

Requiem for Faith Unmitigated*—Or—Faith in 1923 Palestine and 2023 Israel: Revising Alain Locke's 1923 Pilgrimage (Musing Again)¹

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IN 1911, ALAIN LOCKE SOJOURNED FROM OXFORD UNIVERSITY, England to Universitat zu Berlin, Berlin, Germany, located on Friedrichstrasse to attend lectures regarding nineteenth-century philosophy from Georg Simmel; aesthetics from Max Dessoir; idealism from Hugo Münsterberg and from Kantians Benno Erdmann and Adolf Lasson. Locke prepared himself for this journey. While the first African American Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University, Hertford College, starting in 1907, in 1909, he hired a tutor to learn German so that he could read the texts of untranslated works from the Austrian School of value theory. Locke would use Alexius Meinong and Christian von Ehrenfels, representatives of the Austrian School, in his later works. However, his interest in value theory did not bode well at Oxford—his senior thesis proposal, “The Concept of Values,” was rejected by the Oxford faculty responsible for its approval, one of whom was not his faculty advisor, Ferdinand C. S. Schiller, the only pragmatist at Oxford. Schiller was working in a hostile environment because pragmatism and value theory were considered tawdry in contrast to pristine logic, philosophy of language, analytic philosophy, and ancient Greek and Roman philosophy. Locke left Oxford unceremoniously but arrived at the Universitat zu Berlin to a supportive Hugo Münsterberg, one of his former professors at Harvard, who was in residence at Universitat zu Berlin.

Bereft of funds to continue his education in Europe, Locke returned to America in 1912 without terminal degrees from Oxford or Berlin. However, he was able to land a teaching position at Howard University, Washington, DC, where he eventually became chair of the Department of Philosophy. Despite further setbacks, he graduated from Harvard University in 1918 with a doctorate in philosophy.

Locke had, while at Oxford, attended at least the first of the eight Hibbert Lectures by William James, titled "On the Present Situation in Philosophy," given on 18 May 1908. The lectures became the basis of James's 1909 *Pluralistic Universe: Hibbert Lectures at Manchester College on the Present Situation in Philosophy*. Locke also attended the ceremony at which James received an honorary DSc from Oxford. As fate would have it, Ralph B. Perry, who came to be noted for his biography of William James, *The Thought and Character of William James* (1935), was his dissertation advisor. Locke argued in his 1917 doctoral dissertation, *The Problem of Classification in the Theory of Value: Or an Outline of a Genetic System of Values*, that all values were fundamentally relative.² He, thereby, like other pragmatists, naturalized epistemology. However, Locke made it starkly clear to Perry that he disagreed with him, and also with Dewey. Locke proposed that experience is not an elixir providing a warrant for values, as was often granted,³ and that, contrary to claims from Franz Brentano and Christian von Ehrenfels, there is no quaint universe of generic values with distinct pristine features. Classifying values is, for Locke, a subset of the general problem of trying to find an entity that is definitive of the nature of value itself. Particular attitudes, according to Locke, need not remain tethered to any particular category. The absolute stability of value categories is thus rejected by Locke, all the way down. The content of whatever universally common values or norms exist, ethical or otherwise, is far more lucid than often thought. In effect, as I interpret Locke, there is no queer universe of epistemic true values revealed through experience, intuition, critical reasoning, or scientific reasoning, let alone pure reason; value categories are far more complex than pragmatism had allowed.⁴ Locke had his own version of value theory.⁵ If his thesis that values substantively shape what and how we understand reality, and that reality itself is best understood as fluid, is right, then the search for universal ethical values is at best a search for functional values beneficial to humanity, not necessarily for values endemic to some sort of objective *conscientia phenomenon* that gives warrant.

In September of 1923, while away from his duties at Howard University, Locke arrived in Vienna, Austria, which was a part of his touring itinerary of Europe. He attended at least the first of two Roland Hayes concerts in Vienna at the Mittlerer Konzerthaus-Saal in early October. Hayes was barely 5'4" tall, not much taller than Locke. It was arguably among the most important musical events of Vienna's concert season. Hayes's silky, deep tenor voice provided a smooth melodic sound to classical German songs, and spirituals were the rage among seasoned and novice concert goers. "Mr. Hayes has taken

over from the primitive race gift in the art of song.”⁶ Locke attended Hayes’s ascension to the heights of European culture, not just to support Hayes, but because he considered it an event that would forever change even American perceptions that doubted Negro equity, because the spirituals deserve the status of high art.⁷ Especially important for Locke was that Hayes sang both classical German songs and African American spirituals on the same program. Hayes’s sophisticated presentation belied the stereotype of Black men as simply loud spiritual singers or hyper-sexed comedic buffoons bellowing vernacular minstrel tunes to reaffirm white fantasies of Blacks as “Dey show got rhythm.” Locke’s “Roland Hayes, An Appreciation,” published in *Opportunity* in December 1923, appeared in print before “Impressions of Haifa” (1924), which describes his 1923 visit to Haifa and meeting the Guardian of the Faith, Shoghi Effendi (Bahá’í faith).⁸ Also appearing in print were comments in a local Vienna paper about Hayes’s concert: “Do not imagine that it is sufficient to be white to become an artist; try first to sing as well as this black man did” (Locke, “Roland Hayes: An Appreciation” 356). In addition to Hayes’s concerts in Vienna, Locke attended a winter semester of open academic lectures at the Vienna Internationale Hochschulkurse (language center) on anthropology and psychology.

