
**Genealogies of Race and Culture
and the Failure of Vernacular
Cosmopolitanisms: Rereading
Franz Boas and
W. E. B. Du Bois**

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for Feliciana

On September 11, 2001, even people who had never figured out what protesters in Seattle had been saying got a lesson in globalization. A basic strategy of U.S. imperialism—fostering violence in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East as well as in U.S. inner cities while excluding it from white, middle-class sectors—suddenly became untenable. As nationalism surged, President George W. Bush responded with a “war on terrorism” that justified military

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actions against al-Qaeda, Afghanistan, and Iraq and a global regime of surveillance and intervention. The Patriot and Homeland Security Acts and postwar detentions created spaces where liberty, due process, and the rule of law were excluded, even as the United States claimed the right to impose them elsewhere. Early post-9/11 debates juxtaposed flag-waving nationalism with media reports on Islam, xenophobia, and racism; violence against Muslims and persons of South Asian and Middle Eastern descent (or those who looked as if they might be); and Afghani “tribal culture.” Liberal notions of culture were deployed in legitimizing a regime of global governmentality as the empire demanded the right to strike back.

As the possibility of *not* thinking and feeling beyond the nation becomes increasingly remote, many intellectuals have reexamined old and new cosmopolitanisms in search of footholds for critical engagement. As scholars have scoured their libraries for precedents, Franz Boas and W. E. B. Du Bois have remained on the sidelines. Yet in the patriotic fervor that flourished as the United States moved inexorably toward engagement in World War I, Boas defiantly challenged xenophobia, nationalism, war sentiment, and limits on free speech at the same time that he called for a global conception of citizenship. Du Bois promoted a pan-African movement that linked U.S. racism to colonialism and imperialism in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. At the same time that both thinkers accorded a crucial place to cosmopolitan imaginaries in their intellectual and political projects, they were also fundamentally concerned with what we can call vernacularisms, perspectives that are tied to local and national perspectives and interests. While Boas focused particularly on cultural vernacularisms, both Du Bois and Boas defined their cosmopolitanisms vis-à-vis racial and racist vernacularisms.

Their cosmopolitan projects have been largely erased. Boas’s notion of culture is commonly placed within a liberal program for confronting racism that celebrates autonomous cultural worlds, thereby authorizing a genealogical charter of contemporary multiculturalism for liberal supporters and neoconservative critics alike. A central goal of this essay is to disrupt this genealogy by detailing Boas’s anthropological cosmopolitanism and showing how he tied it to his critiques of nationalism, colonialism, imperialism, and racism. If anthropology lends itself to (neo)colonial projects, then the problem with Boas’s notion of culture lies not in its isolation from a broader critique of state and racial power but in how he positioned “culture” in relation to consciousness, science, colonialism, and cosmopolitanism. Du Bois, on the other hand, promoted a pan-African movement. His cosmopolitanism formed part of black internationalism and cosmopolitanism whose diverse political and artistic projects flourished on both sides of the Atlan-

tic. Du Bois's cosmopolitanism has sometimes been erased by assimilating him to a Boasian genealogy of cultural relativism and race, sometimes by reducing his politics to an elitism or racial essentialism, and at other times by ignoring him altogether. Yet in seeking to transform cosmopolitanism by linking it to global antiracist and anti-imperialist vernacularisms, Du Bois challenged the ways in which both cosmopolitanism and vernacularism have been constructed since the seventeenth century.

The recuperation of Du Bois's and Boas's cosmopolitanisms, which has recently been undertaken in Du Bois's case by several writers (see Edwards 2003; Gilroy 1993; Posnock 1998), promises more than a historical corrective. Homi Bhabha's notion (1996) of "vernacular cosmopolitanism," Anthony Appiah's call (2001) for "rooted cosmopolitanism," and other efforts have challenged universalist, hegemonic formulations by placing cosmopolitanism in dialogic relationship with vernacularisms. Yet this is exactly what Du Bois attempted a century ago, and one goal of this essay is to give credit where credit is due. More broadly, we need to critically engage the very conditions of possibility for formulating cosmopolitanisms and vernacularisms. I argue here that since the seventeenth century, one of the cornerstones of projects of modernity has been to construct a moral opposition between vernacularism and cosmopolitanism that denigrates the former and valorizes the latter. The nationalist projects during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, on the other hand, were predicated on opposing vernacularism and cosmopolitanism in such a way as to seemingly privilege the former over the latter, nevertheless maintaining elite control over vernacular subjects. Both projects presented explicit and hidden guidelines for relating cosmopolitanisms and vernacularisms. In the twentieth century, the legacy of Boas's and Du Bois's work—and the problematic way in which it has been represented—continues to shape the possibilities for imagining vernacularisms and cosmopolitanisms, presents and futures. Unraveling these connections is crucial if we are to create more progressive cosmopolitanisms and vernacularisms and enhance their viability as political projects.

In his September 20, 2001, address to a joint session of Congress, Bush (2001b) proposed a new cosmopolitanism, one that he tied specifically to the politics of difference: "This is not, however, just America's fight. And what is at stake is not just America's freedom. This is the world's fight. This is civilization's fight. This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom." Bush asserts that no one can escape being located in terms of this opposition, and the combination of military operations abroad and surveillance, censorship, and incarceration in the United States points to the importance of devising strategies for engaging it critically.

Our journey with Boas and Du Bois can help us challenge this discourse in two ways. First, Bush's thin multiculturalism presupposes a liberal genealogy that opposes cultural vernaculars to universal principles. Unraveling this narrative of culture suggests that so-called cultural relativism was founded on an Enlightenment project of freeing the rational mind from what Arjun Appadurai (1988) calls its incarceration by traditional culture. Rethinking multiculturalism can help us unmask how the liberal claim that everyone is equally entitled to his or her own culture is being used to disguise the creation of inequalities within and between nations. Second, Bush uses what I refer to as "purifying practices" for making his antiterrorist cosmopolitanism appear to exist independently from the U.S. vernacularism that he simultaneously constructs. Theorizing connections between cosmopolitanisms and vernacularisms more critically can help us challenge the neoconservative, neoliberal, and militaristic cosmopolitanisms that are defining the limits for imagination and action today.

