



Philosophic Values and World Citizenship

Locke to Obama and Beyond

Edited by
Jacoby Adeshei Carter
and Leonard Harris

14. Oscar Njang, interview by Donald Addison; Oscar Njang, interview by the Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Nigeria, Lagos.
15. *Paris Talks* is a small book with talks by Abdu'l-Baha, son of the founder of the Baha'i Faith, Baha'u'llah.
16. *Ibid.*

***Philosophic Values and World Citizenship: Locke to Obama and Beyond.* Jacoby Adeshai Carter and Leonard Harris (eds.). Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010. 247 pp.**

ISBN 978-0-7391-4803-7 (hbk), \$90.00 (£57.95)

ISBN 978-1-4616-3403-4 (eBook), \$89.99 (£57.95)

Reviewed by **Christopher Buck**, Pennsylvania State University

Email: buckc@msu.edu

World Citizenship: Promise and Delivery

Philosophic Values and World Citizenship ('*World Citizenship*'), as the title indicates, aims at connecting the values philosophy of Alain Locke (1885–1954) and peers with the global ethic of world citizenship. To what extent does this volume deliver on its promise?

World Citizenship is effectively the proceedings volume of a 2008 conference of the Alain Locke Society held at George Washington University. This multi-author work succeeds in catapulting Locke into the limelight as a cosmopolitan, by showcasing Locke as an advocate of world citizenship, as no other previous publication on Locke has done. Indeed, prior to this, Locke, for the most part, had been frozen in time as the 1925 editor of *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, thus privileging Locke as a 'race man'. *World Citizenship* features Locke as a man of the human race.

In the 'Introduction' (xi–xvii), editors Jacoby Adeshai Carter and Leonard Harris rightly note that 'Locke's philosophy holds the universal and the particular in creative tension' (xiii). *World Citizenship* tautens this tension by maintaining a delicate balance between Locke's 'advocacy aesthetics' (xi) and 'his emphasis on emancipation' and 'transvaluation of values' (xii). The book is divided into three sections: 'Value' (1–73), 'Tolerance' (77–136) and 'Cosmopolitanism (139–233).' Each of these three parts opens with a short work or two by Locke.

In answer to the opening question, *World Citizenship* delivers on its promise, but not as nearly as coherently as a monograph might have, since the thirteen chapters (apart from Locke's five essays) are rather uneven. The reader 'listens in' on the 2008 conference of the Alain Locke Society, and is thereby a vicarious participant. Yet it is, after all, a colloquy of philosophers, who discourse in their own jargon, and are in conversation with each other. Some authors, more than others, are aware of their projected audience – their readers – which contributes to a certain unevenness of

treatment of the theme of 'world citizenship' and its value predicates, as might be expected. What follows is a guided tour of the book, from start to finish.

Part 1: 'Value' (1–73)

Part 1 begins with two essays by Alain Locke: 'Moral Imperatives for World Order' (1944) (1–2) and 'Unity Through Diversity: A Bahá'í Principle' (1932) by Alain Locke (2–5). Oddly, neither essay is given a proper citation, let alone an introduction. The same lack of citation holds true for another Locke essay published in this volume, 'World Citizenship: Mirage or Reality?' (1947) (139–45).

'Moral Imperatives for World Order' opens with these arresting words: 'Realism and idealism should be combined in striking for a world order' (1). Locke takes Christian 'salvation' to task for its limitations:

We must in the third place consider religion as having many ways leading to salvation. The idea that there is only one true way of salvation with all other ways leading to damnation is a tragic limitation to Christianity, which professes the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. How foolish in the eyes of foreigners are our competitive blind, sectarian missionaries! If the Confucian expression of a Commandment means the same as the Christian expression, then it is the truth also and should so be recognized. It is in this way alone that Christianity or any other enlightened religion can vindicate its claims to Universality; and so bring about moral and spiritual brotherhood. (2)

Locke spells out just what he means by his title: 'The moral imperatives of a new world order are an internationally limited idea of national sovereignty, a non-monopolistic and culturally tolerant concept of race and religious loyalties freed of sectarian bigotry' (2). Thus *World Citizenship* is off to a good start, with a global reordering predicated on reciprocity and mutuality of nations, races and religions.