Leaving Vienna, a northern European location that was a geographic universe away from Palestine, Locke traveled by train on 4 October to the seaport of Trieste Italy, and then boarded a steamer to Alexandria, Egypt, for a few days before taking off on another steamer to the island of Lesbos in Greece, and the seaports of Piraeus, Greece, and Chanak, Turkey, finally arriving in the ancient Byzantine capital of Constantinople (Istanbul), Turkey on 14 October. After two days in the ancient capital, he was off again by steamer and train to Haifa, remaining there as a guest of the Guardian of the Faith until early November. Possibly, fascination with wonders of the new nation of Turkey and a recently independent Egypt were enough of an attraction for any traveler, but Locke’s interest conjoined tourist sentiments with a spiritual mission—a pilgrimage. Locke writes in the “Impressions of Haifa” what he sees: “Mount Carmel, already casting shadows, was like a dark green curtain behind us and opposite was a gorgeous crescent of hills so glowing with color—gold, sapphire, amethyst as the sunset colors changed—and in between the mottled emerald of the sea, and the gray-toned house-roofs of Haifa.”⁹

From his senior thesis and his doctoral dissertation on, Locke was a consistent secularist and racial eliminativist—the category of race for Locke was pernicious, and categories as such are fundamentally unstable. How can

he make compatible treating religious objects as only artistic productions sourced from a given cultural milieu and simultaneously have religious faith in a way that suggests that at least Bahá'í religious objects are to be understood as sacred?¹⁰ What type of faith distinguishes a pilgrim's belief in a religion from a secular physics scholar's faith that theoretical terms exist? There can be no direct evidence, for example, that a vacuum exists. Any effort to measure a space where a vacuum is alleged to exist destroys the vacuum if it exists; instruments used to measure or contain prevent the possibility of empirical direct evidence of an actual vacuum. We know that our accompanying theories about vacuums will change, and consequently, faith that the property "vacuum" exists is the type of faith required for physicists. The more we look at the universe, the more faith in theoretical terms is required because it seems as if what we sometimes find was considered impossible the day before it is found.¹¹ Assume, at least for the purpose of this argument, that both the religious pilgrim and the physics scholar share the same kind of faith understood as belief in that which cannot be confirmed by evidence. Assume further that it is other criteria they use (e.g., revelation vs. experimental results) to distinguish their approaches to what exists. The kind of faith involved in being a secularist or religionist and also rejecting racialism, ethnocentricity, and colonialism cannot be—I would like to believe—the same kind of faith that is involved in maintaining religiously fueled racism, ethnocentricity, and colonialism. If what I would like to believe is wrong and there is nothing cognitively different in these forms of faith, that is, if normal human valuative modalities (i.e., cognitively *sui generis*) make it common for faithfulness to be marshaled by both violence workers and pacifists (*circa*, the same for the religionist and the physics scholar), is there something philosophical that can distinguish the two? I became bedeviled by this question during my travels around Israel in May of 2023.

The divide between the faith endemic to the theology of religionists and the type of faith endemic to secular thought is arguably a strained divide. There is no world where religionist and secular atheist sit on opposite sides, clearly causing separate types of behavior. There is no common religion among the populations that produced most of the weapons used not just in state-to-state wars or civil actions, but in genocide. I juxtapose religiously motivated faith and the type of faith common to secular thought as a way of thinking about "faith" in each separate arena and what they might or might not share.

What kind of faith is it that could make its home among a population that produces, sells, or uses weapons for racially, ethnically, nationally, or religiously fueled genocide, religious or otherwise? Nearly all the weapons

used in all twentieth-century genocides were made in just a few countries: Germany, France, the United States, Russia, and China. An all too short and brief recount of genocides may help convey a sense of the widespread world of genocide: 1904–1907 German genocide of Herero and Nama, Namibia; Darfur, Sudan, 2023; Ardamata, Misterei, Geneina massacre, all of which targeted Masalit civilians; genocide of Yazidis by the Islamic State, Syria, 2015; Effacer le tableau, Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2002, Mbuti people, or Bambuti; Rwandan genocide, Tutsi, 1994; Bosnia, Srebrenica massacre, Muslims, 1995; genocide of Isaacs or “Hargeisa Holocaust,” Somali, 1994; Guatemalan genocide, Mayan people, 1980, “Operation Sophia”—a fitting name to denote the influence of philosophy; Bamileke genocide, Cameroon, where French pilots in 1960 used at least 43,363 incendiary cartridges of 7.5 mm against civilians in Cameroon. None of the populations of the countries where the above genocides occurred produced a single bullet.

Does the deep structure of religious faith necessarily support metaphysical absolutism? Is there something philosophical that can help pinpoint features embedded in the deep structure of faith that are not entrapped in absolutism, that is, kinds of faith? The debate between al-Ghazali (c. 1056–1111) and Averroes (c. 1126–1198) regarding the nature of philosophers and their relationship to appropriate faith provides a clue to the deep structure of faith.

Al-Ghazali’s 1090s *Incoherence of the Philosophers* was right. Averroes’s 1095 criticism of al-Ghazali, in *The Incoherence of The Incoherence*, failed. In addition, Averroes’s 1180s *The Decisive Treatise on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy* was wrong. If “philosophy” means the branch of knowledge that discovers laws of necessity—for example, the law of contradiction—then there is no “God” that is omnipotent, if the laws of necessity are true. That is one reason why al-Ghazali claimed that philosophers were necessarily unbelievers because they believed in the existence of the law of necessity, which thereby means God is a slave to those laws—so to humanity. The “impossible” is not in God’s power and the “necessary” means just that, without remainder. One way of framing the problem is this: either faith entails believing in the impossible, contrary to necessary laws, or one fails to have the requisite “faith” to count as sufficiently “religious” in al-Ghazali’s sense. Al-Ghazali argues for a certain orthodoxy of faith that requires the affording of unlimited and unimaginable agency to a deity.

