

# The Limits of Franz Boas's Multiculturalism: An Augustinian Critique

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In *The Meaning of Race*, Kenan Malik relates an amusing though regrettable story about difference.<sup>1</sup> In the midst of Apartheid South Africa, Kellogg's Brand Cereals attempted to help its white customers better understand black culture with a series of "Did you know?" comic strips. The series sought to broaden the horizons of the Afrikaner by offering such helpful insights as why, for example, black servants look away when being greeted or use two hands when receiving things. Instead of fiddling with the usual cereal box trinket, the white South African could participate in the nation's project of creating a better Apartheid, while conveniently finishing off a perfectly balanced breakfast. Malik describes such programs such as Kellogg's "Did you know?" campaign as "little more than apologies for enforced codes of black inferiority and for the maintenance of racial barriers."<sup>2</sup> Duly, he argues that multiculturalism's ostensibly noble goals – to move societies beyond the specter of race – proceed from a "Did you know?" approach to difference and merely reinforced unjust power configurations previously made possible by race; under the increasingly chic name of difference multiculturalism further codified social inequality.<sup>3</sup> Malik writes: "We live in a world, which at one and the same time abhors the creation of apartheid racial barriers but applauds the maintenance of cultural diversity, a world in which the aim of much social and educational policy is to ensure cultural separation."<sup>4</sup>

As multiculturalism purges certain horrors it produces new ones in the same moment. Fearing disorder, it is a project fated to circumscribe the very difference it assumes it has discovered. Though multiculturalism names many things, I use it to specify a strategy and tendency to envision difference as an ontological grounding for a politics of tolerance (for diversity) or separation (for diversity). In seeking to advance cultural tol-

erance/separation, this multiculturalism is a lowest-common-denominator approach to the *political organization of existence*, rights understood as consumer choice where difference is commodified and articulated in terms of market possession.<sup>5</sup>

That late capitalist cultures are only able to subsist within such privative logics would not be surprising to Saint Augustine, who understood such fallow hope as emblematic of the city of man, the *civitas terrena* born of and sustained by fear.<sup>6</sup> The work of Franz Boas, progenitor of a nascent but seminal multiculturalism, exemplifies this peculiarly modern idea of tolerance and separation. From an Augustinian perspective, what Boas got wrong shows how even what he got right can be displayed as the crisis of the earthly city. In what follows, I will first briefly review the significant accomplishments of Boas's anthropology as the groundwork for many twentieth century accounts of multiculturalism. By returning to Boas, we will discover that assumptions taken for granted in late capitalist discourse were for Boas and his contemporaries revolutionary and even dangerous. Having demonstrated the merits of Boas's account of existence, I will delineate Augustine's argument in the *City of God* that the "honest men" of Rome, though they know Roman religion to be deeply problematic, worship nevertheless because they are determined by fear. Rather than timorous living, Augustine imagines gift-giving as enacted by God's gift in Christ and the church's ritual re-enactment of such giving. Whereas the earthly city, discussed in this paper both as Roman pagan worship and Boas's multiculturalism, constructs space for the self, the city of God participates in God's space of self-giving within and between the cities. Though Augustine and Boas are separated by over 1500 years, they share enough commonalities that they need not remain complete strangers to one another. Their respective moral projects, and those they considered adversaries, can be imagined within a similar constellation of concerns, namely the relationship between plurality and unity. Having traced the merits of Boas's seminal work, I return to Keenan Malik's insightful rendering of Boas and advance his critique toward a theological evaluation of multiculturalism, likening it to Augustine's characterization of pagan worship, the vain attempt to eke out existence amidst difference in a way unable to offer a genuine difference because of fearful necessity. Finally, I will propose some broader considerations on the promises and limitations of multiculturalism, offering theological reflections on the category of "gift," a term equally central to Augustinian Christianity and the world Boas made possible. Boas's multiculturalism delimits gift-giving for fear of imposition, while Augustine, by holding the eternal city of God and the temporal city as "intertwined," proffers gift-giving as constitutive of temporal existence; as temporal, creatures cannot exist but as intermingled in the verities of becoming. In this way, Boas's advocacy of culture *qua* culture becomes his way of protecting a mythical purity. Like Varro and Cicero, an anxious grasping after sacral order animates Boas's concern for difference, reinstated in modern versions of tolerance. Rather than guarded purity, we will find in Augustine the advocacy of gift-giving, or what Boas worried was "mongrelisation."

