



# Alain Locke

1885–1954

**A**LAIN LEROY LOCKE—philosopher, race leader, art critic, adult educator, essayist, and anthologist—was the leading African American intellectual of his day after W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963). A social genius, Locke was the mastermind behind the Harlem Renaissance, that explosion in the 1920s and 1930s of “New Negro” literature, drama, music, and art that bolstered black pride and earned reciprocal white respect on a national scale never before achieved. The December 1925 publication of Locke’s anthology, *The New Negro*, was a stellar event in American cultural history. A volume that spoke volumes, *The New Negro: An Interpretation* was art as manifesto—a secular liberation theology. For this and other reasons Columbus Salley, in *The Black 100* (1999), ranks Locke as the thirty-sixth most influential African American in history. Alain LeRoy Locke is the Martin Luther King Jr. of American culture.

## “RACE MAN” AND “FATHER OF MULTICULTURALISM”

Locke was a “prophet of democracy,” whose grand (though not systematic) theory of democracy sequenced local, moral, political, economic, and cultural stages of democracy as they arced through history, with racial, social, spiritual, and world democracy completing the trajectory. Adjunct notions of natural, practical, progressive, creative, intellectual, equalitarian democracy crystallized the paradigm. Seeing America as “a unique social experiment,” Locke’s larger goal was to “Americanize Americans,” with the simple yet profound message that equality

benefits everyone and that democracy itself is at stake. The essence of Locke’s philosophy of democracy is captured in the title “Cultural Pluralism: A New Americanism,” a public lecture he gave at Howard University on November 8, 1950. In raising democracy to a new level of consciousness, Locke internationalized the race issue, making the crucial connection between American race relations and international relations. Racial justice, he predicted, would serve as a social catalyst of world peace. Thus there are two major streams of thought in Locke’s work—the African American historical, cultural, and intellectual tradition, and a cosmopolitan, global outlook intensified by the Bahá’í principles he embraced. Locke is both a “race man” (cultural racialist) and a philosopher (cultural pluralist). How Locke should be read depends on which of these two roles predominates.

“Race men” were black leaders who came of age during the era of scientific racism. They embraced nineteenth-century middle-class values and held a deep faith in the meliorative powers of liberalism. Cultural pluralists compensated for the deficiencies of liberalism by promoting social justice and community; they accorded respect to culturally diverse groups and valued their diversity. A Harlem Renaissance immortal, Locke is no less historic in his role as a cultural pluralist. Locke has been called “the father of multiculturalism”—as cultural pluralism is now known—although his Harvard colleague Horace Kallen was the one who actually coined the term “cultural pluralism” in conversations with Locke that took place at Oxford University in 1907 and 1908.

How should Locke be thought of as a writer? Beyond his historic roles as critic, editor, and cultural ambassador, to what extent does he leap from history onto the printed page and demand to be read? The answers depend largely on how much of Locke *can* be read. While Locke did publish widely, a great deal of his work remains in manuscript form, including lectures, speeches, and unfinished essays that are often the clearest exposition of what he really thought. Two editions of his writings relied heavily on archival research and the subsequent editing of texts for publication: Leonard Harris' *The Philosophy of Alain Locke: Harlem Renaissance and Beyond* (1989) and Jeffrey C. Stewart's edition of Locke's *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations: Lectures on the Theory and Practice of Race* (1992). A third collection, *The Critical Temper of Alain Locke: A Selection of His Essays on Art and Culture* (1983), also edited by Jeffrey Stewart, reprints a number of reviews and essays. These posthumous publications and reprints have effectively brought Locke's work back to influential life. How Locke is *now* being read is becoming as important as how Locke *was* read.

#### LIFE AND CAREER

Harvard, Harlem, Haifa—place names that represent Locke's special involvement in philosophy, art, and religion—are keys to understanding his life and thought. Harvard prepared Locke for the distinction of becoming in 1907 the first black Rhodes Scholar, and in 1918 it awarded him a Ph.D. in philosophy (for his dissertation, *Problems of Classification in the Theory of Value*, submitted on September 1, 1917), which eventually secured his position as chair of the Department of Philosophy at Howard University from 1927 until his retirement in 1953. Harlem was the mecca of the Harlem Renaissance, whereby Locke, as a spokesman for his race, revitalized racial

solidarity and fostered the group consciousness among African Americans that proved a necessary precondition of the civil rights movement. Haifa is the world center of the Bahá'í Faith, the religion to which Locke converted in 1918, the same year he received his doctorate from Harvard. Until recently Locke's religion has been the least understood aspect of his life. During the Jim Crow era, at a time when black people saw little possibility of interracial harmony, this new religious movement offered hope through its "race amity" efforts, which Locke was instrumental in organizing. These three spheres of activity—the academy, the art world, and spiritual society—converge to create a composite picture of Locke as an integrationist whose model was not assimilation but rather "unity through diversity."

For reasons that have eluded historians, Locke always stated that he was born in 1886, but he was really born a year earlier—on September 13, 1885, in Philadelphia. Although his birth name was Arthur his parents may actually have named him Alan. At the age of sixteen Locke adopted the French spelling ("Alain," close to the American pronunciation of "Allen"), and added the middle name LeRoy (probably because he was called Roy as a child). He was the only son of Pliny Locke and Mary (Hawkins) Locke, who had been engaged for sixteen years before they married. A child of Northern Reconstruction (which focused on the post-Civil War economic revolution, while Southern Reconstruction dealt more with laws pertaining to blacks), the boy was given an enlightened upbringing and a private education. As a child of privilege Locke led a somewhat sheltered life. He was raised as an Episcopalian, and during his youth he became enamored with classical Greek philosophy.

Locke was predisposed to music and reading owing to his physical condition. In infancy he was stricken with rheumatic fever, which permanently damaged his heart. Locke dealt

with his “rheumatic heart” by seeking, as Michael R. Winston says, “compensatory satisfactions” in books, piano, and violin. Only six years old when his father died, Locke was sent by his mother to one of the Ethical Culture schools—a pioneer experimental program of Froebelian pedagogy, a philosophy of childhood education named after Friedrich Froebel (1782–1852), who opened the first kindergarten. By the time he enrolled in Central High School in 1898, Locke was already an accomplished pianist and violinist. In 1902 he began studies at the Philadelphia School of Pedagogy, graduating second in his class in 1904. That year Locke entered Harvard College with honors, where he was among precious few African American undergraduates.

During the “golden age of philosophy at Harvard,” Locke studied at a time when Josiah Royce, William James, George Herbert Palmer, Hugo Münsterberg, and Ralph Barton Perry were on the faculty. Elected to Phi Beta Kappa, in 1907 Locke won the Bowdoin Prize—Harvard’s most prestigious academic award—for an essay he wrote, “The Literary Heritage of Tennyson.” He also passed a qualifying examination in Latin, Greek, and mathematics for the Rhodes scholarship, which had just been established by the diamond magnate Cecil Rhodes in 1902. Remarkably Locke completed his four-year undergraduate program at Harvard in three years, graduating magna cum laude with his bachelor’s degree in philosophy. Then Locke made history and headlines in May 1907 as America’s first—and only, until the 1960s—African American Rhodes scholar. While his Rhodes scholarship provided for study abroad at Oxford, it was no guarantee of admission. Rejected by five Oxford colleges because of his race, Locke was finally admitted to Hertford College, where he studied from 1907 to 1910.