Tertullian (c. 155/160–220) is credited with saying “*Credo quia absurdum (est)*” (I believe because it is absurd); however, what he actually said may be better interpreted as “It is certain, because impossible.” What is important about Tertullian’s expression, given that it has a long history of

misinterpretations, is that he is accredited with what has become considered an epistemically unwarranted approach to belief. If it is absurd, it *ipso facto* should not be believed. However, absurdity is not a bane for the warrant of a belief if one accepts its authority in a way that says it is not understandable through normal reason or normal reason is said to allow absurdity. If so, then it is just a matter of choosing which absurdity one prefers without criteria that determines which one to accept. Any criteria that gives warrant to an absurd claim can have no way of selecting between competing absurd claims because any criterion is subject to infinite reductions and a slippery slope. Consequently, it is not surprising that al-Ghazali became a mystic.

A contradiction means that for all, and each and every, 'x' at time *t* and space *q*, that exists (where existence means a given stable location of presence affording agency of any kind), there is no particular 'x' that is not a member. If God created contradictions, that would itself be a contradiction, that is, an 'x' that is simultaneously a 'not x.' If there is a universe where this is true, then there is more than one universe and the two are incompatible; nothing fits in both. Al-Ghazali arguably realized that there was no way a person could be a philosopher on the above definition of philosophy and be religious when that means having faith in an Abrahamic God (i.e., monotheistic, omnipotent, omnipresent.) Being "religious" for Averroes and al-Ghazali required a faith that accepts the idea that the logically and naturally impossible is to be believed. Al-Ghazali and Averroes had exposed a central feature of the deep structure of metaphysical faith: *belief in that which violates laws of necessity*. In the following, I consider the reality of faith, metaphysical and otherwise, in the arenas of genocide.

I.

Parochial compassion—that is, care for a particular kind and simultaneously lacking care for others—and metaphysical faith are bedfellows. The French explorer, Alexis de Tocqueville, is an example. Between 1831 and 1832, he toured America, and one of his aphorisms regarding governance and liberty was "[d]espotism may govern without faith, but liberty cannot." He was wrong. Despotism rules just fine with faith-based justifications. And liberty can exist just fine without anyone relying on metaphysical faith. Alexis de Tocqueville, like his fellow French and Belgian Huguenots-tourist-con-colonial settlers in South Africa, only thought about themselves and their kind. The absolute massive killings of everyone from the Aztecs to nearly every native Indian population, let alone the enslavement of Africans, nowhere appears

in de Tocqueville as tragic realities made possible by the liberty and the killing technologies of the Americans. All Indigenous Tasmanians are dead. A population gets to insist on Indigenous rights and entitlements having lost to “the Other” and being placed in the unenviable position of needing to insist. Huguenots are another example, as they were able to form a settler colony, massacre Africans, colonize, amass tremendous wealth for themselves and their progeny, and even create their own language, Afrikaans. The despots de Tocqueville thought about in Europe subjected their own populations, but all the European despots and common citizens cared less about “the Other,” the enslaved and colonized, that is, *eo ipso* barbarian and heathen who were perceived as raiders and terrorists, all unworthy of life, including their children—ancillary casualties, at best. Populations considered barbarians and heathens are the “Other” in a way far worse than unwanted and despised affiliates of the ruling European classes—the barbarians and heathens are eternally irredeemable and never due compassion save as disposable pets.

William James’s *pluralism* in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) and *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909) is of no use here in this world. Absolutism and extremism are not susceptible to meliorism or compromise, contrary to Wayne Viney’s hopes in *William James’s Pluralism: An Antidote for Contemporary Extremism and Absolutism*. The desire for religious pluralism has been around for at least as long as religions themselves. In this real world, parochialism is in no way inclined to negate itself. If some religion faiths can be well described as a form of monism because they consider some form of transcendental phenomenon a unified reality, and “monism usually treats the world as an illusion.” then it follows that those forms of religious faith are contrary to the natural heterogeneity of experience, that is, the natural reality of religious pluralism in the world (James, *Some Problems* 139). However, religious monism has worked exceedingly well to make the killing of non-believers considered by the faithful erroneous, illusory, or tangential to the value of maintaining belief in the value a sovereign transcendental reality of that faith, not genocide.