## Franz Boas and the Multiplicity of Culture

Of the points of analysis central to ethnographic studies in the nineteenth century, emotional associations were critical because such correlations revealed mental tendencies inherent in primitive cultures. For example, odd and incessant associations between religion and daily activities or between eating and the soul displayed unsophisticated mental processes universal in primitive populations. Having not yet fully developed their cognitive faculties, primitive minds were unable to make careful and rigorous distinctions between “secular” activities and the spirit world. “Primitives” certainly could not theorize such relations much less set out on intercontinental expeditions to observe and analyze them.<sup>7</sup> That some unwittingly lived out “the primitive mind” while others catalogued primitivism revealed all that needed to be known about the superiority of the European mind.

It was Franz Boas’s signal achievement that he reoriented the discussion of difference in the West from ethnocentric notions of primitivism to supposedly power-neutral conceptions of culture. Born in 1858 to a German Jewish family, Boas epitomized the promise of European Enlightenment culture with its strong emphasis on principled learning and science. Boas immigrated to the United States in 1884 and, other than occasional stints of fieldwork, spent his life at Columbia University. Throughout his career, Boas argued not only that primitive cultures were more sophisticated than previously thought, that such associations displayed great complexity, but perhaps more importantly, that European repression of mental associations, and other purported evolutionary advancements, displayed its own mode of primitivism. He claimed that according to “the mind of the primitive man, only *his own* associations can be rational. Ours must appear to him just as heterogeneous as his own to us.”<sup>8</sup> The same attributes categorized as “primitive”—in this case, odd and incessant associations between disparate realities—would also render enlightenment culture “primitive” if viewed from an alternative culture. Modes of explanation such as imminent causality or presuppositions of neutrality might just as likely strike non-Westerners as superstitious.

The virtues of Boas’s contributions can hardly be exaggerated, and his 1911 *The Mind of Primitive Man* founds many twentieth century versions of pluralism. In the aftermath of a colonizing universalism, Boas created space for the other to survive *as* other. The recognition and articulation of racial heteronomy was for Boas the basis of social stability both within but more importantly between cultures, no minor achievement in the wake of European colonization and the impending threat of Nazi aggression. By reorganizing categories of race in favor of functionalist accounts of culture, Boas championed the fundamental necessity of preserving the delicate relations between various societies. Carl Degler articulates the social and intellectual contribution of Boas: “At the same time that racial segregation was being imposed by law in the states of the American South, and eugenics was emerging as a hereditarian solution to social problems, Boas was embarking upon a life-long assault on the idea that race was a primary source of the difference.”<sup>9</sup> In his introduction to Boas’s chief work, *The Mind of Primitive Man*, Melville J. Herskovits reminds us that the German translation of Boas’s masterpiece, *Kultur und Rasse*, was a primary target for

the Nazi book-burning campaign precisely because it so clearly excoriated political articulations of race fundamental to German Aryanism:

It must not be thought that racism went unchallenged. But the anthropologists who refused a racial interpretation of history were scattered, their attempts to rectify the distortions of their science diffuse, while their researches, for the most part, ignored the political and social implications of the doctrine they rejected. It was, therefore, not until the publication of *The Mind of Primitive Man* that the anti-racists could refer to a single work which, in the best scientific tradition derived its conclusions from measured, objective analysis, and presented its data in terms of their wider implications, marshalling the known facts to bring them to bear on disputed questions.<sup>10</sup>

The category of race, inherited by Boas, had theoretically, socially, and politically canonized a hierarchical view of difference by “obvious” and “scientific” assertions epitomized by nineteenth-century eugenics. The European Enlightenment, rather than honoring and celebrating the relative ideals of particular human cultures, favored a vision of the universality of humanity where racial differences demonstrated lesser and better gradations of humanity as an ideal. Boas opposed this vision by calling for a rigorously inductive, in contrast to *deductive*, mode of empirical research. In this way, his anthropology lays bare the excesses of modernity while also limning its enduring possibilities. Using dynamic alternatives to approaches in linguistics analysis, geographic origins, cultural diffusion, as well as fieldwork practices like native language acquisition, comparative regional studies, and acclimation to mythic rituals, Boas forced changes in the ethnological landscape.<sup>11</sup> Boas exhorted his contemporaries to represent different cultures on their own terms, often publishing his own ethnographies as little more than unedited interlinear translations of a culture’s self-report.<sup>12</sup>

