

Module 0: Ending the World



Module 0: An Overview

- 4 sessions:
 - Maps as Cognitive Schemes
 - Who's Human?
 - Who's Human in the Age of Human Rights?
 - Mistaking the Map for the Territory
- Main questions:
 - What is the World?
 - How was the World made?
 - Why does it need to end?

Maps as Cognitive Schemes

1. Introductions to Module
2. Modernity / coloniality and the genealogy of the emergence of decoloniality
3. Mapping and maps
4. Wrap up

Maps as Cognitive Schemes



Maps are...

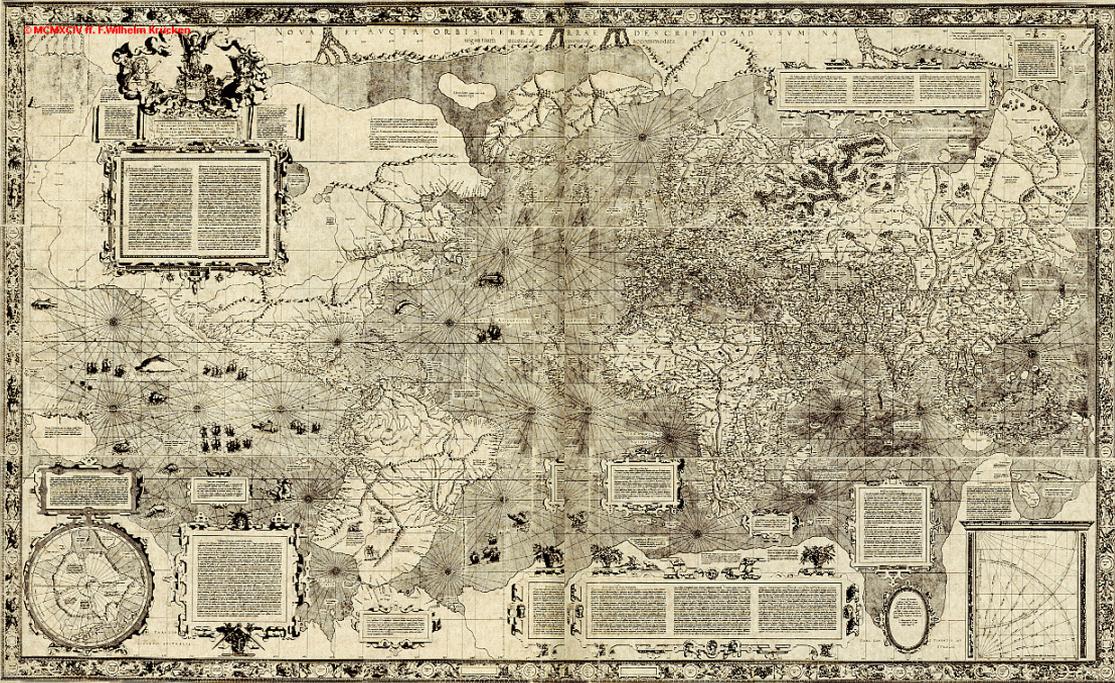
“graphic representations that facilitate a spatial understanding of things, concepts, conditions, processes, or events in the human world” (J. B. Harley & D. Woodward (eds), *The history of cartography*, vol. 1, 1987, p. xvi).

Maps are...

Conventional:

- Selective: “a single map is but one of an indefinitely large number of maps that might be produced for the same situation or from the same data” (Monmonier, 1991, How to lie with maps, p.2)
- Arbitrary signs & symbols
- Projection, f.e. Hereford Mappa Mundi & Mercator map

Hereford map (ca. 1285) & Mercator map (1569)