Franz Boas: Culture versus Cosmopolitanism

Boas, a German Jewish immigrant, became one of the most influential anthropologists in the United States. George Stocking (1968: 149) points to the impact of the revolution of 1848—Boas's personal, scientific, and political goals merged in a quest for truth that would free humanity from the shackles of dogma and foster progress, science, rationality, and equality of opportunity. Late-nineteenth-century Germany was marked by the rising prestige of the natural sciences (see Zimmerman 2001). Matti Bunzl (1996, 2003) suggests that Boas merged the historicist concerns of Wilhelm von Humboldt with his brother Alexander's natural history and geography and that the *Volkerpsychologie* that informed Boas's anthropology was shaped by German-Jewish *Bildung* and the new wave of anti-Semitism in Germany that started in 1878. Boas was also strongly influenced by the renewal of interest in Immanuel Kant in late-nineteenth-century Germany, and he studied philosophy at Bonn with Kantian Benno Erdmann.

In his influential writings on cosmopolitanism, Kant ([1784] 1991: 44) argues that human beings naturally exhibit an "unsocial sociability," meaning that they simultaneously tend to come together and yet manifest "a continual resistance which constantly threatens" to break up society. In Kant's universal history, an original, "purposeless state of savage[ry]" gives rise, first, to "lawless freedom" and egoism in which humans are unrestrained by reason, then to "a civil constitution in which all their dormant capacities could be developed" (Kant [1784] 1991: 49, 102–103, 49). The shift to the "adolescent" period of history—Kant's own—

led human beings to relinquish their dependence on nature, tradition, and the authority of others and to embrace reason, critique, and the sorting out of legitimate from illegitimate claims of theoretical cognition. Although the emergence of the state reduced internal hostilities, antagonistic tendencies were projected onto an unceasing competition among states. The final stage is “*a perfect civil union of mankind*” (Kant [1784] 1991: 51),¹ a federation of free states in which states, like their citizens, “must renounce their savage and lawless freedom, adapt themselves to public coercive laws, and thus form an *international state (civitas gentium)*” guided by a moral and rational “cosmopolitan constitution” (Kant 1991: 105–6; see also Bohman and Lutz-Bachmann 1997). As Pheng Cheah (1998: 23–24) suggests, Kant’s Federation is not post- or antinationalist, as nationalist ideologies and the coupling of nations and states had not yet become dominant. What Kant (1991: 106) condemns is “the *inhospitable* conduct of the civilized states, . . . the injustice which they display in *visiting* foreign countries and people (which in their case is the same as *conquering* them).”

Although it is unclear how directly his cosmopolitan project was shaped by Kant’s, Boas’s project was lodged in the modernist assumptions of his day and thus reflected their Kantian overtones. For Boas, rationality—the road to cosmopolitanism—is modeled on forms of self-consciousness produced by science and philosophy; without rational self-consciousness, unconscious categories join disparate entities so powerfully that we fail to perceive the arbitrariness of their connections. “Centuries of experimentation” and “the abstract thought of philosophers” replace such links with knowledge of cause and effect (Boas [1911] 1965: 199–200, 198). Boas follows Kant and John Locke in arguing that the locus of self-consciousness is the individual and that tradition and others’ opinions keep individuals from rationally reflecting on the world and the contents of the mind. Kant’s dictum is “Think for yourself!” (Wood 1998: 70), while Locke ([1690] 1959) defines modern subjectivity as the ability to transcend premodernity, along with any other subjectivities that seem to be tied to immediate, concrete vernaculars (see Bauman and Briggs 2003). Cosmopolitanism requires individuals to reject “the fetters of tradition” (Boas [1911] 1965: 201) and cultivate rationality; to root out error, superstition, and suppositions not based on facts; and finally, to translate this knowledge into speech and action so as to teach others.²

According to Boas ([1928] 1962: 97), “the narrow-minded local interests of

1. Here as elsewhere, all emphasis is in the original.

2. Stocking (1992: 102–3) suggests that Boas later viewed individual freedom as linked to collective needs and as subordinate to social justice concerns.

cities and other small political units” was overcome in nation-states, and “the federation of nations is the next necessary step in the evolution of mankind.” Nations, like citizens, will resolve disputes judicially. Both Kant’s and Boas’s conceptions of the cosmopolitan order are imagined in terms of spatial projections that reproduce colonial relations; as Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) and Walter Dignolo (2000) argue, such rhetorics thus replicate modernity and inequality. Like Kant’s, Boas’s cosmopolitanism is friendly to commerce; he equates tariffs and trade barriers with how “primitives” privilege the welfare of their fellows over strangers and sees commerce, like art and science, as fostering “ties that bind together mankind” (Boas 1945: 130, 151, 114).

The conservative turn in German politics and growing anti-Semitism prompted Boas to view the United States as more propitious than Germany for launching his career and cosmopolitan project. Boas appreciated the salience of cosmopolitan discourses in New York City, where elites were self-consciously seeking to overcome the city’s image as a haven of mindless materialism or impoverished immigrants. Lisa (1995) argues that Boas’s cosmopolitanism is the form that modernism assumed in his work, and she relates it and his devotion to science to the sense of dislocation and exclusion he felt as a German Jewish immigrant. Cosmopolitan idealism was widely shared by intellectuals in the United States in the 1910s and 1920s, and Hollinger (1996) argues that the antiparochial convictions of Jewish intellectuals were particularly strong. Morris Ketchum Jesup and Seth Low, presidents of the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) and Columbia University respectively, saw Boas’s European credentials as furthering the cosmopolitanism of their institutions. Boas’s abrupt departure from AMNH—like other conflicts with New York elites—points to how his project clashed with nationalist and imperialist elements of these cosmopolitanisms.³

The cosmopolitanism with which Boas was most concerned was his *bête noire*—evolutionism. It might startle readers to see evolutionism referred to as forming part of cosmopolitan debates, but cultural evolutionists drew on transnational circuits of information—mainly provided by missionary and colonial cosmopolitanisms—and redefined civilization on a global basis. British evolutionist E. B. Tylor (1865) and Boas both saw rationality as the historical displacement of religious superstition by science. Nevertheless, Tylor posited that development of culture rendered human activity increasingly rational and modern (Stocking 1968: 105), while Boas viewed culture as an obstacle to modernity. Equating evolutionism with racism and ethnocentrism, he argued that it, like the cosmopolitan

3. This is not to say that Boas’s clashes with the AMNH administration revolved solely around political ideals.

claims of missionaries, colonialists, and industrial philanthropists, was only a provincial ideology—and that the evolutionists were so provincial, they didn't even know it.