Certainly Boas was not the only thinker championing such transformations. Still, his influence has historically been considered the most far reaching and therefore represents a broad trend in cultural anthropology as well as a number of other discourses, many of which would later receive the tag “postmodernism.”<sup>13</sup> Herskovits, writing in 1962, describes how Boas’s critical work constitutes “what we have come to call cultural relativism, which, arising out of the unities of cultural diversity, builds on a realization of the devotion all peoples have for their particular way of life.”<sup>14</sup> As Herskovits shows, Boas did not “formally” declare the tenets of relativism that would found multiculturalism and other facets of postmodernity, but methodologically and philosophically, he articulated as much by his far-reaching scientific methodology.<sup>15</sup> Articulating Boas’s profound influence on ethnographic anthropology specifically and cultural studies generally, Rohner and Rohner state that Boas stood alone among nineteenth-century American scholars in confronting “the deficiencies of unilinear evolution,” by attacking “the use of the concept of psychic unity as an explanation for the appearance of cultural similarities among distant societies,” while discrediting “comparative method for arranging societies into hierarchical sequences.”<sup>16</sup> Chal-

lenging what had become standard paradigms and practices, Boas “attempted to demonstrate that the notion of geographical determinism is invalid; and he pointed out that much nineteenth-century ethnology was ethnocentric.”<sup>17</sup>

The late nineteenth century was dominated by the view that cultural evolution universally followed a single line of development, that cultural strangers were consistently schematized in relation to European cultural development. Ostensibly absent was an *a priori* claim to superiority. Still, such an architectonic could not help but render those different from north Atlantic civilizations as inferiors, as “earlier” and therefore less mature in their development.<sup>18</sup> Such a view did not argue that certain peoples were fundamentally inferior, that they could never exhibit certain “civilized” practices, but simply that they had not *yet* developed those modes of civilization. This linear view of evolution should be contrasted with certain hard-line eugenics which presumed inherent biological inferiorities and therefore limitations on the possibilities of civilization. Rather, the view that Boas inherited conceptualized western civilization not simply in contrast to non-civilized societies, but rather as the promise of what those societies might become. This was at heart a teleological rather than a polemical view of the world. Still, to the extent that there was one line of development, various other societies and their attending customs had to be measured, in a sense “seen,” only in relation to this one accepted line of development, rendering one set of customs the yard stick for all the others. This had the effect of not only casting practices of “uncivilized” societies negatively but perhaps more critically rendering practices of the “civilized” society positively, hermeneutically concealing realities that problematized the unilinear understanding of development.

Introducing the 1938 edition of *The Mind of Primitive Man*, Boas writes: “A close connection between race and personality has never been established. The concept of racial type as commonly used even in scientific literature is misleading and requires a logical as well as biological *redefinition*.”<sup>19</sup> Boas’s arguments in *The Mind of Primitive Man*, first articulated in a public address in 1895, offer this redefinition. Convinced that his contemporaries reached their conclusions through prejudiced circular reasoning—for example, the correlation between physiology and evolutionary development—Boas posited a rigid scientism that espoused methodological integrity—for example, Boas showed that even though Europeans were hitherto contrasted with Australian aborigines in terms of physiology and evolutionary development, they both, in contrast to Asiatics and Africans, shared the animal-like quality of hirsuteness. Boas postulated complex correlations that went beyond cultural prejudice. When considering evolution, brain size, and intelligence, Boas eschewed simple explanations and posed questions of cultural heterogeneity, pushing science, he thought, beyond racialization. Rather than assume the neutrality of scientific research, Boas, a physicist by training, showed how the presumption of neutrality, an achievement allegedly reserved for the most racially advanced, ultimately prejudiced scientific conclusions toward the unrecognized assumptions of its European and American progenitors.