During his senior year at Harvard, Locke met Horace Kallen, a German-born Jew who was a graduate teaching assistant in a course on Greek

philosophy—taught by George Santayana—in which Locke had enrolled. Thus began a lifetime friendship. Kallen recorded some valuable personal observations about Locke as a young man. First, Locke was “very sensitive, very easily hurt.” As Kallen relates in “Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism,” Locke would strenuously insist that we are all human beings, that “the Negro is ... an American fact,” and that color should make no difference in the “inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” This sentiment is corroborated by a letter he wrote to his mother shortly after receiving his Rhodes scholarship; in it he insists: “I am not a race problem. I am Alain LeRoy Locke.” Unfortunately color made all the difference in that era. The prevailing social reality was that Locke’s self-image was really a wish-image.

In 1907, on a Sheldon traveling fellowship, Kallen ended up at Oxford at the same time as Locke. In “Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism” Kallen describes a racial incident over a Thanksgiving Day dinner hosted at the American Club at Oxford. Locke was not invited because of “gentlemen from Dixie who could not possibly associate with Negroes.” Elsewhere Kallen is more blunt: “We had a race problem because the Rhodes scholars from the South were bastards. So they had a Thanksgiving dinner which I refused to attend because they refused to have Locke.” In fact, even before they left for Oxford these southern Rhodes Scholars had “formally appealed to the Rhodes trustees to overturn Locke’s award”—but to no avail. “What got Kallen particularly upset, however,” according to Louis Menand in *The Metaphysical Club* (2001), “was the insult to Harvard.” In support of this, Menand cites a letter to Harvard English professor Barrett Wendell, in which Kallen speaks of overcoming his aversion to blacks through his loyalty to Harvard and by virtue of his personal respect for Locke. After having invited Locke to tea in lieu of the

Thanksgiving dinner, Kallen writes that, “tho’ it is personally repugnant to me to eat with him ... Locke is a Harvard man and as such he has a definite claim on me.” The irony is that Kallen harbored some of the very same prejudices as the southern Rhodes Scholars who shunned Locke, but not to the same degree. “As you know, I have neither respect nor liking for his race,” Kallen writes, “—but individually they have to be taken, each on his own merits and value, and if ever a Negro was worthy, this boy is.” Locke was deeply wounded by the incident. And it wasn’t just the prejudice of his American peers that disaffected him, for he was almost as critical of British condescension as he was of American racism. In 1909 Locke published a critique of Oxford, particularly of its aristocratic pretensions.

At Oxford, resuming their conversation begun at Harvard, Locke asked Kallen, “What difference does the difference [of race] make?” “In arguing out those questions,” Kallen recounts, “the phrase ‘cultural pluralism’ was born.” While the term itself was thus coined by Kallen in his historic conversation with Locke, it was Locke who developed the concept into a full-blown philosophical framework for the melioration of African Americans. Distancing himself from Kallen’s purist and separatist conception of it, Locke was part of the cultural pluralist movement that flourished between the 1920s and the 1940s. Indeed it was at Oxford that a crucial transformation took place: Locke saw himself as a cultural cosmopolitan when he entered Oxford; by the time he left he had resolved to be a race leader, although he did not know then how he would fulfill that role. While at Oxford, Locke founded the African Union Society and served as its secretary, thereby greatly broadening his international contacts in Africa and the Caribbean, which proved valuable in later life.

So acutely did the Thanksgiving Day incident traumatize Locke that he left Oxford without

taking a degree and spent the 1910–1911 academic year studying Immanuel Kant at the University of Berlin and touring Eastern Europe. During his stay in Berlin, Locke became conversant with the Austrian school of anthropology, known as philosophical anthropology, under the tutelage of Franz Brentano, Alexius Meinong, Christian Freiherr von Ehrenfels, Paul Natorp, and others. Locke much preferred Europe to America. Indeed there were moments when Locke resolved never to return to the United States. But reluctantly he did return in 1911.

In the spring of that year Locke would taste firsthand the bitterness and alacrity of the racialized Deep South. For the first eight days of March Locke traveled with Booker T. Washington through Florida, beginning in Pensacola. Beyond this the extent of Locke’s travels is unclear, but his trip probably lasted through the summer. There were moments during that trip when he feared for his life. As a direct result of his experience with racism in the South, Locke resolved to promote the interests of African Americans—and thereby of all Americans—using culture as a strategy. This was another turning point in his life. At Oxford, Locke knew that he had been prepared and destined to become a race leader. But he did not know in what capacity he would lead. It was during this trip in the South that Locke had his vision of promoting racial pride and equality through the influence of culture. Unlike politics, culture is a means of expressing and effectively communicating the aspirations and genius of a people.

Later, in an unpublished autobiographical note, Locke reflected on the circumstances that led to this momentous decision in his life and career:

Returning home in 1911, I spent six months traveling in the South,—my first close-range view of the race problem, and there acquired my life-long avocational interest in encouraging and interpret-

ing the artistic and cultural expression of Negro life, for I became deeply convinced of its efficacy as an internal instrument of group integration and morale and as an external weapon of recognition and prestige.

On September 3, 1912, with the help of Booker T. Washington, Locke joined the faculty of the Teachers College at Howard University. There Locke taught literature, English, education, and ethics—and later, ethics and logic—although he did not have an opportunity to teach a course on philosophy until 1915. In the spring of 1915 Locke proposed a course on the scientific study of race and race relations. His rationale was that “a study of race contacts is the only scientific basis for the comprehension of race relations.” But the white ministers on Howard University’s Board of Trustees rejected his petition. They opposed him because they felt that “controversial” subjects such as race had no place at a school whose mission was to educate young, black professionals. However, the Howard chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Social Science Club sponsored a two-year extension course of public lectures (1915–1916), which Locke called “Race Contacts and Inter-Racial Relations: A Study in the Theory and Practice of Race.” (See below for an account of these lectures.)

In the 1916–1917 academic year Locke took a sabbatical from Howard University to become Austin Teaching Fellow at Harvard. In that brief span of time, Locke wrote the two hundred sixty-three pages of his dissertation, *The Problem of Classification in the Theory of Value*, evidently an extension of an earlier essay he had written at Oxford. It was the Harvard professor of philosophy Josiah Royce who originally inspired Locke’s interest in the philosophy of value. Of all the major American pragmatists to date, only Royce had published a book dealing with racism: *Race Questions, Provincialism, and Other American Problems* (1908). In formulating his own theory of value,

Locke synthesized the Austrian school of value theory (Franz Brentano and Alexius Meinong) with American pragmatism (George Santayana, William James, and Josiah Royce), along with the anthropology of Franz Boas and Kant’s theories of aesthetic judgment.

The essence of Locke’s philosophy of value is captured in the first sentence of his 1935 essay “Values and Imperatives,” which recapitulates his dissertation: “All philosophies, it seems to me, are in ultimate derivation philosophies of life and not of abstract, disembodied ‘objective’ reality; products of time, place and situation, and thus systems of timed history rather than timeless eternity.” In anchoring philosophy in social reality, Locke studied the determinative role of values in the human experience, and developed a typology of values. In his dissertation Locke expresses his “psychology of value-types” in one cognitive breath: “We have therefore taken values classed, rather roughly and tentatively, as Hedonic, Economic, Aesthetic, Ethical and Moral, Religious, and Logical, aiming to discover in terms of the generic distinctions of a value-psychology their type-unity, character, and specific differentiae with respect to other types.” Later, in “Values and Imperatives,” Locke reduces his taxonomy to four types of values: Religious; Ethical/Moral; Aesthetic/Artistic; and Logical Truth/Scientific Truth.