The racialized/political image of the sovereignty, as defined by Mbembe, is “[t]he perception of the existence of the ‘other’ as an attempt on my life, as a mortal threat or absolute danger whose biophysical delimitation would strengthen my life potential and security.”¹² When the very existence of “the Other” is understood as a threat to my existence, especially if they also are understood as the embodiment of a faith considered inimical, practical measures are warranted. One way to see this is well-described by Sealey: “[I]f by ‘sovereignty’ we mean a general sense of self-ownership for the sake of self-authority

(control from within and not from without), then a right to self-possession becomes a right to kill what undermines that self-possession.”¹³ This is a form of necropolitics: “[I]n our contemporary world, weapons are deployed in the interest of maximally destroying persons and creating *death-worlds*, that is, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to living conditions that confer upon them the status of *living dead*.”¹⁴ The unbelievers for al-Ghazali are an ontological kind. A common feature of all representative heuristics is the marshaling of ontological kinds of stereotypes, for example, the stereotype that all Black males are sexual predators; all women are intellectually inferior to men; all Palestinians are terrorists; all Jews are cheap; and all Americans are greedy. It is this cognitive feature that helps form a common conceptual feature of those everyday persons that become evil—the agents of genocide.¹⁵ Conceptions of the “Other” and sovereignty are forms of representative heuristics, for example, conceiving groups as a ubiquitous kind—a feature of cognition that is a necessary feature of normal thinking. Oppositional “Others” are in no way inclined to convene toward mutual appreciation or credence. Arguably, “Othering” has been a feature of the real world when communities have practiced genocide, engaged in settler colonialism, and promoted nationalism (religious and otherwise.) In more than one case, good incomes, ownership of valuable assets, occupied land, and security are resources enjoyed by such communities—for example, contemporary Germany, Tasmania, Austria, South Africa, and Israel. Those that make and sell advanced weapons and associated technologies and practice genocide and settler colonialism may live in the same place as metaphysical faith. Whatever terrorism that can be laid at the feet of secular experience as a contributing source, metaphysical faith is arguably a source with no less of a trail of terror. Secular atheists to devout religionists equally share the cognitive feature of representative heuristics—the “Other” is generalized as stable ontological kinds with *sui generis* unadulterated features. Is there something about Locke’s faith, if anything, that distinguishes his kind of faith from those with religious faith who are inclined to commit genocide?

II.

I will explore Locke’s form of faith by considering various expressions of his faith. In 1909, Locke and Pixley I. Seme were editors of the Oxford student journal *Cosmopolitan*.¹⁶ Seme was a student working on a degree in law at Oxford and eventually one of three founders of the African National Congress, South Africa, describing himself in 1912 as a “Zulu, full-blooded.”¹⁷

Locke had presented formal discussion before the Cosmopolitan Club on the topic and eventually managed to reconcile his deep commitment to cosmopolitanism with a commitment to promote African American culture; its promotion, although cloaked in the garb of race, was essentially a cultural project promoting universally meritorious traits he deemed to be created by African American culture. Persevering against racist slights at Oxford, Seme and Locke might have found a place of respite within the conceptual scene of cosmopolitanism ideals of undifferentiated humanity, given that eventually, they would shed its cloak and promote Native and Negro rights. In his intellectually fertile years at Oxford, Locke also authored the concept of “cultural pluralism” during a conversation with Horace Kallen, a concept that Kallen would later help popularize, but he also rejected the “fact-value” distinction by the time he wrote his 1918 doctoral dissertation, a view he would repeat in later life. “Values and facts were not neatly separable but rather were inextricably intertwined. . . . [T]here are no facts without the values of a historical subject, so too were there no values without facts.”¹⁸ Values are not unwanted additions to viewing reality but rather, reality is conveyed and formed through values. One reason we need moral imperatives is not because there is some ultimate foundation of pure truth-giving rules, but because they are functionally necessary for communal life, preferably based on a consensus reached through agreement. Thus, Locke was adamant about the need for cultural pluralism, including religious plurality, as well as the need for a cosmopolitanism that respected diversity and eschewed racialism.¹⁹ Neither Locke nor Seme lived to see an independent South Africa or a world where religious or cultural communities refrain from participating in genocides or maintaining racialism.

All settler colonies receive substantive financial support from foreign capital, for example, Tasmania from English, French, and German companies; and Rhodesia from Belgian companies. Tremendous benefit and wealth accrue to the financing home. The Belgian government can well afford to send Zimbabwe an apology for its past terrors—no barrels of diamonds have been returned; the British government can well help afford to pay for a museum that houses the artifacts of the Tasmanians, given that all the land and its wealth are now in the hands of British, Irish, and Scottish descendants. So much for the faithful settler existing in an isolated world unencumbered by the handmaiden of death that pays for the concrete streets where they pray.

The Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have a long history of responsibility for genocides, acquiescing and cooperating with genocidal regimes, and practicing or supporting the practice of slavery.²⁰

The Israel government, for example, approved the sale of their drones and other weapons to Azerbaijan, knowing they were being used to massacre Armenians. The Bahá'í faith is the only major Abrahamic faith without a demonic trail of murder, slavery, torture, and the ruthless stealing of land. The sacred texts of the Bahá'í faith are the only texts of a major Abrahamic faith that do not tell the faithful how to treat slaves, rejoice in the military defeat of non-believers, pillage, ravage, destroy livelihoods of sinners, lie, and deceive.²¹ One way to think about genocide and community is this: The faithful pacifist settler colonists and those who commit genocide give money to the same bank account and invest in the same casket-making company owned by a settler. The same bank account or taxes from the casket-making company may be used to pay for building roads, buildings, gun factories, and hospitals in the name of the same church, synagogue, or mosque for which the pacifist is a paragon of piety and upstanding member of the faith. The pacifist and soldier of genocide can share the same metaphysical faith—it says believe (and pay tidings or donate to Doctors Without Borders) despite the apparent reality of killed babies, ineffectual platitudes, and benevolent goods that fail to end the need for benevolent goods. Arguably, the theologians of the genocidal Abrahamic faiths are theologians that even if they condemn their fellow thieves and murderers, they remain supportive members of the same community but with prayers, apologies, and humanitarian aid that never ends the sources of misery. Such theologians are like missionaries who condemn the violence of their religious affiliates and—as in the case where Cecil Rhodes, ruler of colonial Rhodesia who presided over diamond mines and farmhouses with fences made of the skulls of Africans—come to benefit from the wealth produced by brutalized natives. In effect, humanitarian-oriented Abrahamic theologians are members of the same community (i.e., sharing banks, currencies, investments)—albeit, with radically different intentions, roles, and behaviors—as their fellow religionist violence workers. (Arguably, secular communities can be seen as cauldrons of communities no less burdened with similar violent heritages than are Russian-type Gulags or Cambodian type Pol Pot genocides.) The point is not that all community members are morally culpable (they are not), but that the actual religious community network entangles resources unintentionally.