When race and civilization are conflated, as they had become in Boas’s time, innate physical characteristics are seen as determinative of a group’s potential for

civilization, and since race in turn determines one's physicality, the limit of one's race becomes the limit of one's civilization. Of course, as Boas showed, herein lies the circularity: how one views a civilization follows how one views race. If certain anatomical (i.e. racial) characteristics are construed as "primitive"—broad nose, dark skin, and so on—then that *colors* how that civilization is viewed. Likewise, if a civilization is construed as primitive, then its inhabitants, understood only in terms of their racialized bodies, are viewed as primitive—broad nose, dark skin, and so on are now read into the definition of primitivism. Because the modes of difference that the Europeans encountered in places like New Zealand or Western Africa were vaguely analogical, the Europeans could not imagine alterity on its own terms. Unable to see beyond physical characteristics, they could only interpret difference as necessarily inferior. Consequently, as subjective classifications like "complexity" or "social organization" became the determinative scientific categories, those types were then interpreted in terms of a relative—Eurocentric—standard. Eventually, racism became increasingly obtuse such that even when able to recognize the complexity of contrasting social organizations, western ethnographers could only pronounce judgments in terms of their own superiority.

Thus, when *The Mind of Primitive Man* promoted, most powerfully and explicitly in the 1938 edition, the category of "culture" over against race, it was on the one hand attempting to detach the manner in which one views civilization from how one views bodies, while on the other reading both civilization and bodies in categories more fundamental than either. By culture, Boas was attempting to galvanize a more generous "classification of human difference," one that might transcend the hierarchal assumptions of European humanism by postulating analysis beyond the unilinear notions of development. Boas created space for what he considered racial difference by philosophically grounding his anthropology in a more primary category than race itself: culture. As race had hitherto been conceptualized as disembodied from its storied history, culture now took on the favored designations of the day: "scientific" and "obvious," especially since Boas purportedly based his findings upon more rigorous field research. With the blinders of race removed, he could now truly see the other. Robert Lowie, one of Boas's students, claimed in his 1917 *Culture and Ethnology*: "Culture is a thing *sui generis*, which can be explained only in terms of itself."<sup>20</sup> Within cultures, tradition offered individuals the resources necessary to navigate difference in and beyond their particular traditions. Rather than hierarchically place one culture's development in relationship to another culture, rather than a unilinear development model or what Boas termed an "all-embracing application of a theory of evolution of culture," and rather than construe that hierarchy univocally, Boas sought to look within cultures. If a model for development was to be made, it had to be made within the framework of a specific culture itself, with its own understanding of development. For Boas, there was simply no viewpoint, not already infected by culture, from which one might render judgment between cultures and he argued that regardless of criterion—morality or language, technological innovation or artistic skill—there remains no category by which cultures can be hierarchically ordered.<sup>21</sup>

Boas was not attempting to rid the world of hierarchical considerations, but

rather was attempting to delineate hierarchy as culturally dependent. Thus, locutions such as “child-like” or “primitive” made sense only *within* cultures, not *between* them, such that it is meaningful, for example, to speak of the immaturity of a child in relation to an adult in the child’s respective culture. According to Boas, “The steps of development must relate to an aspect of culture in which the same kind of activity persists.”<sup>22</sup> Nowhere does Boas make clearer the relative nature of cultural evaluation than in his consideration of moral variation: “From an ethnological point of view murder cannot be considered as a single phenomenon. Unity is established by introducing *our* juridical concept of murder.”<sup>23</sup> Boas does allow for moral adjudication but suggests that it is only coherent and binding within cultures, where judgments regarding acts such as murder find meaning. Within a culture, “murder” names an act within a constellation of others, for example, destroying another’s possessions. From Boas’s perspective, “Murder” does not name a transcendent category between cultures, by which cultural acts might be morally compared.

The gift of culture as a conceptual matrix was its ability to engage differing civilizations in categories more complex and amorphous than anatomy while at the same time to account for anatomical difference. Within the constellation of classifications such as social organization, language, intercultural diffusion and others, culture could be read as contributing to racial types. It was not that Boas wanted to end thinking in terms of race. Rather, he thought that race and bodies could be further analyzed by an interpretive scheme that would expose cultural presumptions hidden behind the veil of objectivity. For Boas, specificities of race “do not *create* but *react* to a culture.”<sup>24</sup> In this sense, culture names the lens that enabled the world to be seen. Recognizing one’s cultured situation then allowed one, Boas hoped, to recognize one’s cultural prejudices. At heart, Boas’s great contribution was his transcendental apperception, to use Kant’s term, that culture was always at play in European views of the other, and what he did by championing culture was make explicit what had always undergirded European racialized thinking. Thus, culture did not obviate racial considerations but rather grounded them such that culture became the theoretical template that made race and racial thinking possible in a world of diverse others. Culture, rather than race, became the framework whereby white intellectuals could simultaneously hold their racialized visions of the world while enjoying the darker races in all of their savage beauty and sublimity. On the one hand, Boas’s cultural anthropology allowed understanding of non-European cultures. On the other, it allowed understanding of *European* culture and in this sense *The Mind of Primitive Man* investigates the *European* mind: “Our tendency to evaluate an individual according to the picture that we form of the class to which we assign him. . . is a survival of primitive forms of thought.”<sup>25</sup> Boas makes the striking observation that the self-defensive and self-referential act of killing one’s tribal enemies, long the subject of European ethnographies of the “savage,” is precisely the ethos that funds European ethnography itself, one that was dangerously rampant in Boas’s native Germany at the time of the critical 1938 edition of *The Mind of Primitive Man*.