When awarded his Ph.D. in philosophy from Harvard in 1918, Locke emerged as perhaps the most exquisitely educated and erudite African American of his generation. The year 1918 marked another milestone in Locke’s life when he found a “spiritual home” in the Bahá’í Faith, a new world religion whose gospel was the unity of the human race. The recent discovery of Locke’s signed “Bahá’í Historical Record” card (1935), in which Locke fixes the date of his conversion in 1918, restores a “missing dimension” of Locke’s life (as documented in Buck, “Alain Locke: Bahá’í Philosopher,” and

more fully in *Alain Locke: Faith and Philosophy*). In a letter dated June 28, 1922, written shortly after the death of his mother, Locke states: “Mother’s feeling toward the [Bahá’í] cause, and the friends who exemplify it, was unusually receptive and cordial for one who had reached conservative years,—it was her wish that I identify myself more closely with it.” Locke honored her wish.

The Bahá’í Faith (known then as the Bahá’í Cause) was attractive to some African Americans wherever it had made significant inroads, as was the case in Washington, D.C. Its message of world unity—particularly its gospel of interracial unity (then called “race amity”)—was quite radical in its stark contrast to the “separate but equal” American apartheid of the Jim Crow era. One instance of this new religion’s appeal is the fact that W. E. B. Du Bois’s first wife, Nina, was a member of the Bahá’í community of New York City. The Bahá’í World Center is located on Mt. Carmel in Haifa, Israel, and is a place of pilgrimage for Bahá’ís. As a Bahá’í Locke undertook two pilgrimages to the Holy Land, in 1923 and again in 1934. His first pilgrimage was immortalized in a travel narrative published in 1924, reprinted three times in 1926, 1928, and 1930, and endorsed by Bahá’í leader, Shoghi Effendi (1897–1957).

It is significant that Locke’s trips to Israel (then called Palestine) were for the primary purpose of visiting the Bahá’í shrines rather than Jerusalem, the spiritual magnet that attracts most pilgrims bound for the Holy Land. The fact that Haifa was his principal destination attests the primacy of Locke’s religious identity as a Bahá’í rather than as an Episcopalian, as he was always designated in the brief biographical notices of him published during his lifetime. It was not until an article, “Bahá’í Faith: Only Church in World That Does Not Discriminate,” appeared in the October 1952 issue of *Ebony* magazine that Locke’s Bahá’í identity was ever publicized in the popular media. Although he

studiously avoided references to the Bahá’í Faith in his professional life, Locke’s four *Bahá’í World* essays served as his public testimony of faith.

As previously mentioned, Locke was actively involved in the early “race amity” initiatives sponsored by the Bahá’ís. “Race amity” was the Bahá’í term for ideal race relations (interracial unity). The Bahá’í “race amity” era lasted from 1921–1936, followed by the “race unity” period of 1939–1947, with other socially significant experiments in interracial harmony (such as “Race Unity Day”) down to the present. The Bahá’í statement, “The Vision of Race Unity,” together with the video “The Power of Race Unity,” which was broadcast on the Black Entertainment Network and across the country in 1997, has its roots in early Bahá’í race-relations endeavors, in which Alain Locke played an important role. The first four Race Amity conventions were held in Washington, D.C. (May 19–21, 1921); Springfield, Massachusetts (December 5–6, 1921); New York (March 28–30, 1924); and Philadelphia (October 22–23, 1924). Locke participated in all but the second, and was involved in the planning and execution of these events as well. Beginning with the task force that organized and successfully executed the first convention, Locke served on race-amity committees from 1924 to 1932. There are records of Locke’s having spoken (albeit sporadically) at Bahá’í-sponsored events from 1921 to 1952. Locke’s last-known public talk (“fireside”) on the Bahá’í Faith was given on March 23, 1952, in Toronto, Ontario.

In 1924 Locke left for the Sudan and Egypt. He was granted sabbatical leave to collaborate with the French Archaeological Society of Cairo. The highlight of his research trip was the reopening of the tomb of Tutankhamen. On his return from Egypt, however, he found his campus in upheaval from a student strike. In June 1925 Locke was fired from Howard

University by its white president, J. Stanley Durkee, for Locke's support of an equitable faculty pay scale and for student demands to end mandatory chapel and ROTC. Following his dismissal, since he was no longer gainfully employed, Locke needed to find a patron for support of his intellectual work. He found his benefactor in Charlotte Mason, a wealthy white woman with whom Locke faithfully corresponded until her death in 1940. Mason financed Locke's annual trips to Europe for thirteen years and enabled Locke to begin building his invaluable collection of African art, which he later bequeathed to Howard University.

That very year (1925) the Harlem Renaissance was born. It was conceived a year earlier when Locke was asked by the editor of the *Survey Graphic* to produce an issue on Harlem, a community located in Manhattan in New York. That special issue, *Harlem, Mecca of the New Negro*, Locke subsequently recast as an anthology, *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, published in December 1925. A landmark in black literature, it was an instant success. Locke wrote the foreword plus four essays appearing in the anthology: "The New Negro," "Negro Youth Speaks," "The Negro Spirituals," and "The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts." *The New Negro* featured five white contributors as well, making this artistic tour de force a genuinely interracial collaboration, with much support from white patronage (not without some strings attached, however).

The Harlem Renaissance—known also as the New Negro Movement, of which Locke was both the prime organizer and spokesman—sought to advance freedom and equality for blacks through art. The term "New Negro" dates back to Booker T. Washington, Norman Barton Wood, and Fannie Barrier Williams's *A New Negro for a New Century* (1900). From 1925 onward Locke engendered what was called "race pride" among African Americans by fostering a new sense of the distinctiveness of

black culture and its enrichment of the American experience for all Americans. Not merely a great creative outburst during the Roaring Twenties, the Harlem Renaissance was actually a highly self-conscious modern artistic movement. In an unpublished report on race relations, Locke stated that the New Negro Movement "deliberately aims at capitalizing race consciousness for group inspiration and cultural development. But it has no political or separatist motives, and is, in this one respect, different from the nationalisms of other suppressed minorities." In its mythic and utopian sense, Harlem was the "race capital" and the largest "Negro American" community in the world. The Harlem Renaissance, consequently, presented itself to America and to the world as a microcosm or self-portraiture of black culture. With its epic scope and lyric depth, the movement was an effusion of art borne of the everyday African American experience. The Harlem Renaissance would establish Locke as the elder statesman of African American art in later life, when his towering prestige wielded enormous authority.

In principle Locke was an avowed supporter of W. E. B. Du Bois's idea of a cultural elite (the "Talented Tenth") but differed from Du Bois in the latter's insistence that art should serve as propaganda. Even so, as Locke reveals in *The New Negro*, he hoped the Harlem Renaissance would provide "an emancipating vision to America" and would advance "a new democracy in American culture." He spoke of a "race pride," "race genius," and the "race-gift." This "race pride" was to be cultivated through developing a distinctive culture, a hybrid of African and African American elements. In Locke's opinion, art ought to contribute to the improvement of life—a pragmatist aesthetic principle sometimes called "meliorism." But the Harlem Renaissance was more an aristocratic than a democratic approach to culture. Criticized by some African American contemporaries, Locke himself came to regret the Harlem

Renaissance's excesses of exhibitionism as well as its elitism. Its dazzling success was short-lived.