Boas envisioned a world without racism, xenophobia, and imperialism. Having criticized Germany and embraced the political ideals of the United States on the question of colonialism, “a rude awakening came in 1898, when the aggressive imperialism of that period showed that the ideal had been a dream” (Boas 1945: 168). His critique hints at a reading of the culture of imperialism in terms of its impact on domestic ideologies (see Kaplan and Pease 1993). Boas (1945: 150, 112) argued that great inequities between nations must be legislatively resolved and that “no nation has the right to impose its individuality upon another.⁴ Countering U.S. claims to global altruism, he (1945: 151) suggests that “a nation which claims for itself the right to control the foreign policies of other states” cannot settle international disputes. If, as Donna Haraway (1989) suggests, the culture of imperialism shaped the AMNH, Boas's efforts to change museological techniques there challenged the visual politics of imperial cosmopolitanism.⁵

Boas spoke out in public meetings, radio broadcasts, and essays in the *New York Times* and popular magazines about the limits of nationalism and patriotism and the need for cosmopolitanism (see Boas 1945). Writing as a public intellectual, Boas (1945: 194) argued for a “program of justice” to confront the gap between rich and poor. Boas joined the Socialist Party when it embraced freedom of expression for opponents to World War I (Stocking 1992: 104; see also White 1947). In 1917, Columbia's president, Nicholas Murray Butler, stifled antiwar sentiment. Butler declared that while before the war protest was merely wrongheaded, during wartime it constituted sedition and treason—and Columbia had no place for those “who are not with whole heart and mind and strength committed to fight with us to make the world safe for democracy” (quoted in Gruber 1975: 204). Boas challenged investigations of faculty political loyalty by publicly reading a critique of nationalist efforts to foster blind loyalty and silence dissent, arguing that education should encourage the ideal of equal rights for all members of humankind (Boas 1945: chap. 19). Two faculty members were dismissed for antiwar activities. When psychologist James McKeen Cattell was fired, Boas, along with John Dewey, supported Cattell. Although Boas was not alone at Columbia in protesting the war and censorship, he was one of a small number of “voices in the wilderness” (Gruber 1975: 195).

4. Despite his criticisms of colonialism, Boas (1919) accepted the British Labour Party's proposal for a kinder, gentler colonialism.

5. This is not to say that Boas's museum work is not open to criticism (see Jacknis 1996).

For Boas, charting a cosmopolitan project involved using the culture concept to discredit competing cosmopolitanisms. Analyzing why his era was not ready to become truly cosmopolitan, Boas ([1928] 1962: 68) uses an origin myth to locate the problem in “the early days of mankind.” Hunters and gatherers roamed a thinly settled earth in homogeneous, collective hordes that placed the interests of members above others; therefore, “man considered it an act of high merit to kill the stranger” (69). This tendency persists within civilization, because “the nation is also a segregated class, a closed society” (194). Nationalism is thus an extension of this “primitive” pattern, and colonialism and imperialism represent the unfolding of universal tendencies.

Culture, too, resists cosmopolitanism because it rests on emotional attachments to unconscious patterns assimilated during childhood—that is, tradition. Few can identify which of “those cherished ideas with which we operate are traditional phrases without any kind of rational significance, . . . to raise them into consciousness and make them the subject of examination” (Boas 1945: 179). Boas’s conceptualization of linguistic patterns as unconscious grounded his understanding of culture as similarly rooted in unconscious, habitual patterns (see Briggs 2002). Cosmopolitanism demands a critical consciousness in contrast to popular attempts to systematize and historicize cultural categories; this “secondary reasoning” can lead to demagoguery, excited passions, totalitarianism, and xenophobia. By 1938, Hitler provided a prime example of “the unscrupulous demagogue who arouses slumbering hatreds and designedly invents reasons that give to the gullible mass a plausible excuse to yield to the excited passions” (Boas [1911] 1965: 210).

Although both “civilized” and “primitive” peoples are incarcerated by culture, science and philosophy are signs of cognitive development. While “primitives” use “crude, automatically developed categories” derived from experience, “we have succeeded by reasoning to develop from the crude, automatically developed categories a better system of the whole field of knowledge,” enabling “us” to gain insight into “the hypothetical basis of our reasoning” through increasing elimination of “the traditional element” (Boas [1911] 1965: 198). Boas extends this argument to “uneducated” people: since “the average man . . . first acts, and then justifies or explains his acts by such secondary considerations as are current among us” ([1911] 1965: 214), “the educated groups of all nations” (1945: 149) must teach cosmopolitanism.⁶ Science and abstract philosophy shape the cultures in which

6. When intellectuals failed to challenge the use of anti-German sentiments in rationalizing U.S. participation in World War I, however, Boas (1945: 183) suggested that “the masses” are *less* susceptible to the “traditional forms of thought” embraced by aristocrats, scientists, artists, and the clergy.

they are most prominently situated without themselves being shaped by culture; unlike other social spheres, they do not seem to be in need of Boasian cultural-historical deconstruction. Boas reified an “idealized and absolutist conception of science” (Stocking 1992: 111) and located it in an autonomous, privileged realm that produces but is not produced by history, that fosters political reform without becoming politicized. In Bruno Latour’s terms (1993), science hybridizes identities and social relations by infusing them with scientific knowledge—without itself becoming a product of hybridization. Science and abstract philosophy thus become the gold standard for distinguishing rationality from tradition and, in turn, key to Boas’s scientific-political-cosmopolitan project.