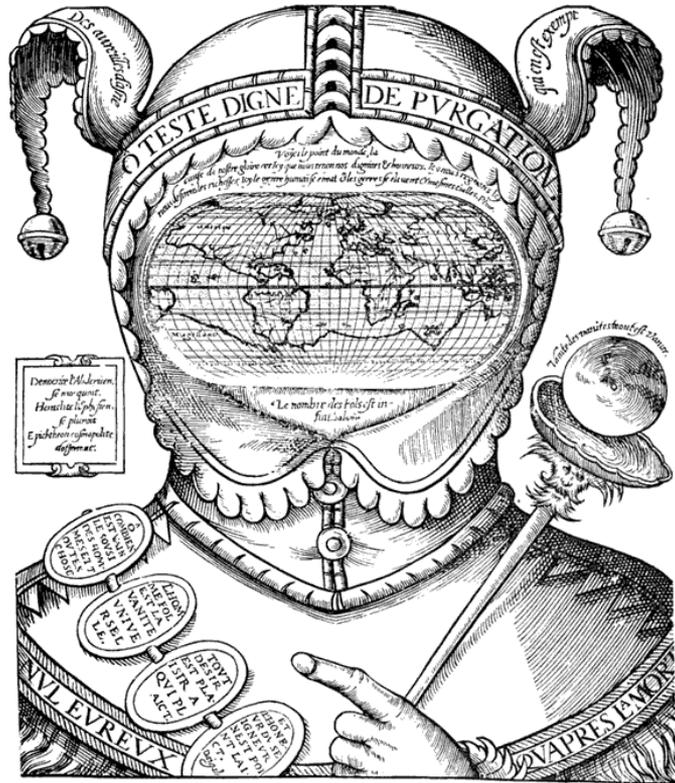


Conventions

“Conventions often follow cultural, political and even ideological interests, but that if conventions are to function properly they must be so well accepted as to be almost invisible. [...] For a map to be useful [and have authority in Western society], it must [look artless-ness and] of course offer information about the real world, but if this 'real world information' is to be credible, it must be transmitted in a code that by Western standards appears neutral, objective and impersonal, unadorned by stylistic device and unmediated by the arbitrary interests of individuals or social groups.”

<http://territories.indigenouknowledge.org/exhibit-2/3>

Maps are Theories



... all theory may be regarded as a kind of map extended over space and time.

Michael Polanyi, *Personal knowledge: towards a post-critical philosophy*, 1958, p.4

Picture - 1575 *Fool's Cap Map of the World*

Maps are theories

‘What, then, have we learned about maps that is of some value in understanding theories? They are conventional, selective, indexical, embedded in forms of life, dependent on the understanding of a cognitive schema and practical mastery. They can be enormously powerful and can sustain not just successful exploration of foreign parts but whole empires. At base there is something more than merely metaphoric about maps and theories; they share a common characteristic which is the very condition for the possibility of knowledge or experience-connectivity. Since we cannot have a pure unmediated experience of our environment, that experience is better understood as an active construction resulting from a dialectical interaction between the 'lumps' in the landscape and our imposed connections of those lumps. Our experience and our representations are formative of each other and are only separable analytically. Hence there is an important sense in which the map is the territory, even though paradoxically the territory is *not* the map.

However, there are some difficulties in equating maps with theories if we take theories to be the embodiment of objective knowledge. This view of science has become problematic since the appearance of Thomas S. Kuhn's *Structure of scientific revolutions*. It is now recognised that theories and observations are inseparable, and also that for any given set of observations there exist in principle an indeterminately large number of theories that could fit. Most problematically though, theories do not come with a full set of rules about how to apply them in given cases. If you go back and reread the quote from Kuhn at the beginning, which was selected for its discussion of maps, you find Kuhn saying 'Through the theories they embody, paradigms prove to be constitutive of the research activity'. This gives the impression that to Kuhn theory is central to science. However, Kuhn himself in later trying to clarify his position makes it clear that he takes '**shared examples of practice**' to be the central elements in science (T. S. Kuhn, 'Second thoughts on paradigms', 1977, pp. 459-99).

To see science as a 'field of practices' rather than a 'network of theories' makes a profound difference to our understanding. It is especially significant when it comes to maps. If maps are seen as theories in the sense of fully articulated objective knowledge, then only one small group of maps appears to qualify as real maps – the supposedly accurate contemporary Western maps. We have seen, in the process of looking at the exhibits, that there are difficulties with that position. On the one hand, it fails to acknowledge the workability and potential power of maps from non-Western cultures, while on the other hand, it fails to acknowledge the contingent character of Western maps. **The approach we are considering here, by recognising maps as embodying shared examples of practice, makes it perfectly reasonable to accept all maps as having a local, contingent and indexical character intimately tied to human purposes and action.**