The way the Bahá'í treat race/ethnicity/tribe will possibly provide a clue to why Locke was so enamored in 1923. One feature of modernity, of which Locke was clearly a member, is its tendency to create increased efficiencies through standardization of everything from measurements, weights, naming, roads, airports, transportation, hairstyles, and dress. Arguably, making “Black”

and “white” ubiquitous racial categories is a neat way to sneak in a subliminal belief that all dark-skinned persons with any ancestral background from sub-Saharan Africa are inferior. Each Black person, by association, inherits a being and a biological inescapable kind. Even efforts to fight racism or uphold respect for “Black” life unintentionally work to keep existing categories in vogue and assure the standardization of status forms. No matter how effective anti-Black racism happens to be, “Black” as a racial designation is structurally (by definition) a descendent category—only white/white mating makes a white person and anyone/Black mating makes a Black person. The problem I am pointing to is not that race is an unneeded socially constructed category or misguided biological category, as draconian categories reinforced by social practices, or that its structure makes unalterable well-formed social tropes and connotations—but that the status of “white” as superior is reinforced as a matter of grammar—the deep structure of antonyms and synonyms making “white” the anti-form of “black.” Standardization of racial hierarchical statuses keeps marching on alongside the standardization of road width, concrete texture, and plug types for electric car chargers.

The Black/white divide affords differential statuses at the level of deep structure. *If there is no room for race or ontological kinds due deference, there is no grammar that needs fixing.* Locke was a cosmopolitan and racial eliminativist. Unlike the Abrahamic faiths that dominated a good deal of the cultural work for which he championed, which used racial categories, there was no need to decolonize the Bahá’í faith at the level of grammar or its substratum. There cannot be what is necessary for faith to be compatible with motivations for genocide—sovereign selves nor ontological racialized or social kinds due deference. The Bahá’í, as a matter faith as directed by its founder, whom they believe was anointed by God, do not allow pure ontological kinds of race/ethnicity/tribe as a function of the faith. At the very least, Locke could live in a conceptual, cognitive, and emotional space, if just for a moment, that was unlike the world of the Viennese. This space came at a cost.

Locke was a pilgrimaging tourist, watching, with a loving gaze, the exotic and embrewing wellsprings of spiritual serenity. Vienna in October of 1923 was a young republic, the Republic of Austria, replete with internal conflict, and not just a mecca of classical music paid for by the largest of robber barons from the former empire; Hitler’s Nazi party would attempt the failed Munich Putsch *coup d’état* of the German government in November of 1923 while Locke was in Palestine. Palestine was under the vicious rule of the British. Locke saw gray-toned house-roofs of Palestinians in 1923, and I saw gray brick buildings and red-tiled roofs of Israeli settlers.

Metaphysical faith may have told the Christian pilgrims I saw in the old city of Jerusalem not to ask who lived there and attended the churches they visited before settlers and soldiers removed them. This is why Locke, on his pilgrimage, was unconcerned with the plight of the Palestinians living under British Mandate rules: faith, on a pilgrimage, blinds. It is not a ubiquitous good. Possibly, that is why it is often defined as unmitigated, that is, a source of inspiration, solace, strength, and so on, and not as the source of cognitive failure. The way it is defined hides its real conceptual dangers. The religiously “faithful” characteristically feel full of soulful dedication, as long as they are not burdened with the need to limit their enthusiasm. What, then, is faith?

III.

“Faith” is a noun. “Faith” is not a queer property. There is no world where theory, nouns, and adverbs neatly refer to, pick out, or point to neatly bounded raw reality. The referential theory of language is false, and logical positivism is, at best, a theory by delusional philosophers who want a nearly perfect system of formalized propositional truths without content that matters to actual corporeal beings.²² In addition, the desire for our cognitive world to give us a *sui generis* picture of reality is an evidentialist, *qua* empiricist, wish-dream and a theist delusion. These theories proceed as if “faith” is something we could do without. Faith is nothing special. It refers to a broad range of possible ways to accord the impossible and the unknown a place of reverence. It is always the case that we grant faith to the simple speculations in our very best explanations, descriptions, definitions, and discordance between the diachronic and the synchronic. There is no reasoning strategy that will give us the kind of “truth” that justifies absolutism that sustains metaphysical faith, let alone some mystical pipeline running from a queer universe to sentient beings. It is not just that such truths do not exist, but that unmitigated faith circumvents even reason and posits itself in a cesspool of *conscientia* so that the pilgrim, like the violence worker, can ignore the dead bodies or humiliated people whom they walk past. This form of faith is unwarranted.