The latter essay, 'Unity Through Diversity: A Bahá'í Principle' is the only major association between Alain Locke and the Baha'i Faith, which Locke embraced in 1918, the very same year that he was awarded his PhD in Philosophy from Harvard. Over the years, Leonard Harris has consistently drawn attention to Locke's predisposition to Baha'i values, which may be said to represent cosmopolitanism made sacred. Harris had previously anthologized this essay,¹ the most oft-quoted statement of which is this: 'What we need to learn most is how to discover unity and spiritual equivalence underneath the differences which at present so disunite and sunder us, and how to establish some basic spiritual reciprocity on the principle of unity in diversity' (3).

Not surprisingly, Locke's Baha'i identity is closeted throughout the rest of part 1 – indeed, from the volume as a whole – effectively shutting out Locke's Baha'i values from the analysis that follows. Thus, apart from the 'Unity Through Diversity' essay itself, the Baha'i dimension is singularly lacking, which subtracts a hermeneutical key in understanding Locke's outlook as a cosmopolitan. That said, this volume does some justice to Locke's philosophical contributions.

Rose Cherubin, in chapter 1, 'Culture and the *Kalos*: Inquiry, Justice, and Value in Locke and Aristotle' (7–19), discusses Locke 'at his most Greek' (7), looking at Locke's notion of 'culture' in light of Aristotle's concept of *kalos* ('beautiful' / 'noble'). Art is not only of intrinsic worth, in and of itself, but, in Locke's and Aristotle's conceptions of it, is strategically allied with 'beauty, justice, and the search for knowledge' which are 'mutually supportive' (17). Although not explicitly stated, the implication here – in connection with this volume's overarching theme of world citizenship – is that 'to pursue justice without inquiring after beauty or knowledge is self-defeating' (17).

Art, in contrast with the previous essay, may be 'beautiful', but not 'noble'. Erin Kealey, in chapter 2, 'Aesthetic Evaluations of Realist Drama' (21–29), talks about 'realist drama' without ever explicitly defining it. A typical metaphor for realist drama is holding up a mirror to humanity in order to reflect on itself, warts and all. The mirror itself can be grossly distorted, as in film propaganda. Kealey offers D. W. Griffith's 1915 epic, *Birth of a Nation*, as a technically superb work that supports, *inter alia*, the role of the Ku Klux Klan in protecting the prevailing social interests of the Deep South – such that the film, at once, is 'morally abhorrent' yet 'aesthetically beautiful' (24). In the case of *Birth of a Nation*, while its aesthetic mode was critically acclaimed, 'the real events that inspire the dramatic content' may be 'evaluated in a different mode that assigns a moral predicate, like right or wrong, or even a religious predicate, like good or evil' (25). This conflict of moral and aesthetic values can create the possibility of 'transvaluation' – which, after having an atypical emotional association with the object of value, is valuing that object in a different way. 'Aesthetic experiences', Kealey concludes, 'allow us to recognize values established by other modes' (28). Thus, according to Kealey, realist drama has the potential for establishing 'a space for personal and social transvaluation' (28). Again, while no connection with the book's theme of world citizenship is made, the implication is that drama can offer up new vistas for seeing values in a pluralistic light.

Grant Silva, in chapter 3, 'The Axiological Turn in Early Twentieth Century American Philosophy: Alain Locke and José Vasconcelos on Epistemology, Value, and the Emotions' (31–55), develops Locke's values axiology further, shifting the focus from persons to cultures, as 'patterns of valuation that are consistent across groups of people' (40). Silva compares Locke's theory of values with José Vasconcelos (1882–1959). Both were 'philosophical anthropologists' (31). Due to lack of space, this reviewer will skip over Silva's analysis of Vasconcelos, which occupies equal, if not greater space than his discussion of Locke.