If culture produces incarceration, anthropologists are uniquely qualified to bust people of out jail. Anthropologists learn to overcome the universal tendency “to consider the behavior in which we are bred as natural for all mankind” (Boas [1928] 1962: 206). Boas’s (204–5, 207) “purely analytic” methodology engenders “an objective, strictly scientific inquiry” free from “all valuations based on our culture,” scrutinizing “types of culture that have developed on historically independent lines or that have grown to be fundamentally distinct.” The disciplinary perspectives adopted by classicists, orientalists, philologists, and historians are thus too narrow to afford them access to cosmopolitanism. Anthropologists produce scientific texts that enable cultures to speak, unlike accounts produced by travelers, missionaries, and colonial administrators. Boasians thus distinguished themselves from anthropologists who relied on such data, including British, French, and German colleagues (Briggs and Bauman 1999). “Culture” accords anthropologists entrée to knowledge and freedom but impedes access for everyone else. Boas’s (1945: 1–2) efforts as a public intellectual modeled the “new duty” of anthropologists to show the “masses of our people” how to subordinate “the love of traditional lore to clear thinking.” By placing the critical examination of cultural alternatives at the core of education, anthropology becomes—as much in homes, schools, museums, and policy circles as in the academy—the obligatory passage point (Latour 1988) for achieving an enlightened and cosmopolitan world.

The Competing Cosmopolitanism of W. E. B. Du Bois

At the same time that I have attempted to recuperate Boas’s cosmopolitan project, I have argued that it was shaped by his constructions of culture, science, and modernity. Boas’s defenders could argue that he was simply a product of his time. This assumption is contradicted, however, by the proliferation of contemporary

black cosmopolitanisms, one of whose intellectual centers lay next to Columbia, in Harlem.⁷ As Paul Gilroy (1993) argues, the African diaspora and a commerce of ideas and cultural forms between Europe, the Caribbean, the United States, and Africa enabled a black cosmopolitan counterculture to emerge two centuries before Boas left Germany. Brent Hayes Edwards (2003) documents the importance of Paris as a space for encounters between a variety of anticolonial and anti-imperialistic projects during the first half of the twentieth century; a number of influential African Americans spent time there. Diasporic publications; a wide range of artistic movements and political forums; black participation in communist, socialist, and trade union movements; and efforts to create African homelands all linked these spaces. Beyond establishing contacts among discrete national antiracist movements, many believed that reaching beyond the nation-state was an epistemological and political prerequisite to challenging both nationalistic and universalist forms of white supremacy.

One of the most prominent black cosmopolitans was the distinguished sociologist, socialist, activist, and NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) official W. E. B. Du Bois. He invited Boas to deliver the 1906 commencement address at Atlanta University (Boas [1906] 1974), and Du Bois reports that it was Boas's words that awakened him to the complexity, creativity, and historical importance of African civilizations and the need to place African American experience within this frame. In 1910, Boas published an article in the NAACP magazine *The Crisis*, which Du Bois edited. Given that both men were social scientists, public intellectuals, and New York residents, it is noteworthy that Boas did not articulate his cosmopolitanism in relation to Du Bois's or other black cosmopolitanisms. Just after the centennial of Du Bois's remarkable *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), the cosmopolitan program that he advances there and in other works continues to yield important insights.

Du Bois was born in 1868 to a family of poor agriculturists in Great Barrington, Massachusetts (Lewis 2000). He graduated from Fisk University in 1888 and from Harvard in 1890; with his 1895 dissertation on the slave trade, he became the first African American doctorate from Harvard. Du Bois also studied in Germany. He taught at Atlanta University, enlisting the social sciences in attacking notions of racial inferiority (Baker 1998). As Booker T. Washington's program of industrial education threatened support for black higher education, Du Bois left for New York to become the founding editor of *The Crisis*. He trav-

7. I thank Donald Moore for suggesting this comparison.

eled to Russia and China and participated actively in peace conferences that challenged U.S. Cold War politics. Du Bois was indicted in 1951 as a foreign agent and acquitted; he became a member of the Communist Party of America in 1961. He died in Africa on August 27, 1963.

In one of the most famous passages in *Souls*, Du Bois ([1903] 1990: 8) wrote: “The Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and fitted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others.” Du Bois anticipates postmodern insights by viewing race as constructed by whiteness. His cosmopolitan project is evident in a less-quoted part of another famous statement: “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line,—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea” (16). He anticipates subaltern studies in connecting the experience of African Americans in the United States with colonialism and imperialism. He looks to “awakened Japan” (Du Bois 1995: 650) as posing an effective challenge to European colonialism. Although Japanese imperialism during World War II certainly dulled his enthusiasm, Japan demonstrated that Europe is not the center of the world (745). Colonialism and imperialism constituted a central target of Du Bois’s trenchant criticism. He pointed out that economic oppression and racial prejudice sustained European and U.S. economic and military power, slavery, colonialism, imperialism, and democracy; were the primary the causes of World War I; and served the interests of capitalists at the expense of “colored people” worldwide. Du Bois nevertheless wrote editorials in *The Crisis* urging African Americans to participate in both world wars (Keene 2001; Posnock 1998).

The “veil of color” and the shared experience of racism, colonialism, and imperialism provide the basis for cosmopolitanism among people of color (see Du Bois 1945, [1925] 1968, 1995; Martin and Yeakey 1982). Du Bois (1995: 639) participated in and helped organize pan-African congresses in 1919, 1921, 1923, and 1927 and challenged the use of the color line as “the basis of denying to over half of the world the right of sharing to their utmost ability the opportunities and privileges of modern civilisation.” He sought to transform a cartography of difference into a global political project and a source of consciousness: “The millions of black men in Africa, America, and the Islands of the Sea, not to speak of the brown and yellow myriads elsewhere, are bound to have great influence upon the world in the future, by reason of sheer numbers and physical contact” (Du Bois 1995: 639; see also Contee 1972). If cosmopolitan justice is denied, “the War of

the Color Line will outdo in savage inhumanity any war this world has yet seen. For colored folk have much to remember and they will not forget" (Du Bois 1995: 650).