“Faith,” as defined in a way that says it is warranted to believe in the impossible absolutely, that is, belief in that which is contrary to necessity, and “faith” as defined in a way that says it is warranted to be in awe at the unexplained, wondrous, and the impossible as heuristic or functional (like theoretical entities) are arguably incompatible. I accept this incompatibility. Faith always portends the seemingly impossible. The first view of faith and its accompanying traditions is misguided. The way al-Ghazali and Averroes

framed the problem is misguided because it hinges on assuming that “faith” is defined as belief in the logically impossible in a way that leaves no room for uncertainty about what is necessary or impossible. That is, it assumes the laws of nature are sufficiently known and logical structures are well-defined. When a law is well-established or logical formation well-structured, the problem as framed presumes that this is enough to allow us to ignore the metaphysical moorings of the problem—the “faith” leap.

The first view of faith (faith as accepting the impossible and rejecting the necessary) says murders may be warranted or at least tolerable, without giving warrant to rejecting the religion, because the murders happened for unknowable reasons or in accordance with an unknowable ecumenical plan. This allows you to leap into a cauldron of excuses. The second view of faith cannot make such a leap of faith. There is no necessary reason for genocide. There is no unknowable God plan nor unseen and unfathomable master plan that warrants acquiescing in genocide. Theocratic government-sanctioned theft, killings, and colonial settlers are just that—theocratic governments that sanction theft, killings, and colonial settlements. However, faith as awe has acceptable limits. Its leap is a leap away from the abyss and the asylum. The laws of nature are just that—necessary. Nothing is mysterious about the fact that even *the laws of physic lie*—perfect knowledge of unchanging laws is just not something we need desire. When we make an “inference to the best explanation,” that inference is not confirmation of an unchanging natural law matching an unchanging natural fact; laws of nature happen within a context, and its associated states are subject to change, or at least our awareness of associated states is subject to change.²³ Bodies fall 32 feet per second in a context of an earthly gravitational field, not outside that context. There is no gravity in a perfect vacuum, *eo ipso*, there is no law of gravity working. All natural laws work within, not outside, a context. Nothing makes laws of necessity a bane, save a misguided desire to be truly sovereign.

At the time of this writing, approximately 31,000 Palestinians were killed by one of the world’s most efficient military nation-states targeting buildings, schools, hospitals, houses, and cars—babies, pregnant women, young children, boys, fathers, grandfathers, cab drivers, cooks, and farmers killed—all in the name of making “us” safe (parochial care justifies), the same reason given by the genociders in Rwanda, Cambodia, and Srebrenica. Approximately 1,200 Israelis have been killed by comparatively inefficient and ill-trained combatants. Human Rights Watch, the World Court, the Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention, and a litany of international agencies have found the state of Israel guilty of genocide. Genocide makes physical room for settlers to inhabit the homes, gardens, and holy sites of the vanquished.

The religiously faithful who object to these genocides too often mouth the same phrases—our “faith” does not condone, but we remain committed to the same religion. The asylum located on the corner stays afloat because the owners meet, vote, and make sure the taxes are paid, despite disagreements among managers and owners about how the patients should be treated. Faith sits on both the side of the killers and the side of those that object.

I argue that there is no solution. Leave the asylum, close the prison. There is no hope within the dead world of existing religionist paradigms that accompany metaphysical faith. All accept belief in the impossible, monsters of one sort or another—absurdity, with a litany of sagacious sayings—to grant authority to some transcendental or metaphysical Being or sphere. Justifying genocide on the basis that it is one’s fellow religionists’ mistake, leaving faith in the religion untouched, is no better than an atheist justifying genocide on the basis that it was a necessary but unfortunate consequence of the liberation struggle, leaving dedication to the agents of genocide—class, dialectic unfolding, evolution, or a sacrosanct social kind—untouched. Faith as unmitigated gives warrant for Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of Israel, a theocracy, and Pol Pot, the former Prime Minister of Democratic Kampuchea, a communist nation, to be allowed, if not innocence, appreciation but not absolute condemnation by the faithful.

Al-Ghazali was right. Necessity and faith (metaphysical faith) fail to be compatible or, in his sense, it is incoherent to believe in both simultaneously. There are religious views such as those of Thomas Aquinas where God cannot contradict logically necessary or essential truths. However, these sorts of excusatory views allow a monotheistic God to remain, if not omnipotent, worthy of worship. Such views are not ones that provide the foundational home of orthodoxy; they are just the choir to the pulpit. Aquinas cannot escape what al-Ghazali made plain: if there is necessity, whether logical or natural, belief in an agent that can violate necessary laws and conditions requires some form of absolutist faith. A pragmatist can believe in the impossible as a form of religious faith, contrary to necessary truths, but such beliefs are not held as foundational, contrary to al-Ghazali’s view of faith.²⁴ Locke, consequently, can arguably be a religiously faithful Bahá’í as one who favors their principles, but he need not even have an opinion, let alone accept, foundation contentions, for example, that Bahá’u’lláh was the last messenger of God. So, too, can William James be a religious pluralist without committing to belief in any particular religious faith.

Al-Ghazali was wrong to take a leap of faith into a mysticism fueled by metaphysical faith. Instead, he should have leapt into evidentialism, because it makes possible, even if limited, the seeing of necessary truths. But that would

have meant the end of absolutism and thereby orthodoxy. Faith and loyalty to a sacrosanct racial, ethnic, or religious kind provide credence and sanctuary if in doubt, and when not in doubt, encouragement and confirmation of worthiness. Faith should be mitigated. Faith, then, to be warranted, should have deep limitations. At bottom, the deep structure of religious faith, unlike secular faith, is an unmitigated metaphysical commitment, and it embraces the impossible and eschews the necessary. Faith in the naturally impossible and faith that blinds to the obviously false should be rejected. Given that neither logic, reason, nor evidential proceedings are bereft of the ability to be without limitations and may well misguide, there is no reason to fall into the trap of faith-based ignorance, willful self-deceit, and titular and ancillary support for the egregious conditions of slavery, settler colonialism, or genocide.