A little-known fact is that at the very time *The New Negro* was published Locke went on an extended teaching trip in the South, giving public lectures on the Bahá'í vision of race unity. Between October 1925 and sometime in the spring of 1926, Locke spoke in the Dunbar Forum of Oberlin, at Wilberforce University, in Indianapolis, Cleveland, and Cincinnati, and before what the Southern Regional Teaching Committee in 1926 called "the best Negro institutions in the Middle South and Northern Florida," including the Daytona Industrial Institute and the Hungerford School near Orlando.

Locke returned to Howard under its new black president, Mordecai Johnson, who reinstated him in June 1927, although Locke did not resume teaching there until June 1928. (During the 1927–1928 academic year, Locke was an exchange professor at Fisk University.) In a letter dated May 5, 1927, Du Bois had written to Howard administrator Jesse Moorland to lobby for Locke's reinstatement. Du Bois states: "Mr. Locke is by long odds the best trained man among the younger American Negroes." Locke was subsequently promoted to chair of the philosophy department. He is credited with having first introduced the study of anthropology, along with philosophy and aesthetics, into the curriculum at Howard. A pioneer in the Negro theater movement, Locke coedited the first African American drama anthology, *Plays of Negro Life: A Source-Book of Native American Drama* (1927), which consisted of twenty one-act plays and dramatic sketches—ten by white playwrights (including Eugene O'Neill) and ten by black dramatists.

Strange to say, Locke did not publish a formal philosophical essay until he was fifty, when "Values and Imperatives" (1935) appeared. Apart from his dissertation Locke published

only four other major philosophical articles in a philosophy journal or anthology: "Three Corollaries of Cultural Relativism" (1941), "Pluralism and Intellectual Democracy" (1942), "Cultural Relativism and Ideological Peace" (1944), and "Pluralism and Ideological Peace" (1947).

In 1936, under the auspices of the Associates in Negro Folk Education (ANFE), Locke established the *Bronze Booklets on the History, Problems, and Cultural Contributions of the Negro* series, written by such leading African American scholars as Sterling A. Brown and Ralph Bunche. Locke himself wrote two Bronze Booklets: *The Negro and His Music* (1936, Bronze Booklet No. 2) and *Negro Art: Past and Present* (1936, Bronze Booklet No. 3). Published between 1936 and 1942, the nine Bronze Booklets became a standard reference for teaching African American history. In 1940 the ANFE issued Locke's *The Negro in Art: A Pictorial Record of the Negro Artist and of the Negro Theme in Art*, which was Locke's best-known work after *The New Negro* and the leading book in its field. In 1942 Locke coedited (with Bernhard J. Stern) *When Peoples Meet: A Study of Race and Culture*. This anthology was international in scope, promoting interracial and ethnic contacts through intercultural exchange. In November 1942 Locke served as guest editor for a special edition of the *Survey Graphic*, an issue entitled "Color: The Unfinished Business of Democracy."

In 1943 Locke was on leave as Inter-American Exchange Professor to Haiti under the joint auspices of the American Committee for Inter-American Artistic and Intellectual Relations and the Haitian Ministry of Education. Toward the end of his stay there, Haitian President Lescot personally decorated Locke with the National Order of Honor and Merit, grade of Commandeur. There Locke wrote *Le rôle du Nègre dans la culture des Amériques* (1943), the nucleus of a grand project that he believed would be his magnum opus. That project, *The Negro in*

*American Culture*, was completed in 1956 by Margaret Just Butcher, daughter of Locke's close friend and Howard colleague Ernest E. Just. It is not, however, considered to be an authentic work of Locke.

In 1944 Locke became a charter member of the Conference on Science, Philosophy, and Religion, which published its annual proceedings. When in 1945 Locke was elected president of the American Association for Adult Education, he became the first black president of a predominantly white institution. During the 1945–1946 academic year Locke was a visiting professor at the University of Wisconsin, and in 1947 he was a visiting professor at the New School for Social Research. One of Locke's former students at Wisconsin, Beth Singer, describes her professor as follows: "Locke was a quiet, extremely scholarly, and well organized lecturer; I do not recall his speaking from notes." After mentioning the fact that Locke was a member of the Bahá'í Faith, Singer recalls that "Dr. Locke seemed somehow aloof, and my friends and I were pretty much in awe of him."

Among his many other accomplishments, Locke served on the editorial board of the *American Scholar*, was the philosophy editor for the *Key Reporter* of Phi Beta Kappa, and a regular contributor to various national magazines and journals, most notably *Opportunity* (1929–1940) and *Phylon* (1947–1953). Locke also contributed articles on Negro culture and Harlem to the *Encyclopedia Britannica* from 1940 to 1954. From 1948–1952 Locke taught concurrently at the City College (now City University) of New York and Howard University. Howard granted Locke a leave of absence for the 1951–1952 academic year to produce *The Negro in American Culture*, conceived in Haiti but left unfinished. Locke retired in June 1953 as a professor emeritus with an honorary doctorate of human letters conferred by Howard

University. On June 5, 1953, Locke said in his unpublished acceptance speech:

In coming to Howard in 1912, I was fortunate, I think, in bringing a philosophy of the market place not of the cloister. For, however much a luxury philosophy may be in our general American culture, for a minority situation and a trained minority leadership, it is a crucial necessity. This, because free, independent and unimposed thinking is the root source of all other emancipations. ... A minority is only safe and sound in terms of its social intelligence.

He moved to New York in July. For practically his entire life, Locke had sought treatment for his rheumatic heart. On June 9, 1954, nearly a year after moving to New York, Locke died of heart failure in Mount Sinai Hospital. On June 11 at Benta's Chapel, Brooklyn, Locke's memorial was presided over by Dr. Channing Tobias with cremation following at Fresh Pond Crematory in Little Village, Long Island. The brief notice that appeared in the *Baha'i News* in 1954 states that "quotations from the Baha'i Writings and Baha'i Prayers were read at Dr. Locke's funeral."

#### LOCKE'S PHILOSOPHY OF DEMOCRACY

Before describing the three principle collections of Locke's writings, it is important to explain how democracy provided the real basis of Locke's body of work. To this end, manuscript sources must be drawn on as well as actual publications. Access to the full range of Locke's writings permits one to see the breadth of his vision of America and the world. A survey of Locke's writings, both published and unpublished, reveals his overarching interest in democracy, and all of his writings on race are referenced to it. For Locke, race relations are at the heart of what democracy is all about. Locke's grand theory of democracy provides a necessary framework of analysis for comprehending what his views on race relations actu-

ally were. His multidimensional approach to democracy has already been noted. The first five dimensions are historical; they appear in Locke's paradigm of social evolution. In his 1941 unpublished farewell address at Talladega College, Locke spoke of local, moral, political, economic, and cultural stages of democracy.

Locke traces the origins of democracy back to Athens, where "democracy was a concept of local citizenship." By analogy he compares this "local democracy" to "college fraternities and sororities" in which the bonds are of "like-mindedness," thereby excluding others:

The rim of the Greek concept of democracy was the barbarian: it was then merely the principle of fraternity within a narrow, limited circle. There was a dignity accorded to each member on the basis of membership in the group. It excluded foreigners, slaves and women. This concept carried over into the Roman empire.