The concept of science as fields of practice also highlights the importance of skills and tacit knowledge, which are often overlooked or suppressed when the purely theoretical is emphasised. Skills and tacit knowledge are modes of knowing the world that exemplify Wittgenstein's forms of life. They depend on givens that cannot be spoken of, in the same way that you cannot explain how to ride a bike. If we had to wait for a theoretical explanation of bike riding, nobody would even get on the saddle. *If maps are shared examples of practice, perhaps science can be thought of as a compendia of maps, that is, an atlas, as an example of the way in which people have to work to make the whole hang together. Ultimately maps and theories gain their power and usefulness from making connections and enabling unanticipated connections.* Science is an atlas not because all its theories are connected by logic, method and consistency. There is no such logic, or method or consistency. Science is riddled with contradiction and disciplinary division. Science is an atlas because the essence of maps and theories is connectivity. **Maps and theories provide practical opportunities for making connections whenever and wherever it is socially and politically strategic’.**

Maps Are Territories: Science is an Atlas is a book by David Turnbull, with a contribution by Helen Watson with the Yolngu community at Yirrkala

**'the limits of my language mean the
limits of my world'**

(L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, tr. D.F. Peters & B.F. McGuinness, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1961, para 5.6)

Coloniality of Power -Anibal Quijano



Peruvian sociologist/
economist

Synthesis of 3 schools of
thought:

1. Dependency Theory
2. World Systems Theory
3. Internal Colonial Model

Reflecting and responding to
indigenous resistance, social
movements in Abya Yala

Coloniality - Race as a central organising principle for the world itself

“The idea of race is the most efficient instrument of social domination invented in the last 500 years” - Anibal Quijano - Que Tal Raza? - What is Race (1999).



Jason deCaires Taylor underwater sculpture was made in honor of African ancestors who were thrown overboard, off the slave ship Zong off the coast of Grenada.

World System itself operates through a system of coloniality

- Decoloniality: challenges the 'naturalness' of border and state thinking
- 'Naturalness' of World System of **Knowledge** which is *Eurocentric* but is presented as if it is universal, acultural, natural

Decoloniality as Praxis

Coloniality is a DIAGNOSIS of the extent of the problem so we can shift our attention to organising in a way that attacks the World System and not just symptoms.

e.g. Immigrant Rights vs Migrant Rights
Linda S Bosniak - Ethical Territoriality

1492 - Beginning of modern world

Wikipedia:

*In history, the **early modern period** of modern history follows the late Middle Ages of the post-classical era. Although the chronological limits of the period are open to debate, the timeframe spans the period after the late portion of the post-classical age (c. 1500), known as the Middle Ages, through the beginning of the Age of Revolutions (c. 1800) and is variously demarcated by historians as beginning with the Fall of Constantinople in 1453, with the Renaissance period, and with the Age of Discovery (especially with the voyages of Christopher Columbus beginning in 1492, but also with the discovery of the sea route to the East in 1498), and ending around the French Revolution in 1789.*

Modernity/Coloniality

Colombus and Genocide

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWdIAk3739g>

Dionne Brand - A Map to the Door of No Return

This door [of no return] is really the door of dreams. This existence in the [African] Diaspora is like that—dreams from which one never wakes. Then what here can be called cognition let alone a schema? A set of dreams, a strand of stories which never come into being, which never coalesce. One is not in control in dreams; dreams take place, the dreamer is captive, even though it is the dreamer who is dreaming. Captured in one's own body, in one's own thoughts, to be out of possession of one's mind; **our cognitive schema is captivity.** (29, emphasis added)

Amiri Baraka/Leroi Jones – Blues People.

*But one of the most persistent traits of the Western white man has always been his fanatical and almost instinctive assumption that his systems and ideas about the world are the most desirable, and further, that people who do not aspire to them, or at least think them admirable, are savages or enemies. **The idea that Western thought might be exotic if viewed from another landscape never presents itself to most Westerners.***

To wrap up

- ★ Modern maps reflect the societies' cognitive scheme that produces them
- ★ The ubiquity of the modern map is reflective of the coloniality of western knowledge
- ★ 1492 is an ONTOLOGICAL year - impact on how people EXPERIENCE BEING in the world
- ★ The modern world is born from genocide, colonialism, slavery - the subjection of the world to the western local culture
- ★ That the world is anti-black