Du Bois's cosmopolitanism reflects the complexities, contradictions, and shifting stances surrounding notions of modernity, technology, and science. He believed in "the rule of inequality: . . . that some had the talent and capacity of university men, and some the talent and capacity of blacksmiths" (Du Bois [1903] 1990: 65). Echoing Locke, Du Bois's notion of the "Talented Tenth" called on university-educated members of the African American middle class to develop "higher individualism" and "a freedom for expansion and self-development," and he conferred on them the task of illuminating "an untaught people" and overcoming its "narrowness of life" (81, 65, 106). The "primitive peoples of Africa and the world" need, in addition to land and home rule, "training through modern methods of educating children" (Du Bois 1995: 649). Du Bois celebrated knowledge and reason as the only "cure for war" (759). In *Souls*, Du Bois ([1903] 1990: 64, 69) asserts that "from Academus to Cambridge, the culture of the University" has been the source of the "broadest and deepest knowledge" that can promote a "catholicity of taste and culture" which is the only way to overcome racism. Du Bois was harshly criticized for this elitism by a subsequent generation of African American intellectuals (see Holloway 2002).

Nevertheless, Brent Hayes Edwards (2003: 40) suggests that Du Bois's vision was of "a black counterculture of modernity," while Paul Gilroy (1993) argues that Du Bois was deeply ambivalent about modernity due to its complicity with white supremacist terror. Ross Posnock (1998) notes that Du Bois attempted to demonstrate that modernity has no color; and while neoconservatives today might endorse this statement, Du Bois's deracialization was a goal, not a premise, and one that required critical practice. Posnock argues that his famous phrase, "I sit with Shakespeare and he winces not," should be read as a move to deracialize elite Western culture in both directions—establishing people of color as spectators and readers and decoupling the implicit connection between aesthetics and whiteness. Thus, if Du Bois connected cosmopolitanism and modernity, this was a modernity that had to come to grips with its own violent and racist foundations. At the same time that Boas tied racism to the premodern—the hostility of "primitive" groups of strangers—Du Bois located it squarely within modernity. Another indication of Boas's and Du Bois's distinct views of modernity is apparent in the way that the former's cosmopolitanism became increasingly rooted in the power of science, particularly after World War I, while the latter's project turned more and more away from science and toward political struggle (see Liss 1998).

Posnock (1998) emphasizes a broad tension in Du Bois's work between a racialist call for the amelioration of blacks and other people of color and an anti-racialist challenge to essentialist identities. He points to Du Bois's shift from the racialism espoused by Rev. Alex Crummell to an emphasis on hybridity, fluidity, and diasporic consciousness. Posnock suggests that Jamesian pragmatism and Boas's critique of race helped prompt this transition; nevertheless, as Lee Baker (1998) argues, Du Bois did not wholeheartedly embrace Boas's notion of culture. In his autobiographical *Dusk of Dawn*, Du Bois (1940: 117) argues that, with respect to his African heritage, "the physical bond is least and the badge of color relatively unimportant save as a badge; the real essence of this kinship is its social heritage of slavery; the discrimination and insult; and this heritage binds together not simply the children of Africa, but extends through yellow Asia and into the South Seas." Anthony Appiah (1993: 41) suggests that this passage reintroduces the racial essentialism it tries to expunge, burying biological conceptions of race beneath references to common history and shared memory. Nevertheless, Du Bois's statement—and his investment in pan-Africanism and the category of "people of color"—can also be read as a pioneering recognition of how social movements transform racist practices and categories (e.g., "Negroes") into bases for social mobilization (see Espiritu 1992). Du Bois complicates natural identities and contests the notion that they automatically generate political positions at the same time that he casts categories created by racism as the experiential basis for cosmopolitan consciousness.

Genealogies of Race, Cultural Relativism, and Cosmopolitanism

If we were to assess Du Bois's and Boas's projects by how much their cosmopolitanisms shaped their intellectual legacies, it would be hard to construe them as successes. Boas's cosmopolitanism has been pushed to the margins or erased entirely in both historical treatments and theory-building projects, in part because it was situated in "popular" books, *Race and Democratic Society* (1945) and *Anthropology and Modern Life* ([1928] 1962) (for exceptions see Liss 1990, 1995). To be sure, Boas's explicit assimilationist position on "the problem of the American Negro" complicated the reception of his project (see Boas 1921). Nevertheless, excluding these works from the Boasian canon and separating Boas's activism from his scholarship reproduces the separation of science and society that, Latour (1993) argues, is constitutive of modernity. For nearly half a century, Du Bois was framed in "the familiar role of talented-tenth race activist within the veil" (Posnock 1998: 89), emphasizing either his elitism or his many contri-

butions to understanding racial inequalities in the United States and developing strategies for challenging them. Nevertheless, I argue that the marginalization of Boas's and Du Bois's cosmopolitan projects rests fundamentally on problematic genealogies of race and culture and on how the very possibility for constructing notions of vernacularism and cosmopolitanism and imagining their relations have been regulated since the early modern period.

Taking up the first theme, many writers on both the Left and Right share a genealogy of race, racism, antiracism, and culture that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century which asserts, too quote Alan Barnard's *History and Theory in Anthropology* (2000: 100), that "classic cultural relativism emerged in the work of Franz Boas and his students." Etienne Balibar (1991) suggests that Boasian cultural logics are inextricably linked to racism in the twentieth century. According to Balibar, "anthropological culturalism" threatened the legitimacy of biological reasoning and undermined its public use in legitimizing social inequality. Nevertheless, racists then deftly appropriated it in legitimizing racism during the second half of the twentieth century, construing groups as separated by equally coherent and systematic cultures whose differing tenets promote distinct goals. Du Bois's legacy—and the cosmopolitan projects of both authors—seem to vanish.