Christianity would provide spiritual and social resources for the next stage in the evolution of democracy. Christianity gave rise to what Locke calls "moral democracy":

We owe to Christianity one of the great basic ideals of democracy—the ideal of the moral equality of human beings. The Christian ideal of democracy was in its initial stages more democratic than it subsequently became. ... But the Christian church was a political institution and in making compromises often failed in bringing about real human equality.

Democracy in America began with a quest for "freedom of worship and the moral liberty of conscience." Yet "it had not even matured to the adult principle of abstract freedom of conscience as the religious intolerances of colonial settlers proved; migrating non-conformists themselves, they still could not stand the presence of non-conformity in their midst." Thus Christianity, while representing a necessary advance in the notion of democracy, was not a sufficient advance.

"It is a sad irony," Alain Locke wrote, "that the social institution most committed and potentially most capable of implementing social democracy should actually be the weakest and most inconsistent, organized religion." Indeed Locke takes Christianity to task for what is now called "self-segregation": "Of all the segregated bodies, the racially separate church is the saddest and most obviously self-contradicting. The separate Negro church, organized in self-defensive protest, is nonetheless just as anomalous [*sic*], though perhaps, more pardonably so."

This is where secularism comes in, that is, "political democracy." According to Locke:

The third great step in democracy came from protestant [*sic*] lands and people who evolved the ideal of political equality: (1) equality before the law; (2) political citizenship. This political democracy pivoted on individualism, and the freedom of the individual in terms of what we know as the fundamental rights of man. It found its best expression in the historic formula of "Liberty, equality and fraternity."

Here Locke acknowledges the influence of the French Revolution. "In terms of this ideology our country's government was founded," Locke explains, and continues:

But for generations after[,] many of the fundamentals of our democracy were pious objectives, not fully expressed in practice. In the perspective of democracy's long evolution, we must regard our country's history as a progressive process of democratization, not yet fully achieved, but certainly progressing importantly in terms of the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth amendments [*sic*], and the amendment extending the right of franchise to women. It is still imperfect.

What, then, is beyond political democracy? In Locke's view, "If we are going to have effective democracy in America we must have the democratic spirit as well as the democratic tradition, we must have more social democracy and

more economic democracy in order to have or keep political democracy.” Economic reform, then, was considered a necessary development of democracy:

The fourth crucial stage in the enlargement of democracy began, I think, with the income tax amendment. ... The income tax amendment was an initial step in social [economic] democracy as distinguished from the purely political,—a step toward economic equality through the partial appropriation of surplus wealth for the benefit of the commonwealth.

History is the measure of how far America has come. “In this country for many generations we thought we had economic equality,” Locke goes on to say.

What we really had was a frontier expansion which developed such surpluses and offered such practical equality of opportunity as to give us the illusion of economic equality. We later learned that we did not have economic democracy, and that in order to have this, we must have guaranteed to all citizens certain minimal standards of living and the right to earn a living.

Locke then shows how the New Deal and the creation of the social security system represented further advances in economic democracy, by which he means economic equality of rights and opportunities. In the conclusion of an unpublished essay, “Peace Between Black and White in the United States,” Locke stresses the importance of economic development:

We used to say that Christianity and democracy were both at stake in the equitable solution of the race question. They were; but they were abstract ideals that did not bleed when injured. Now we think with more realistic logic, perhaps, that economic justice cannot stand on one foot; and economic reconstruction is the dominant demand of the present-day American scene.

This relatively timeless statement attests Locke’s contemporary relevance.

Locke continues in his Talladega speech:

A fifth phase of democracy, even if the preceding four are realized, still remains to be achieved in order to have a fully balanced society. The present crisis forces us to realize that without this also democracy may go into total eclipse. This fifth phase is the struggle for cultural democracy, and rests on the concept of the right of difference,—that is, the guarantee of the rights of minorities.

In his small book *World View on Race and Democracy: A Study Guide in Human Group Relations* (1943), Locke sums up the problem he is addressing as follows: “Less acute than race prejudice, but by no means unrelated to it, is the social bias and discrimination underlying the problem of cultural minorities. ... Cultural bias, like that directed against the Mexican, Orientals, the Jew, the American Indian, often intensifies into racial prejudice.” At this stage in the social evolution of democracy Locke begins to address the problem of racism:

These contemporary problems of democracy can be vividly sensed if we realize that the race question is at the very heart of this struggle for cultural democracy. Its solution lies beyond even the realization of political and economic democracy, although of course that solution can only be reached when we no longer have extreme political inequality and extreme economic inequality.

The first four stages of democracy, developmental in nature, are still in process. These dimensions are not merely historical. Rather, they are challenges that America continues to face.

Locke looked beyond political democracy, which is merely the structure and machinery of the American experiment: “Constitutional guarantees, legal and civil rights, political machinery of democratic action and control are, of course, the skeleton foundation of democracy,” Locke concedes,

but you and I know that attitudes are the flesh and blood of democracy, and that without their vital reinforcement [*sic*] democracy is really moribund

or dead. That is my reason for thinking that in any democracy, ours included, the crucial issue, the test touchstone of democracy is minority status, minority protection, minority rights.

Not only is the race question America's "most challenging issue," as Locke's fellow Bahá'ís would say, it is also the single greatest challenge facing the world.

"The race question," wrote Locke in 1949, "has become the number one problem of the world." The next statement follows from the first: "Race really is a dominant issue of our thinking about democracy." In *World View on Race and Democracy*, Locke states this another way: "Of all the barriers limiting democracy, color is the greatest, whether viewed from a standpoint of national or world democracy." And in an unpublished report on racism Locke writes:

So, as between the white and the black peoples, the American situation is the acid test of the whole problem; and will be crucial in its outcome for the rest of the world. This makes America, in the judgment of many, the world's laboratory for the progressive solution of this great problem of social adjustment.

Thus Locke defines America's world role.

Locke speaks of "religious liberals" who represent "renewed hope for some early progress toward racial and social and cultural democracy." In a letter dated November 7, 1943, to the editor of the *Washington Star* Locke cites, with approval, a story that appeared in the November 2nd *Salt Lake Tribune*, which quoted him as saying:

There must be complete consistency between what democracy professes and what democracy practices. ... Public opinion in America has got to be sold on racial democracy. Now is the time for the people to face this question. Race equality alone can secure world peace. ... To save the United

States from moral bankruptcy we must solve the color problem.

Locke's rhetoric here is a direct echo of his Bahá'í convictions.

The next dimension is social democracy. In "Reason and Race: A Review of the Literature of the Negro for 1946" (1947) Locke underscores "the fact that the contemporary world situation clearly indicates that social democracy is the only safe choice for the survival of Western and Christian civilization." In the Seventeenth Annual Convention and Bahá'í Congress (July 5, 1925), Locke is reported to have remarked on "the great part which America can play in the establishment of world peace, if alive to its opportunity." He went on to say that "the working out of social democracy can be accomplished here. To this end we should not think in little arcs of experience, but in the big, comprehensive way. ... In final analysis, peace cannot exist anywhere without existing everywhere." To get from national democracy to world democracy, the world will have to be spiritualized.