Assume that faith has no husband, wife, nor same-sex partner. Arguably, faith is cognitively *sui generis*. That is why secular and religiously based faiths can well be the source of violence of any kind. In this sense, faith is a proper noun and names a thing. The thing has a family of traits, none of which are married to each other. It has no teleology. No eschatology. No evolution. No form of dialectic reason such that it resolves conflicts between the starving and the greedy, the billionaire religionists and the poor. No psychiatric company closes because it cures all of its patients so they can live a normal life. It makes its patients dependent on them and, when they aren't, their cure is not to be found inside the psychiatric ward. No American prison has ever been used as a model prison to be emulated by others because all of its former inmates were rehabilitated and there was no recidivism of its former prisoners. American prisons fail to fix. Analogously, if we are stuck with some persons needing confinement, just as we are stuck with needing some kind of faith, the kind we choose is crucial. Abandon metaphysical faith.

The criteria of justification differ for metaphysical and secular faith in a way that makes the kind of faith involved substantively different in kind. Secular and religionist have both harbored genocide, but the criteria of justification for faith is at least separate. It is not just that secular faith cannot appeal to authority to justify. And it should not, although it often does appeal to queer properties. Secular faith cannot accept without evidentially associated reason, which absurd hopes and beliefs in the impossible or seemingly unlikely we choose. Choose, if no more than by the dint of languages—use of nouns, we must. But even if I am wrong, and there is no difference between the kind of criteria allowed by religionist and secularist in the justification each commonly give warrant, there should be a difference. That is, the theoretical difference *should* fit a cognitive difference. This is where ethics and

logic break down. There are no ethical principles nor moral sentiments that can tell us, *tout court*, what leap of faith to take, let alone whether to have a religious faith of any kind. There is no set of reasoning methods, *reductio ad absurdum*, utility calculations, or semantics that can tell us whether to eat cats, pigs, chickens, or bugs, or to be vegetarians. Killing sentient is a necessary feature of human sustenance. What kind of killing, why, and how all matter.

I am just a tourist, watching, in bemused contempt and disdain for religious, racial, and ethnic segregation. I am not enamored by the exotic nor smitten with high regard for mystics as wise vases of eternal truth, let alone anointed corporal beings. Neither African sages nor decolonized liberation theologians receive my awe. No new world do they portend, nor is a new world portended by theocracy and its segregated communities that I am walking through. It is the world of religious, racial, and ethnic “Othering” that I know I am traveling within. I do not need the solace of conceptual, cognitive, or emotional spaces that cosmopolitanism and the Bahá’í faith provide.

All forms of pragmatism place emphasis on the importance of personal experience to help inform warranted belief. Arguably, the fear of death and the exegesis of daily life motivate persons to need religious faith, metaphysical and otherwise. And it is certain that stalwart devotees of religions have provided helpful sources of motivation and solace. I watched women, for example, crawl on their hands and knees a quarter-mile up a hill to worship and seek solace from the Goddess of the Heavenly Mother (Ma Zu), Goddess of Mercy, and the Goddess of Sui-Wei at the Thean Hou Temple, Kula Lumpur, Malaysia, in 2024, before traveling to Vienna to walk in Locke’s footsteps by attending a concert at the Mittlerer Konzerthaus-Saal, the same concert hall wherein Locke heard Roland Hayes in 1923. And I certainly could have used solace in the many times I have faced and seen death—in Gikongoro, Rwanda, in 1999, I saw nine railroad cars of bodies that included some of the 250,000 bodies—which included those of pregnant women, young boys, elderly women—from the 1994 genocide of Tutsis just in Gikongoro. For six years, I witnessed the pain and hardship of an immediate family member. I cried daily and searched for any solution to defeat their breast cancer. Death won. Death and pain have been my companions far too often. However, personal tragedy and our need for solace are no warrant for metaphysical faith. It has a history of being the practical source of terror, and solace can be accomplished through far less egregious sources.

Locke was fully aware of the legacy of Abrahamic faiths. He knew that what once were holy sites, such as the Pantheon in Rome where Apollo, Juno,

Diana, or Neptune were worshiped by those with deep and abiding faith, are labeled as sites formerly frequented by pagan (thus, inferior) worshippers. He knew that there are countless numbers of holy sites around the world that are reduced to mere tourist destinations. Yet, despite history's trail of failed religions, he remained faithful.

Locke, James, and I do not share the same kind of faith. Locke's form of pragmatism avoids the type of faith that is compatible with giving warrant to genocide because his cosmopolitanism and Bahá'í's racial eliminativism creed are not entrapped in conceptions of pure ontological kinds. This avoids al-Ghazali's contention that philosophers are inherently religious unbelievers, lacking the kind of metaphysical faith needed to be religious believers, which I contend, is the type of faith that lends itself to justifying genocide. However, I always carry a conceptual switchblade in my pocket when I visit with religionists, because I know that one might kill me and the other offer a prayer and an apology at my funeral, where both have investment interests in the casket-making company that supplied the casket wherein I lay. Metaphysical faith should be rejected, especially when conjoined with the representative heuristics of "Othering" because that has been a unique source of making genocide possible.