Neoconservative Dinesh D'Souza (1995: 115) claims that Boas and his students constituted the "intellectual forefathers of contemporary liberalism." Boasian cultural relativism became so enshrined that "today the relativist paradigm is not defended, but taken for granted" (160). Relativism dominated the politics of race during the past fifty years and destroyed moral constraints on behavior. D'Souza blames relativism for inequality, racial conflict, and ironically, for new reifications of race; affirmative action is thus based on failed premises. Now that racism has somehow disappeared, relativism only serves to undermine social and governmental institutions, encourage black *and* white racism, and make excuses for Afrocentric extremism and irresponsible behavior on the part of African Americans. D'Souza (184) traces the civil rights movement to Du Bois and argues that it "continues to reflect his intellectual assumptions, which are at bottom the assumptions of cultural relativism." This genealogy misrepresents Boas's project as cultural relativism, collapses the differences that separated Boas's and Du Bois's antiracisms (see Baker 1998), and erases the two writers' cosmopolitanisms, even though these would seem highly pertinent to D'Souza's postracial universalism. Reductionist genealogies of cultural relativism have also become strategies that champions of true science, including sociobiologists, cognitive scientists, and evolutionary biologists, have used in dismissing criticisms that sci-

ence might be shaped by racial, sexual, and colonial assumptions. E. O. Wilson (1996) and Steven Pinker (2000), for example, claim the right to speak for human nature by arguing that cultural relativism lacks any concern with rationality, science, or universals.

Cultural relativism also serves as a trope in efforts to launch contemporary cosmopolitan projects. On the one hand, it is often asserted that cultural relativists are foes to cosmopolitanism (see, e.g., Wood 1998: 72). Critical cosmopolitanisms are sometimes defined in opposition to anthropological humanism. For example, James Clifford (1997: 36) opposes his notion of “discrepant cosmopolitanisms” to what he characterizes as ethnographic techniques of “cultural localization” that privilege notions of attachment to a given space over those of travel. Pheng Cheah (1998: 298) argues that Clifford’s and Homi Bhabha’s work are “attempts to erect actually existing radical cosmopolitanisms on the back of anthropologicist culturalism or linguistic freedom”; they, accordingly, “rely on a cultural reductionist argument,” a notion of “the givenness or organicity of the natural or nonhuman” that provides a basis for defining culture. Nevertheless, Cheah partakes of this reductionism by reproducing Clifford’s marginalization of the broader cosmopolitan project that launched ethnographic work. Boas’s cosmopolitan view of culture precisely involved both dwelling and traveling, except that the latter had less to do with diasporas than with educational programs for promoting cross-cultural journeys in search of rationality. The cultural relativism narrative is also reductionist in that it reproduces Boas’s erasure of Du Bois’s competing cosmopolitan project.

My goal here is not to suggest that contemporary progressive projects can simply spring from Boas’s and Du Bois’s cosmopolitanisms but rather to think about why scholars and others find these genealogies so persuasive. I suggest that these difficulties rest on a second problem, how vernacularisms and cosmopolitanisms got tied together at the hip in constituting modernity. Sheldon Pollock (2000) argues that the two have been linked during the second millennium. While projects of empire often involved complementary relationships between vernacularisms and cosmopolitanisms (also see Hardt and Negri 2000), this relationship became a binary opposition with the advent of modernity in the seventeenth century. John Locke ([1690] 1959) and others enshrined cosmopolitanism as the embodiment of modern subjectivity while the images they constructed of contemporaneous, if receding, vernacularisms became the quintessence of premodern, traditional subjectivities. Cosmopolitanism embodies the features that define both modernity and humanity—rationality, autonomy, individualism, and consciousness, while vernacularism involves passive, uncritical repetition of traditional

voices. Transposing Latour's terms (1993) from the science/politics opposition to cosmopolitanism/vernacularism, we can say that Locke made receiving the mantle of the modern contingent on systematically purifying cosmopolitanism from vernacularisms. His contemporary and fellow Royal Society member John Aubrey (1626–1697) took up the other side of the purifying project by studying vernacularisms, suggesting that purification was advancing so rapidly that vernacularisms would soon disappear (Aubrey 1972; see Bauman and Briggs 2003). Latour argues that Royal Society members also attempted to hide their hybridizing practices, and the same is true of the cosmopolitan/vernacular opposition. Locke and company took a particular vernacular, the idealized self-construction of white, elite, European men, and transformed it into the model for cosmopolitanism, a classic step toward “deprovincializing Europe” (Chakrabarty 2000). Locke hybridized imagined vernacularisms associated with women, laborers, the poor, country folk, and the people of Asia and the Americas insofar as he used them as negative mirror images for constructing modern and cosmopolitan subjectivities.

The project of purifying and hybridizing the cosmopolitan/vernacular relationship took two paths in the second half of the eighteenth century. Kant's program for separating the legitimate elements of the theoretical cognition from religious superstitions and tradition cast his era as a gateway to a cosmopolitan world. By contrast, his student Johann Gottfried von Herder asserted that the German “folk” had been fatally contaminated by cosmopolitan modernity, and he sought to find this German vernacularism, purify it, and use it to restore masculine vitality and unity to the German nation—which he was busy creating. Criticizing hybrid texts that synthesized folk voices with fragments of literary modernity, the brothers Grimm turned purification into textual cottage industries, entextualizing German vernacularity in the form of folklore collections that had been carefully purified of foreign and modern elements (Bauman and Briggs 2003). Herder and the Grimms created an organic model of the nation that joined purified constructions of language, folklore, literature, history, art, and worldview as a package that could be exported for shaping other nationalist projects. By inducing foreign colleagues to translate the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* and create their own vernacular collections—on the German model—the Grimms created a cosmopolitan market for consuming vernacular texts and hybridized the production of vernaculars. Locke, Aubrey, Kant, Herder, and the Grimms promoted contrastive cosmopolitanisms and vernacularisms and imbued them with different valences, but they all promoted purifying practices explicitly and thereby rendered their own hybrids implicit.