Locke's views on "spiritual democracy" have received scant attention. In "The Gospel for the Twentieth Century," an evidently unpublished Bahá'í essay, Locke expresses his conviction that spiritual democracy is our greatest resource for realizing the full range of democracy: "The gospel for the Twentieth Century rises out of the heart of its greatest problems. ... Much has been accomplished in the name of Democracy, but Spiritual Democracy, its largest and most inner meaning, is so below our common horizons." Locke follows with this telling criticism of American materialism: "The land that is nearest to material democracy is furthest away from spiritual democracy." Then, presumably for the benefit of his Bahá'í audience, Locke cites Bahá'í scripture:

The word of God is still insistent, ... and we have ... Bahá'u'lláh's "one great trumpet-call to humanity": "That all nations shall become one in

faith, and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled. ... These strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and family.”

Locke’s direct citation of Bahá’u’lláh (1817–1892), prophet-founder of the Bahá’í Faith, makes his point abundantly clear: spiritual democracy is democracy taken to heart, internalized and universalized. This alone can ensure world democracy.

“World democracy,” writes Locke, “presupposes the recognition of the essential equality of all peoples and the potential parity of all cultures.” On a radio program, “Woman’s Page of the Air” with Adelaide Hawley, broadcast August 6, 1944, while World War II was in full furor, Locke said: “Just as the foundation of democracy as a national principle made necessary the declaration of the basic equality of persons, so the founding of *international* democracy must guarantee the basic equality of human *groups*.” This is where Locke registers his support for the United Nations:

Significantly enough, the Phalanx of the United Nations unites an unprecedented assemblage of the races, cultures and peoples of the world. Could this war-born assemblage be welded by a constructive peace into an effective world order—one based on the essential parity of peoples and a truly democratic reciprocity of cultures—world democracy would be within reach of attainment.

He then draws a moral analogy:

Moreover, the United States, with its composite population sampling all the human races and peoples, is by way of being almost a United Nations by herself. We could so easily and naturally, with the right dynamic, become the focus of thoroughgoing internationalism—thereby realizing, one might say, our manifest destiny.

Note that Locke has not only redefined the idea of manifest destiny—he has revolutionized it.

In “Moral Imperatives for World Order” (1944), Locke incorporates nation, race, and religion as the three “basic corporate ideas” that are integral to America’s world role. Locke explored the relationship between America and world democracy. In “Color: The Unfinished Business of Democracy” (1942) he states: “World leadership ... must be moral leadership in democratic concert with humanity at large.” In so doing, America must perforce “abandon racial and cultural prejudice.” “A world democracy,” he adds, “cannot possibly tolerate what a national democracy has countenanced too long.”

Beyond these nine dimensions of democracy—or collateral with them—is the contribution of youth. On May 28, 1946, in his commencement address at the University of Wisconsin High School, Locke spoke of “the gallant natural democracy of youth,” stating as its cause the simple reason that “youth, generally speaking, are typically the most free of deeply engrained prejudice.” Another variation on the theme of democracy is Locke’s use of the term “practical democracy” in a variety of contexts. For instance, in reporting on a Bahá’í-sponsored race amity convention, Locke wrote: “Washington, which the penetrating vision of Abdul Baha [Bahá’í leader, 1844–1921] in 1912 saw as the crux of the race problem and therefore of practical democracy in America, was for that reason selected as the place for the first convention under Bahá’í auspices for amity in inter-racial relations.”

Democracy has always been a creative human project, according to Locke. We should “keep constantly in mind how indisputably democracy has historically changed and enlarged its meaning, acquiring from generation to generation new scope, added objectives, fresh sanctions.” Democracy, of course, has not always been democratic. Locke shows the dissonance between the ideal and the real in the

inherent contradictions of democracy as practiced by the founding fathers:

We can scarcely make a fetish of our own or even our generation's version of democracy if we recall that once in the minds of all but a few radical democrats like Jefferson, democracy was compatible with such obvious contradictions as slavery and has even much later seemed adequate in spite of such limitations equally obvious to us now as the disenfranchisement of women, complete disregard of public responsibility for education, no provision for social security and the like.

Democracy is ongoing in its development. In an unpublished essay, "Creative Democracy," Locke rhetorically asks:

If democracy hasn't always meant the same thing, how can we be so sure that its present compass of meaning is so permanent or so fully adequate? It seems absolutely essential, then, to treat democracy as a dynamic, changing and developing concept, to consider it always in terms of an expanding context, and to realize that like any embodiment of human values, it must grow in order to keep alive. Except as progressive and creative, democracy both institutionally and ideologically stagnates.

In one of his formal philosophical essays, "Pluralism and Intellectual Democracy," Locke declares: "The intellectual core of the problems of the peace ... will be the discovery of the necessary common denominators and the basic equivalences involved in a democratic world order or democracy on a world scale." To this end Locke advocated a "democracy of values"—that is, value pluralism. In this essay Locke argues for the "re-vamping of democracy" and advocates the adoption of "'cultural pluralism' as a proposed liberal rationale for our national democracy." Conceived differently, Locke sees pluralism as an extension of eighteenth-century democratic values.

This inventory of the dimensions of democracy in the philosophy of Alain Locke does not

exhaust his expansive use of the concept. Perhaps the summary lies in Locke's felicitous expression "equalitarian democracy." At the heart of this view of democracy is interracial unity, Locke's paramount Bahá'í ideal. In *The Negro in America* (1933), Locke explains:

If they will but see it, because of their complementary qualities, the two racial groups [blacks and whites] have great spiritual need, one of the other. It would be truly significant in the history of human culture, if two races so diverse should so happily collaborate, and the one return for the gift of a great civilization the reciprocal gift of the spiritual cross-fertilization of a great and distinctive national culture.

In his speech "America's Part in World Peace" (1925) Locke reportedly said:

America's democracy must begin at home with a spiritual fusion of all her constituent peoples in brotherhood, and in an actual mutuality of life. Until democracy is worked out in the vital small scale of practical human relations, it can never, except as an empty formula, prevail on the national or international basis. Until it establishes itself in human hearts, it can never institutionally flourish. Moreover, America's reputation and moral influence in the world depends on the successful achievement of this vital spiritual democracy within the lifetime of the present generation. (Material civilization alone does not safeguard the progress of a nation.) Bahá'í Principles and the leavening of our national life with their power, is to be regarded as the salvation of democracy. In this way only can the fine professions of American ideals be realized.

This rare religious sentiment by Locke should not be misconstrued. In his own lifetime the Bahá'ís were the only predominantly white group, with the possible exception of the Quakers, who collectively reached out to African Americans for the purpose of fostering interracial unity—a sacred Bahá'í value. Far from asserting any parochial ownership of this ideal, Locke wanted to promote the principle of inter-

racial unity within the broader context of democracy. Evidence suggests that he first encountered Bahá'ís in 1915, which, if true, coincides with his remarkable series of five lectures, first delivered in 1915 and again in March and April of 1916, "Race Contacts and Inter-Racial Relations."

"RACE CONTACTS AND INTERRACIAL  
RELATIONS"

Jeffrey Stewart edited *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations: Lectures on the Theory and Practice of Race* (1992) from transcripts of Locke's 1916 lectures preserved in the Alain Locke Papers, held in the archives of the Manuscript Division of the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University. Locke drew heavily on the work of Franz Boas (1858–1942), whose paper "The Instability of Race Types" Locke may have heard at the Universal Race Congress (July 26–29, 1911). In the fourth lecture Locke directly cites Boas' pioneer work, *The Mind of Primitive Man* (1911), which, as Stewart observes in the introduction to his book, "revolutionized theories of race and culture." Stewart goes on to acknowledge that Boas, the "father of American anthropology," exploded the myth that race had any real basis in scientific fact, and sought to establish "culture" as a "central social science paradigm." In so doing Boas was widely regarded by intellectual historians as one who did more to combat the ideological rationalization of race prejudice than any other person in history. Yet in 1916 only a handful of Americans knew of Boas' work. Stewart notes that Locke "was the intellectual who most fully comprehended the implications of Boas' theories for African Americans." Boas, who had significant contacts with Bahá'ís, was a touchstone of truth for Locke. His lectures thus represent a further development of ideas of Boas, whom Locke eulogized as a "major prophet of democracy."