I stand at the top of a holy garden, Terraces of the Shrine of the Báb, above the Shrine of Báb and just left of the Bahá'í World Centre, dedicated to the promotion of world peace, co-respect for cultural and religion diversity, racial eliminativism, and democratic governance, located on the biblical Mount Carmel, a World Heritage site in Haifa, once Palestine, now Israel. A place for solace among flowers, trees, and a majestic view of the Mediterranean Sea. I hope that it will not befall the fate of the Pantheon in Rome. Possibly, in 3034, the bedroom of the last Catholic Pope, favored by God, in the Vatican, Rome will be visited by as many tourists as the bedroom of Puyi, Son of Heaven, last emperor of the Qing dynasty in the Forbidden City, Beijing, China, in 2024. Or, in 3034—over a thousand years from now—at the old city of Jerusalem, a tourist will be able get their picture taken in rented costumes in front of the Wailing Wall in a Zoroastrian Paghdi (a majestic headgear worn by Zoroastrians at a wedding and other special social event) and a Panām (mouth covering to prevent flies from entering and unintentionally killing them while praying), or a Hasidic kolpik or spodik made of synthetic material and not actual dead animal fur, just as tourists now have their pictures taken wearing Roman togas at the Pantheon. I lament now, and were I to exist in the future, I would lament the lost sites that allowed solace. Holy sites, and the devotees who grace their shadows, are due respect.

Not replication. Secular mitigated faith works well without religionist meta-physical faith. Would it were so for the whole of humanity.

NOTES

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1. This is the second in a three-part series of Requiems. See Harris and Molesworth, "Requiem for a Garden" 97–105.

2. Locke, *Problem of Classification*.

3. Logical categories for Dewey emerge from experience. Even logical forms, among other features, for Dewey "arise out of ordinary transactions; they are not imposed upon them from on high or from an external and *a priori* source. . . . [T]hey regulate the proper conduct of the activities out of which they develop" (Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* 106). It is generic traits and components that shape experience; see, for the importance of experience and generic traits in pragmatist ethics, Pappas. See Locke's distancing himself from Perry and Dewey, in Locke, *Problem of Classification* 32–35; he relies heavily on Wilbur Urban and Christian von Ehrenfeld to defend the view that value categories are important.

4. I mean by "queer" that which is fundamentally unlike anything in the universe; unmeasurable or observable and inherently an agent that once known always motives; and that which is knowable unless there exists a special moral sense determining status and meaning but a sense that have no verifiable existence or verifiable way of measuring features of meaning. See what J. L. Mackie means in *Ethics*.

5. See Harris, "Rendering the Subtext" 279–89. I have argued that Locke was a classical pragmatist in this and other works: Harris and Molesworth, *Alain Locke: Biography*; Harris, *Philosophy of Alain Locke*; Harris, *Critical Pragmatism*.

6. Locke, "Roland Hayes: An Appreciation" 358.

7. These are some thoughts I had while at Mittlerer Konzerthaus-Saal: I could hear Wynton Marsalis play with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra in April 2023 at Mittlerer Konzerthaus-Saal. I went to hear a Beethoven concert at this same concert hall in June of 2024. No one wrote that Marsalis represented the race spirit proving itself worthy of high culture, even if they thought that it did; nor did anyone write that Marsalis would be key to changing provincialism and racist attitudes in Europe or America.

8. Locke, "Impressions of Haifa" 125–28 (reprinted 1926, 1928, 1930); see Stewart, *New Negro* 380–81; Harris and Molesworth, *Alain L. Locke: Biography* 391–92.

9. Locke, "Impressions of Haifa" 125.

10. I previously argued that Locke can be considered a "Bahá'í" because he expressed faith in the principles required by the Bahá'í, he lived his life and promoted those principles independent of whether he accepted the doctrinaire belief that Bahá'u'lláh was the last messenger of God as foretold by the Báb, Ali Muhammad, and anointed by God. I previously argued that Locke's critical pragmatism was sufficiently pluralist to allow for religious faith, but not dogmatism. See Harris, "Requiem for a Garden" 97–105.

11. Arguably, this is an instrumentalist approach to theoretical entities. However, it is still the case that a realist about theoretical entities will admit the reality that we often

discover new entities and dump previous items counted as real. See, for a discussion, Maxwell 181–92.

12. Mbembe 72.

13. See Sealey 9.

14. See Mbembe 72.

15. See Waller; Nelson.

16. Harris, “Cosmopolitanism” 181–92.

17. See Richard Rive and Tim Cousens, *Seme: Founder of the ANC* (Skotaville Publishers, 1991), p. 71. Also see P. Ka Isaka Seme, The Regeneration of Africa, *Journal of the Royal African Society*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1906, pp. 404–08.

18. Akam 157.

19. See Locke “Values and Imperatives” 312–33, where he criticizes other pragmatists who rely on the fact-value distinction, the efficacy of experimental scientific reasoning and Kantian type foundations.

20. See Hitchens.

21. See Hitchens.

22. See, for example, Whitehead and Russell.

23. See Cartwright.

24. Harris, *Philosophy of Alain Locke, Harlem Renaissance; Critical Pragmatism*; Harris and Molesworth, *Alain L. Locke: Biography*; Harris and Carter, *Philosophical Values*. Also see Stewart; and Molesworth.

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