Leonard Harris, in chapter 4, 'Conundrum of Cosmopolitanism and Race: The Great Debate between Alain Locke and William James' (57–73), presents a problematic or 'conundrum' that faced Oxford's Cosmopolitan Club when Locke, the first African American Rhodes Scholar, joined in 1907: '[H]ow is it possible to promote universalism, or common culture, and simultaneously promote local culture, or a particular racial, national or ethnic [*sic*: read 'ethnic'] culture?' (61). Harris then poses an interesting hypothetical colloquy of philosophers: 'Imagine that the Metaphysical Club inadvertently met the Cosmopolitan Club' (64).

Like Oxford's Cosmopolitan Club, Harvard's Metaphysical Club was cosmopolitan. In this mythical meeting of the Cosmopolitan and

Metaphysical Clubs, two of the Metaphysical Club's philosophers – [Oliver Wendell] Holmes and [Charles Sanders] Peirce – 'might not sit for dinner with Locke and Seme' (64). But the Clubs' leading pragmatists, Alain Locke and William James, would dine together and engage in philosophical discussion. Each had 'a deep dedication to a metaphysical pluralism that allowed James to be something of a religious mystic and Locke to sojourn with the B'há'i [*sic*: read 'Bahá'í'] faith and its brave insistence on racial egalitarianism' (64). For Locke, race is a social construct: 'Instead, therefore, of regarding culture as a product of race, race, by this interpretation, is regarded as itself a cultural produce' [*sic*: read 'product'] (70). Harris then contrasts Locke's 'Dynamic Theory of Value' with James's 'uniformitarian universalism' (66).

Part 2: 'Tolerance' (77–136)

Alain Locke, in 'A Functional View of Value Ultimates' (1945) (77–81) advocates a 'functionalist theory of value' for its ability to treat various values 'in terms of their interrelationships, guaranteeing a comparative and a more realistic type of value analysis' (77) that may lead 'toward a relativistic but not anarchic ethics, world view and religion' (81).

Greg Moses, in chapter 5, 'A Funtional [*sic*: read 'Functional'] Peace in *This World: Farmer and Locke on the Challenges of a Truly Post-War Hope*' (83–96), looks at the views of two professors of Howard University, Alain Locke and J. Leonard Farmer, who 'analyzed what would be needed to produce lasting peace after World War II' (83). Locke focused on democracy, while Farmer concentrated on Christianity. The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ had, in 1943, proposed a six-point peace platform (91). Out of this history, Moses grandly asks: 'Can laws of good will transcend the name of democracy? By introducing the ideal of peace on earth as the criterion that challenges symbol with value, could the symbols of Christianity and Democracy both discover that they cannot be the common denominators that they most desire to share?' (90). In answer, Farmer writes of both international and domestic peace among and within nations: 'The world cannot be saved until it is saved socially; and this social salvation must include all races and classes within each nation. Only this all-inclusive salvation of the world is the fullest expression of God' (94). Locke has stated likewise.

Arnold L. Farr, in chapter 6, 'Beyond Repressive Tolerance: Alain Locke's Hermeneutics of Democracy and Tolerance in Conversation with Herbert Marcuse and H. G. Gadamer' (97–110), after comparing discourses on tolerance by Marcuse, Gadamer and Locke, advocates adoption of Locke's methodology (in Farr's words) of 'objective comparison between different value systems,' which (in Locke's words) may serve as 'functional constants' to 'take scientifically the place of our outmoded categoricals' (109). It is true that Locke proposed judging social values on a comparative basis in quest of functionally equivalent, and objectively identical, standards – which common denominators Locke variously termed 'culture-cognates' or 'culture-correlates', fostering, in turn, 'reciprocity' (a real exchange of values), even leading to a 'limited cultural convertibility' whereby a nation, or group of nations, might selectively adopt a universal value.² Locke's methodology of 'functional constants' to pragmatically

arrive at common denominators that may serve as verifiable universals in operationalizing world peace, while praised in theory, was never put into practice.

Christopher J. Collins, in chapter 7, 'Multicultural Education, Metaphysics, and Alain Locke's Post-Metaphysical Alternative' (111–22), evaluates 'Locke's philosophy of education, informed by his value theory' (112) in conversation with Allan Bloom's and Richard Rorty's respective theory's of multiculturalism within the university curriculum. For Locke, the university is a forum for the critical study of values (117–18). The implication here, as it relates to the book as a whole, is that multicultural education cultivates world citizenship.