The hegemony of purifying practices in cosmopolitan discourses created problems for Boas's and Du Bois's projects, because they proposed explicitly *hybridizing* the cosmopolitan/vernacular opposition. Boas recommended hybridizing vernacularisms by educating subjects to systematically examine the one they inherited through a critical, rational consciousness and knowledge of other vernaculars. Vernaculars should only be retained when they ceased to bear the quality that, since the seventeenth century, had defined them—passive, uncritical reproduction of tradition. Cosmopolitanism would no longer ground imperialism, colonialism, and racism as the Kantian prototype was stripped of ethnocentrism and fitted with a true universalism—the common denominator that resulted from critically comparing all vernacularisms. Only anthropologists could guide both sides of this hybridization process because they were uniquely qualified to separate real hybridization from the ethnocentric universalization of particular vernaculars (associated with missionaries, evolutionists, and colonialists).

Posnock (1998: 10) suggests that Du Bois's cosmopolitanism was marginalized because he defamiliarized the term by rejecting its “typical connotations of an apolitical leisure class.” But by the time Du Bois had published *Dark Princess* ([1928] 1995) and *Color and Democracy* (1945), black cosmopolitanisms, Marxism, and other projects had clearly challenged this definition. Rather, Du Bois threatened the purification practices required of both cosmopolitan and vernacular discourses by explicitly hybridizing them. His hybridizing move went well beyond suggesting that U.S. struggles to achieve racial justice must find allies in other lands in order to be successful. Arguing that racism had imposed provincialism by fostering a sort of “group imprisonment within a group” that deprives awareness of “the wider aspects of national life and human existence,” Du Bois (1940: 132) sought to render the identities, perspectives, and social relations of both African Americans and whites more cosmopolitan. Du Bois's racial essentialism was shaped by his cosmopolitanism in that the latter informed strategies for promoting pan-Africanism and an alliance of people of color. The passage to a cosmopolitan “kingdom of culture” required critical reflection on racist vernaculars and their antiracist responses. Unlike contemporary neoconservative versions, Du Bois's imagination of a postracial cosmopolitanism involved closer and more critical scrutiny of both racial and racist provincialisms rather than the explicit—preferably legal—proscription of all discourses that engage issues of race. Cosmopolitanism could only emerge by actively challenging the vernacularisms produced by racism and colonialism, just as progressive vernacularisms required a cosmopolitan consciousness to confront racism and its effects.

The incomprehensibility of Boas's and Du Bois's hybrid cosmopolitanisms in

the face of the modernist requirement to purify became even more pronounced in the second half of the twentieth century thanks to a reconceptualization of the nation that their work helped produce. Departing from the Herderian requirement that the nation-state be monocultural, the multicultural model suggests that nation-states are truly modern insofar as they contain diverse authentic cultures—discrete, horizontally ordered, and with distinct historical roots. If they get hybridized by one another or engineered by the state, cultures become inauthentic—and the nation-state loses its multicultural status. Multicultural ideologies make the cosmopolitan dimensions of Du Bois’s and Boas’s projects seem incomprehensible, anachronistic, elitist, or even antiliberal. Hybridizing vernacularisms with cosmopolitanisms challenges the purifying practices needed to maintain the purported autonomy of cultures; efforts to hybridize the two can thus be equated with assimilationist or other homogenizing ideologies. In contrast to the localization of new and improved purifying practices within the nation, cosmopolitan vernacularism (as in Du Bois’s claim that the experiences of people of color worldwide have been shaped by the local effects of global colonial and imperialist projects) imagines cultural-ethnic differences and similarities across national borders. Because discussions of difference *beyond* the nation-state still generally entail the one nation, one culture notion (or broader units, such as “Islamic culture”), Boas’s and Du Bois’s cosmopolitanisms also ran afoul of liberal multiculturalism. In Samuel Huntington’s account *The Clash of Civilizations* (1996: 20–21), the work of purifying provincialisms—written large as seven or eight “civilizations” based on cultural commonalities—is the key to avoiding global conflict; “the survival of the West depends on Americans reaffirming their Western identity . . . and uniting to renew and preserve it against challenges from non-Western societies.” Thus, when conservative critics accept cultural reasoning, purification remains the dominant logic.

Bringing Du Bois’s cosmopolitanism—and now, I hope, Boas’s—into focus awaited the emergence of a critique of multiculturalism, including scrutiny of notions of cultural authenticity, power inequalities masked as formal equality among ethnicities, and the nation-state’s localization of difference. Recent challenges to purification, such as Bhabha’s “vernacular cosmopolitanism,” Appiah’s (2001) “rooted cosmopolitanism,” and scholarly attention to the status of many contemporary cosmopolitans as “victims of modernity” whose rootlessness is forced and impoverished (Pollock et al. 2000: 582; see also Clifford 1997) have also helped open up a space in which Du Bois’s and Boas’s projects can emerge. But this juxtaposition renders some recent claims anachronistic. Pollock (2000: 625) suggests with regard to global-local, cosmopolitan-vernacular oppo-

sitions that “the future must somehow become one of *And* rather than *Either/Or*.” Beyond the importance of giving credit where credit is due, the vernacularisms and nationalisms that often provide negative points of reference in locating cosmopolitan projects bear the traces of Boasian and Du Boisian cosmopolitan, anti-racist, and anticolonial projects. We should not be complicit with the promoters of dangerous essentialisms in erasing these cosmopolitan imbrications.

Conclusion: Cosmopolitanism, Violence, and the Politics of Race and Culture

I would like to return to the question of the new global economy of violence with which I began. Perry Anderson (2002) has recently pointed to new strategies for justifying global military interventions. U.S. participation in the Balkans war was seen as an exceptional use of force, but the war on terrorism and the axis of evil cartography turned Afghanistan and Iraq into a “part of the regular repertoire of democratic peace-keeping on a global scale” (Anderson 2002: 15). Bush provides two justifications for this shift. Speaking of terrorists in his 2002 State of the Union address, he suggested that “These enemies view the entire world as a battlefield, and we must pursue them wherever they are.” This terrorist cartography enables Bush to rationalize the right of U.S. forces to attack anywhere: “Even 7,000 miles away, across oceans and continents, on mountaintops and in caves—you will not escape the justice of this nation.”