In the first lecture, "The Theoretical and Scientific Conceptions of Race," Locke leads with the question, "What is race?" He then traces the origins of race theory to Joseph Arthur Comte de Gobineau (1816–1882), the founder of scientific racism. "We should expect naturally," said Locke, stating the obvious, "that race theory should be a philosophy of the dominant groups." Apart from the serious social issues involved, the integrity of the scientific method itself was at stake. Scientific racism could no longer maintain its scientific pretense. Addressing the connection between bias and theory, Locke stresses Boas' distinction between racial difference and racial inequality. Racial difference is biological; racial inequality is social. Race, therefore, is socially—not biologically—determined. There may indeed be a cause-and-effect relationship between the two. "Consequently, any true history of race," Locke goes on to say, "must be a sociological theory of race." The paradox is that race "amounts practically to social inheritance[,] and yet it parades itself as biological or anthropological inheritance." Races are socially constructed, and their cultures expressive of core values, even though those values themselves are in flux.

This is a theoretical reversal of the old-school anthropological approach to race. Locke debunks Social Darwinism, the belief that distinct races exist and are genetically determined to express certain traits. Science must be brought to bear on the race question, to dispel "false conceptions of race." And he predicts that "science will ultimately arrive" at the conclusion that "there are no static factors of race." Locke successfully removed race from its biological basis, arguing that race is culture. Accordingly Locke supported the move from "biological" anthropology to cultural anthropology.

In the second lecture, "The Political and Practical Conceptions of Race," Locke states that dominant groups are "imperialistic." He gives the Roman Empire as a perfect example.

Then there are “the exploitations of modern imperialism.” On a personal note, Locke says, “I lived for three years in close association with imperial folk at the ‘Imperial Training School’ at the University of Oxford. Oxford and Cambridge rule the English Empire.” Imperialism generates its own race myths. Anglo-Saxon superiority is a rationalization and justification of its own imperialism. Another form of imperialism is “commercial imperialism,” exercised “to further trade dominance.” In the modern age, “empire is the political problem.” As a corollary to this problem, Locke discusses race and class in the third lecture, “The Phenomena and Laws of Race Contacts.”

In the fourth lecture, “Modern Race Creeds and Their Fallacies,” Locke compares “racial antipathy” with Francis Bacon’s concept of “social idols.” Examples range from the Rhine District (French and German), the Alsace-Lorraine question, the Brown Provinces of Austria, to anti-Semitism in Prussia. Locke then enumerates a series of social fallacies: the “biological fallacy,” the “fallacy of the masses,” the “fallacy of the permanency of race types” (which Locke takes to be a “race creed”), the “fallacy of race ascendancy,” and the fallacy of “automatic adjustment.” In the end prejudice “is simply an abnormal social sense, a [perversion] of a normal social instinct.”

In the fifth and final lecture, “Racial Progress and Race Adjustment,” Locke concludes the series with a discourse on “social race,” citing the Hindu caste system as the oldest instance of it. Then he baldly states: “Every civilization produces its type.” He goes on to say that “conformity to civilization type is something which society exacts of all its members.” What does Locke mean by this? America’s social metaphor of the melting pot instantly comes to mind. The pressure to conform is the pressure to assimilate. Historically, because they were forcibly cut off from their African traditions, African Americans were exposed to, immersed

in, and assimilated to American culture. Segregation is one of the barriers that prevents their full participation in American life.

Paradoxically, race pride is a loyalty that can coexist within a larger loyalty to the “common civilization type.” The reader is left to presume that America is its own “civilization type.” As his own theory of social conservation, Locke goes so far as to propose the reinvention of the “race type,” advocating the development of a “secondary race consciousness.” This eventually leads to “culture-citizenship,” or group contribution to a joint civilization, where “race type blends into the ‘civilization type.’” Racial pride is analogous to an individual’s sense of self-respect. Here Locke differs from Boas in his theory of race in that Locke saw value in maintaining race consciousness. In “The Negro’s Contribution to American Culture” (1939) Locke projected that race would matter less and less in the future, when the “ultimate biological destiny, perhaps, of the human stock” would be mulatto, or mixed, “like rum in the punch.” Sadly Locke’s lectures had no influence on his philosophical contemporaries.

#### THE CRITICAL TEMPER OF ALAIN LOCKE

Stewart has again made Locke far more available than ever before, with the publication of his anthology of Locke’s essays on art and culture. The book is organized in sections: “Renaissance Apologetics”; “Poetry”; “Drama”; “African Art”; “Contemporary Negro Art”; “Retrospective Reviews”; “Race and Culture.” The majority of these reprinted articles originally appeared in the journals *Phylon* and *Opportunity*. In these, as in other works by Locke, the reader must hunt for the occasional “gold nugget”—when Locke is at his timeless best. Otherwise the reviews can be somewhat tedious. Locke’s prefatory remarks in each article often repay the effort, however.

In the opening paragraph of "Dawn Patrol: A Review of the Literature of the Negro for 1948" (1949), Locke states that "the race question has become [the] number one problem of the world." This is this crisis of Western civilization. Art, literature, and drama counteract racism through creating "new sensitivities of social conscience, of radically enlarged outlooks of human understanding." "Race and Culture," the last section in Stewart's collection, is the most interesting from the standpoint of understanding Locke's thought. "The American Temperament" (1911) is a critique of American popular culture, which failed to live up to Locke's belief that the function of art is to enlighten, to engender social change. "Race Contacts and Inter-Racial Relations" was a privately printed syllabus of Locke's 1915–1916 lectures. "The Ethics of Culture" (1923) is an address by Locke to freshmen at Howard University. This is one of Locke's most straightforward talks, in which he tells his students that "a brilliant Englishman once characterized America as a place where everything had a price, but nothing a value. ... There is a special need for a correction of this on your part." America is largely a cultural wasteland, with "Saharas of culture" across the country. Locke exhorts his students to strive for excellence, to be "well-bred." "In fact," Locke concludes, "one suspects that eventually the most civilized way of being superior will be to excel in culture."

In "The Negro's Contribution to American Culture" Locke reflects on the Harlem Renaissance. He refers to it as "cultural racialism" which was "the keynote of the Negro renaissance." Between 1925 and 1939 "three schools of Negro cultural expression" appeared in succession. The first was the "enthusiastic cult of idealistic racialism" that characterized the "Negro renaissance" (Locke's preferred term of reference to the Harlem Renaissance in his later writings). The movement was marred by a certain degree of "irresponsible individualism

and eccentric exhibitionism." This was followed by a period of folk realism (which the depression intensified), giving rise to a school of "iconoclast" social protest literature. (In his own iconoclastic vein, Locke refers to *Gone With the Wind* as a "contrary to fact romance.") Ideally "Negro art" should fulfill its primary purpose as "an instrument for social enlightenment and constructive social reform." This is what Locke means by "culture politics." But this is not a "racially exclusive" task, since it is "the ultimate goal of cultural democracy, the capstone of the historic process of American acculturation."