A. Todd Franklin, in chapter 8, 'Unlikely Allies: Nietzsche, Locke, and Counter-Hegemonic Transformation of Consciousness' (123–36), presents Friedrich Nietzsche, a 'caustic critic of democracy and all other ideologies of human equality' (123), and Alain Locke as 'unlikely allies who employ variations of a common method' (123) to counter value absolutism, which both philosophers regarded as a social pathology. While Nietzsche stressed the importance of individuality as the key to cultural health (124–5), Locke stressed the importance of mutual respect (125–6). Both used 'aesthetic means and methods to induced [*sic*: read 'induce'] cultural transformation' (134). While Nietzsche's antidote to Christian dogmatism was outright contempt, Locke aimed at fostering empathy, which meant artistically advocating satire, irony, social protest and social analysis as 'good medicines ... against social poison' (131).

Part 3: 'Cosmopolitanism' (139–233)

Alain Locke, in 'World Citizenship: Mirage or Reality?' (1947) (139–45), is a welcome publication of this previously unpublished essay. This speech shows Locke at his finest. Here's an excerpt:

For in the realm of religion and morals must come one of its chief uses and vindications. ... Although there has been considerable organizational initiative and effort in world-wide religious rapprochement, there still is little internal renouncing on the part of religious bodies of their sectarian parochialisms and their mutually conflicting claims. Yet here obviously is the crux of the whole issue: if the brotherhood of man is an inescapable corollary of the 'fatherhood of God' principle, so also is the confraternity of religions. This enlightened religion must learn – that the realistic way to become a world religion is not through world pretensions and world rivalry, but through promoting world-wide peace and understanding and moral cooperation of all sorts on a world scale. On that outcome hangs a goodly part of any real ideological peace, since religion, for all its universalistic claims, instead of being a universalizer has so often been the prime weapon of partisan strife and limited parochial attitudes and loyalties.

(144)

Robert Danisch, in chapter 9, 'Cosmopolitanism and Epideictic Rhetoric' (147–64), presents an original thesis, which is that '*The New Negro*, given its hermeneutical practices, is a special form of epideictic rhetoric' (151). Often referred to elsewhere as 'praise and blame' oratory, Aristotle's definition of epideictic rhetoric is provided (149–50), but not with sufficient

clarity for the uninitiated reader. True, '*The New Negro* does not include a single orator or public speaker' (152). Danisch focuses on Locke. Locke is part of the epideictic tradition because he (1) praises the virtue and value of African American art; (2) valorizes art's role in fostering race pride as a bulwark against racism; cites notable examples to inspire further artistic excellence; stresses the role of African American art vis-à-vis the wider American society; and stresses the role of values in improving social relations (161).

David Weinfeld, in chapter 10, 'What Difference Does Difference Make? Horace Kallen, Alain Locke, and the Birth of Cultural Pluralism' (165–87), revisits the origins of the term, 'cultural pluralism' – a philosophical term of art that was the predecessor of the more familiar concept of 'multiculturalism' – which was coined in 1907 conversations between Horace Kallen and Alain Locke at Oxford when Locke posed the question (which forms this chapter's title): 'What difference does difference make?' (165). Weinfeld's essay is assiduously historical, skilfully critical, and adroitly nuanced. It is arguably the best essay in this volume. The analysis elucidates and illuminates both harmonics and dissonances between Kallen's and Locke's respective philosophies of cultural pluralism.

Chielozona Eze, in chapter 11, 'Ethnocentric Representations and Being Human in a Multiethnic Global World: Alain Locke Critique' (189–202), asks an interesting question: 'Is Obama the cosmopolitan that Alain Locke dreamed about?' (189). The answer to this excellent question is left unanswered.

Terrance MacMullan, in chapter 12, 'Global Citizenship through Reciprocity: Alain Locke and Barack Obama's Pragmatist Politics' (203–16), thematizes 'common strands of thought evidenced by both men' (213). MacMullan treats 'Locke's Vision of Pluralistic Democracy' that led him 'to develop an ideal of peace through reciprocity' (207). Reciprocity – mutuality of rights and responsibilities – is central to Locke's philosophy. Thus 'Locke's call for value pluralism and cosmopolitan democracy is a pragmatic path to global peace' (207).