A second justification is captured, as it were, in Bush’s September 20, 2001, address to Congress: “Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.” This logic positions 9/11 as the death of the old cartography of violence: “Time and distance from the events of September the 11th will not make us safer unless we act on its lessons. America is no longer protected by vast oceans. We are protected from attack only by vigorous action abroad, and increased vigilance at home.” This rhetoric legitimizes military action against Iraq (and its imagined stockpiles of “weapons of mass destruction”) as homeland security abroad.

Note the cosmopolitan frame for rationalizing this shift. In his 2002 State of the Union address, Bush deflects the charge that this new cartography is unilateralist: “No nation owns these aspirations, and no nation is exempt from them. We have no intention of imposing our culture. But America will always stand firm for the non-negotiable demands of human dignity: the rule of law; limits on the power of the state; respect for women; private property; free speech; equal justice; and religious tolerance.”

Opposing U.S. provincialism, “our culture,” to “non-negotiable” universals

equally rooted in “America” provides a seemingly clear boundary between “our culture” and cosmopolitanism. Recall what followed shortly after Bush’s with-us-or-with-the-terrorists statement: “This is not, however, just America’s fight. And what is at stake is not just America’s freedom. This is the world’s fight. This is civilization’s fight. This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom. We ask every nation to join us.” This cosmopolitan stance is both attributed to “the world” and “civilization” and quintessentially embodied in “America.” Rather than justifying a new global empire vis-à-vis U.S. interests or values, Bush links it to a cosmopolitanism purified of overt connections to that monolithic construction of U.S. vernacularisms, “our culture.”

Counteracting Bush’s hypermilitaristic cosmopolitanism involves not just hybridizing cosmopolitanisms and vernacularisms but also challenging purifying practices and exposing their undisclosed practices of hybridization, thereby challenging how cosmopolitanisms and vernacularisms are produced and how relations between them are imagined and managed. What we need is both a critical cosmopolitanism, to use Paul Rabinow’s phrase (1986), that helps us contribute to discrepant cosmopolitanisms, and a *cosmocular critical practice* to challenge the purifying and hybridizing practices that enable the Bushes of the world to posture themselves as cosmopolitans. My alternative genealogy of race, culture, and cosmopolitanism suggests that a cosmocular critical practice will need to locate the vernacularisms embedded in existing cosmopolitanisms as well as the cosmopolitan underpinnings of existing vernacularisms in order to read the legacy of purifying practices against the grain of neoconservative universalism and liberal multiculturalism. This strategy will also draw our attention to the architectonics that structure discourses of cosmopolitanism and vernacularism and constrain their relations. One means of overcoming what Scott Malcomson (1998: 241) refers to as cosmopolitanism’s long history of arrogance will lie in extricating its deep connection with modernity’s foundational local-global opposition, challenging the tendency to see cosmopolitanisms as naturally rational, disinterested, convivial, and free while associating vernacularisms with irrationality, interest, passivity, conflict, and demagoguery.

A cosmocular critical practice will need to keep political economy clearly in mind when opposing (neo)liberal illusions that cosmopolitanisms compete on a “level playing field” (hiding the regimes of surveillance; economic domination; political bullying; and military, media, and prison-industrial complexes that support some cosmopolitan visions) and challenging the notion that seemingly parallel units in a multicultural landscape are not structured through relations of power and normalization. In proposing alternative cosmopolitanisms, this political-

economic awareness will also have to scrutinize how differential access to symbolic capital, the media, and international organizations and forums structure the ways in which individuals, publics, movements, and nation-states interpellate themselves vis-à-vis existing cosmopolitanisms and vernacularisms.⁸

A cosmocultural critical practice must scrutinize hybrids and hybridization practices just as critically as purifications. Here we can productively return to Appiah's suggestion (1993: 41) that Du Bois reproduced biological essentialism. Hybrid, vernacular, or rooted cosmopolitanisms are no more resistant to dangerous essentialisms—or to elitism and paternalism—than purification practices are. Tying cosmopolitan imaginaries to racism, as Du Bois did, also leaves much of the power to define the terms of the debate in the hands of the racists (just as liberal multiculturalists have largely relegated the production of discursive frames to neoconservatives). Placing sole responsibility for progressive cosmopolitan projects on people of color would also imply that in order to gain access to cosmopolitanism, whites do not need to face the legacy of racism and colonialism by examining the material and symbolic advantages that whiteness confers on them (see Lipsitz 1998). Significantly, Bush relies on theological self-certainty and hybridization practices that racialize terrorism—even as he claims that his cosmopolitanism is purified of U.S. interests. “Our culture” magically mirrors Bush's cosmopolitanism by embracing law, human dignity, civil society, and women's rights, just as Bush's cosmopolitanism magically reflects U.S. provincialism. The result is a hierarchy in which some vernacularisms reflect cosmopolitan values precisely in contrast to those that supposedly abhor progress, pluralism, and tolerance. The first set naturally provides entrance into “our” virtuous cosmopolitanism, while evil vernacularisms cast nations into terrorist cosmopolitanism—thus becoming targets of U.S. intervention. Here, once again, a false genealogy of cultural relativism is used to advance an oppressive cosmopolitan project and rationalize structural violence, social inequality, and new restrictions on civil liberties in the United States.

This essay has argued against such a genealogy of culture and race in the United States and has proposed a cosmocultural critical practice for challenging received cosmopolitan, vernacular, and hybrid imaginaries. By now I hope that it is clear that one project requires the other. I do not claim to have laid out the sorts of cosmopolitanisms and vernacularisms needed at this critical juncture. But I hope that these remarks have helped to reveal why both cosmopolitan and vernacular

8. For debates about the role of political economy in shaping exile and cosmopolitanism, particularly in the wake of neoliberal globalization, see Ahmad 1992, Brennan 1989, Kaplan 1996, and Robbins 1992.

projects have been so problematic, why cosmocultural alternatives have often been erased, and to open up a space for new progressive possibilities and provide hints as to how they can be more politically viable.

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