In "The Negro in the Three Americas" (1944), the English version of a May 1943 lecture given in French while in Haiti, Locke points to the shared historical legacy of slavery in North America, the Caribbean, and South America. The effects of slavery still need to be eradicated. Poverty, illiteracy, and all related social ills are the direct consequence of persisting "undemocratic social attitudes" and "anti-democratic social policies." Locke sees the effort to remedy this situation as a crusade to save democracy by expanding it. "For historical and inescapable reasons," Locke explains, "the Negro has thus become ... a conspicuous symbol ... of democracy." Locke is optimistic about the "radiant" prospects for "inter-American cultural democracy," but achieving a "larger social democracy" is a broader issue. Speaking "as a philosopher," Locke concedes that the emergence and influence of the elite remains "a necessary though painful condition for mass progress." The reader can see that Locke placed a great deal of faith in the power of the elite to amplify social democracy through the instrumentality of cultural democracy.

#### THE PHILOSOPHY OF ALAIN LOCKE

Leonard Harris has done an invaluable service in assembling *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*:

*Harlem Renaissance and Beyond* (1989), a truly representative selection of Locke's work. Harris even includes two of Locke's Bahá'í essays, "The Orientation of Hope" (1933) and "Unity through Diversity" (1936). This volume is divided into four parts: "Epistemological Foundations"; "Valuation: Commentaries and Reviews"; "Identity and Plurality"; "Identity and Education." Each section is ordered historically, with three of the essays in the first section published for the first time.

Locke did not publish a formal philosophical essay until he was fifty. Accordingly Harris has chosen "Values and Imperatives" as the first essay. In many ways the essay is a condensation of Locke's doctoral dissertation. His classification of "value types" and their associated "value predicates" and "value polarity" are reduced to a schematic chart. Locke's theory of values provides the epistemological foundation for his subsequent philosophical formulations. In "Pluralism and Intellectual Democracy," Locke posits a "vital connection between pluralism and democracy" that can give rise to "a flexible, more democratic nexus, a unity in diversity." Crediting William James with rejecting "intellectual absolutism," Locke outlines his vision of "intellectual democracy." Radical empiricism leads to "anarchic pluralism." Midway between these two extremes, Locke proposes a "systematic relativism." Through objective comparison of different value systems, one may discover "functional constants" that can "scientifically" supplant arbitrary universals, such as "sole ways of salvation" and "perfect forms of the state or society." In so doing, not only will traditional value systems "make peace with one another" but will also make "an honorable peace with science"—an echo of the Bahá'í ideal of the harmony of science and religion, which Locke professed.

The practical corollaries of value pluralism are tolerance and reciprocity. World democracy—a "democratic world order"—cannot be

based "on an enlarged pattern of our own." Rather, "the intellectual core of the problems of the peace, should it lie in our control and leadership, will be the discovery of the necessary common denominators and the basic equivalences involved in a democratic world order or democracy on a world scale." Some of the dogmatisms to be overcome are "culture bias, nation worship, and racism." The duty of intellectuals is to reconstruct democracy to make it truly pluralistic.

In "Cultural Relativism and Ideological Peace," Locke is concerned with the implementation of cultural pluralism. It is a "new age," and a "new scholarship" is needed. Cultural relativity is, in effect, the new methodology. It is based on three basic corollaries: "the principle of *cultural equivalence*" (a search for "culture-correlates"), "the principle of *cultural reciprocity*," and "the principle of *limited cultural convertibility*." The scholarly "task of the hour" is to discover an underlying "unity in diversity." These unities, however, have a functional rather than content character, and are pragmatic rather than ideological.

In "Pluralism and Ideological Peace," Locke argues that cultural parity, tolerance, and reciprocity are "an extension of democracy beyond individuals and individual rights" to group rights. In this essay Locke repeats verbatim a statement he made in "Cultural Relativism" that the "Utopian dream of the idealist" is "that somehow a single faith, a common culture, an all-embracing institutional life and its confraternity should some day unite man by merging all his loyalties and culture values." But that day seems distant, which is why cultural pluralism is far more attainable.

The second section of this anthology opens with "The Orientation of Hope." As a professed Bahá'í, Locke gives an oblique testimony of faith in saying that "the true principles and hopes of a new and universal human order" may be realized through "an inspired extension of

the potent realism of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá by which he crowned and fulfilled the basic idealism of Bahá’u’lláh.” In “Unity through Diversity: A Bahá’í Principle,” Locke urges Bahá’ís to apply “the precious legacy of the inspired teachings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Bahá’u’lláh” by translating the Bahá’í principles into action and carrying them into “the social and cultural fields” where “the support and adherence of the most vigorous and intellectual elements in most societies can be enlisted.” This will result in the “application and final vindication of the Bahá’í principles” and “a positive multiplication of spiritual power.” In “Moral Imperatives for World Order,” Locke abandons his role as an advocate of the rights of African Americans to address the current world crisis. He identifies nation, race, and religion as the three basic group loyalties. “The moral imperatives of a new world order,” Locke concludes, “are an internationally limited idea of national sovereignty, a non-monopolistic and culturally tolerant concept of race and religious loyalties freed of sectarian bigotry.”

Skipping over several essays, three of which also appear in *The Critical Temper of Alain Locke* (“The Ethics of Culture,” “The Concept of Race as Applied to Social Culture,” and “Who and What is ‘Negro’?”), one can see how Locke for his entire professional life advocated a “pragmatically functional type of philosophy, to serve as a guide to life and living rather than what Dewey calls ‘busy work for a few professionals’ refining the techniques and polishing the tools of rational analysis.” Locke wanted to “extend the scientific method and temper beyond the domain of science ... to all other intellectual domains.” He attempted to provide a model for this in coediting *When Peoples Meet: A Study of Race and Culture* (1942), which was “an integrated analysis” of “basic problems of human group relations” and a “wide-scale comparative study of universal forces in group interaction.”

In “Frontiers of Culture” (1950), Locke reflects on how “culture” was “once a favorite theme-song word with me. Now I wince at its mention.” In retrospect Locke claims the New Negro Movement as his “brain child.” “Having signed that ‘New Negro’s’ birth certificate, I assume some right to participate in the post-mortem findings.” The movement died because of “exhibitionism and racial chauvinism.” Late in life Locke believed that “there is no room for any consciously maintained racialism in matters cultural.” Locke then questions the utility of self-segregation: “Let us ask boldly and bravely, what then are the justifications of separate Negro churches, of separate Negro fraternities, schools, colleges?” Thus the new “frontier of culture” is integration. The enemies remain the same—class bias and group bias.

#### CONCLUSION

History has both immortalized and obscured Locke. Given his cynicism toward it in later life, it is ironic, although not surprising, that Locke should forever be associated with the Harlem Renaissance, much to the exclusion of his broader role as a cultural pluralist. With new information that has come to light regarding his Bahá’í identity, it is now possible to understand how Locke could function simultaneously as a cultural racist and cultural pluralist. Together the two combine to produce “unity through diversity”—the Bahá’í principle that Locke held sacred. Locke’s philosophy of democracy, which previous literature never holistically described, is the key to integrating the various facets of his thought. As a philosopher Locke had no appreciable impact in his own lifetime. In the end, however, he may enjoy a delayed influence. That will depend largely on whether the new information that recent scholarship has provided can bring Locke back to influential life as a prophet of democracy.

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