After quoting from one of Locke's *Bahá'í World* essays, 'The Orientation of Hope' (1936), MacMullan adds: 'Locke believed that the spiritual pluralism of his Bahá'í faith would provide direction for humanity's hope' (207). While undeveloped, this recognition of Locke's Baha'i affiliation and worldview adds a depth and dimension missing in the other essays. In the section, 'Lockean Elements of Obama's Political Philosophy' (207–12), MacMullan quotes from President Obama's Inaugural Address, in which the president spoke of America's world role:

For we know that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness. We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus – and non-believers. We are shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this Earth; and because we have tasted the bitter swill of civil war and segregation, and emerged from that dark chapter stronger and more united, we cannot help but believe that the old hatreds shall someday pass; that the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve; that as the world grows smaller, our common humanity shall reveal itself; and that America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace.

(Qtd. 209–10)

Following this ‘admittedly charitable reading of both Locke and Obama’ (213), MacMullan raises two issues that represent challenges to President Obama: capitalism and gay and lesbian rights.

Jacoby Adeshai Carter’s ‘goal’ in chapter 13, ‘New Moral Imperatives for World Order: Alain Locke on Pluralism and Relativism’ (217–33) is ‘to provide greater clarity to Locke’s conceptual instruments’ and to ‘bring Locke’s philosophy into meaningful conversation’ (218) with contemporary social issues. Carter reviews Locke’s pluralism – the most formidable barrier to which is absolutism – then cultural relativism, then both pluralism and relativism as ‘moral imperatives’ in a ‘Democratic World Context’.

As for editing, it was purely by happenstance, and not by design, that the present reviewer spotted some glaring typographical errors, as noted above: i.e. ‘ethic [*sic*: read ‘ethnic’] culture?’ (61); ‘B’há’i [*sic*: read ‘Bahá’í’] faith’ (64); ‘cultural produce’ [*sic*: read ‘product’] (70); ‘A Funtional [*sic*: read ‘Functional’] Peace’ (83); ‘induced [*sic*: read ‘induce’] cultural transformation’ (134).

As a thematic project (and not merely a conference proceedings volume), while the essays relate to the overarching theme of world citizenship rather unevenly, they do so in concert, with no discordance. The Baha’i dimension in Locke’s thought, although undeveloped, is given pride of place with ‘Unity Through Diversity: A Bahá’í Principle’ as the second piece. Publication, apparently for the first time, of Locke’s 1947 speech, ‘World Citizenship: Mirage or Reality?’, (1947) is welcome. If indeed published for the first time, then the editors should have drawn attention to this publication ‘event’.

Philosophic Values and World Citizenship is a welcome contribution to scholarship on Alain Locke, showcasing him not only as a philosophical precursor to President Barack Obama, but as a man ahead of his time – with now being that time. This volume goes far in bringing Locke back to influential life. Carter and Harris are to be commended for their vision in conceiving this project, which brings Alain Leroy Locke into contemporary relevance as a major philosopher of cosmopolitanism and world peace. (Locke typically gets stuck in the Harlem Renaissance.) Universities may find this book to be a worthwhile adjunct to global studies. This volume, particularly because of its curricular relevance to contemporary issues of global concern, is also recommended for graduate courses in philosophy.

Endnotes

1. Alain Locke, ‘Unity through Diversity: A Bahá’í Principle’, in *The Bahá’í World: A Biennial International Record*, vol. 4, 1930–1932, Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1933, 372–4. Reprint (Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1980). Reprinted again in Locke, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, ed. Leonard Harris, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991, 133–8.
2. See Alain Locke, ‘Cultural Relativism and Ideological Peace’, *Approaches to World Peace*, ed. Lyman Bryson, Louis Finfelstein and R. M. MacIver, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944, 609–18. Reprinted in *The Philosophy of Alain Locke* (1991), 67–78 [73].