemann’s work did not attract much attention; it was largely ignored or dismissed as “unscientific.”Frederick Douglass, a former slave and the most prominent nineteenth-century opponent of slavery in the United States, also argued against the idea that Africans are less human than Anglo-Saxons (the descendants of people who settled in England in the fifth century):Man is distinguished from all other animals by the possession of certain definite faculties and powers, as well as by physical organization and proportions. He is the only two-handed animal on the earth—the only one that laughs, and nearly the only one that weeps. . . . Common sense itself is scarcely needed to detect the absence of manhood in a monkey, or to recognize its presence in a Negro. . . Tried by all the usual, and all the unusual tests, whether mental, moral, physical, or psychological, the Negro is a MAN—considering him as possessing knowledge, or needing knowledge, his elevation or his degradation, his virtues, or his vices—whichever road you take, you reach the same conclusion, the Negro is a MAN. His good and his bad, his innocence and his guilt, his joys and his sorrows, proclaim his manhood in speech that all mankind practically and readily understand . . .It is the province of prejudice to blind; and scientific writers, not less than others, write to please, as well as to instruct, and even unconsciously to themselves, (sometimes,) sacrifice what is true to what is popular. Fashion is not confined to dress; but extends to philosophy as well—and it is fashionable now, in our land, to exaggerate the differences between the Negro and the European. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Document 4:** “Anger, grievance, resentment: we need to understand how anti-vaxxers feel to make sense of their actions,” Dan Himbrecht, *The Conversation*It is not entirely irrational to fear needles (or to suffer from [trypanophobia](https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/terrified-of-needles-that-can-affect-your-health-2021042722470) for those who prefer the Greek term). Likewise, feeling anxious about injecting a foreign substance into the bloodstream seems quite reasonable.And it is hardly surprising that people might find these things even more anxiety-inducing because of the duty of care we feel toward loved ones, especially children.The anti-vax movement, thus, has an understandable relationship with fear and anxiety. In fact, there has been [resistance to vaccinations since at least the late 18th century](https://www.historyofvaccines.org/content/articles/history-anti-vaccination-movements#Source%202) when the British physician Edward Jenner began to promote them as a prophylactic measure against smallpox.One of Jenner’s contemporaries, the caricaturist James Gillray, [famously lampooned](https://www.themorgan.org/blog/cow-pock-or-wonderful-effects-new-inoculation) people’s fears by imagining how cows grotesquely begin to sprout from the limbs and faces of the newly vaccinated. It was an early 19th-century version of what we today might assign to the sub-genre of body horror.The anti-vax movement is, however, no longer fuelled purely by fears about vaccines and harmful side-effects.At recent protests against vaccine mandates in Australia, for instance, “[F\*\*\* the jab](https://theconversation.com/its-almost-like-grooming-how-anti-vaxxers-conspiracy-theorists-and-the-far-right-came-together-over-covid-168383)” was one of the chants that could be heard. The mood was dominated by anger, not anxiety.On first sight, there is nothing surprising about such truculence. The vaccine mandates imposed in response to the COVID pandemic are forcing some people to do something they are fearful of and would prefer not to do.But the militancy of the protests and make-up of participants suggest many far-right nationalists and extreme libertarians have either co-opted the anti-vax movement or converged with it. [Ideological differences recede into the background](https://theconversation.com/its-almost-like-grooming-how-anti-vaxxers-conspiracy-theorists-and-the-far-right-came-together-over-covid-168383) and common ground is found in opposing public authorities whose attempts to counteract the spread of the virus have been interpreted as the first steps toward tyranny.**From philosophy to psychology**A common denominator uniting these movements is the penchant for viewing the world through the prism of conspiracy theories.For some, Big Pharma ruthlessly pursues profits by exploiting human frailty and gullibility. For others, the state is exploiting a health crisis with the goal of installing itself as Big Brother. For a few, the [Illuminati](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/nov/22/what-is-illuminati-google-autocomplete) overlords are lurking somewhere in the background.Because conspiracy theories claim to be based in fact – unlike myths or fables – the concept encourages us to treat them as rational and therefore refutable.At least this was the presumption guiding the philosopher Karl Popper when he delivered two lectures in 1948 that are regarded as [the first effort to examine conspiracy theories from a philosophical standpoint](https://iep.utm.edu/conspira/#H1).Although Popper was aware that conspiracy theories are found throughout history, his analysis was akin to a thought experiment. The experiment revolved around the question of whether it was possible to imagine events and trends in the world as the result of a conspiracy. Is this a tenable view of how society works?It was not, he concluded. And refuting the claim that secret agents were responsible for a war or an economic depression, for example, was a way of edging closer to the correct understanding of such phenomena.If this sounds somewhat abstract, the legal theorist Franz Neumann attempted to get nearer to the reality of conspiracy theories by linking them to a psychological condition.In a 1954 lecture called “[Anxiety and Politics](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318600479_Anxiety_and_Politics)”, Neumann diagnosed conspiracy theories as an attempt to transform people’s anxieties into fear. The distinction had political consequences. Anxiety had a paralysising effect; fear, by contrast, was a catalyst for action.Neumann insisted that at the core of the delusions characterising conspiracy theories, there remained a “kernel of truth”. In this spirit, the suspicions long harboured by the anti-vax movement are not entirely misplaced if you take into account the far-from-unblemished public health record of pharmaceutical giants.Much of the research on conspiracy theories since then continues to take its cues from Neumann by treating them as attempts by frightened, panicked people to get a grip on the world. |