When we analyze the strong feeling of nationality which is so potent at the present time and which has superseded the local interests of lesser units, we recognize that it consists largely in the idea of the preeminence of that community whose members we happen to be—in the preeminent value of its bodily build, its language, of its customs and traditions, and in the belief that all external influences that threaten these traits are hostile and must be combated, not only for the justifiable purpose of preserving its peculiarities but even with the wish to impose them upon the rest of the world.<sup>26</sup>

In his later public works, Boas reduces democracy to individuated freedom, epitomized by the modern university and its singular maintenance of intellectual independence. For Boas, America, unlike most European countries, had attained a unique level of genuine civilization, “where not only thought is free, but where everyone has the right to express his opinions, where censorship is shunned, where the actions of the individual are not restricted as long as they do not interfere with the freedom and welfare of his fellow citizens.”<sup>27</sup> Ultimately, Boas’s multiculturalism does not stray far from democratic liberalism as the political patronage of tolerance, where, as in the modern university, the peculiar other may be both investigated and left alone. Like other liberalisms, Boas’s was not simply the recognition of heteronomy but also a strategy for managing difference through the firm belief that the enlightened—world-historical figures like Boas who alone transcend difference and its categorization—should act as the keepers of diversity.

In a highly suggestive essay, Leonard B. Click argues that much of Boas’s academic work reflects his personal history as a German Jewish immigrant.<sup>28</sup> In the same way that Boas understood himself as a Hegelian figure whose universality subsumed any historical identity, Boas intimated that the destiny of the Jews lay in an abstract Archimedean perspective embodied by his own ascendancy in the American academy. Late in his career, Boas would articulate “freedom” precisely in contrast to cultural inheritance:

My parents had broken through the shackles of dogma. My father had retained an emotional affection for the ceremonial of his parental home without allowing it to influence his intellectual freedom. Thus I was spared the struggle against religious dogma that besets the lives of so many young people...In fact, my whole outlook upon social life is determined by the question: how can we recognize the shackles that tradition has laid upon us? For when we recognize them, we are also able to break them.<sup>29</sup>

The German anti-Semitism that forced Boas to flee Europe, according to Glick, drove his identity politics in America. Glick makes an incisive connection between Boas’s seemingly contradictory promotions of cultural separation and cultural assimilation, which he espoused almost exclusively in terms of Jewishness, between the certainty of culture and its plasticity: “Counterposed against [the autonomous integrity of every culture as distinct], however, we find [Boas’s] expectation that Jews, being only

‘subjective constructions,’ will disappear into the melting pot; indeed, he seems to say, that is their only sensible option if they are to escape endless antagonism.”<sup>30</sup> According to Boas, the Jews, understood by many Europeans as exactly the “fossilized relic of a tribal code of values” that Boas would spend a lifetime *disinterestedly* analyzing, would simply disappear. Cultural separation and cultural assimilation, then, name but two sides of the same coin for Boas, the attempt to diminish the threat of cultural imposition. Within Boas’s politics, separation prescribes the responsibility of the dominant culture while assimilation prescribes the responsibility of the minority. Or more precisely, for Boas, cultural separation became the political alternative to assimilation when the indelibility of racialized bodies—African Americans just could not assimilate to the same degree that Jews like Boas could—precluded the possibility of joining white America. Even though Boas dedicated his career to intellectually resisting the Nazis and proffering protected space for “cultures” such as African or Native Americans, his own universalism envisaged the complete assimilation, and therefore disappearance, of the Jews into American society, as was the case in Boas’s own biography. That Boas spoke of cultural difference with such vehement paternalism, all the while ignoring his own, reveals a fundamental anxiety about difference as such. After attending to Augustine’s ruminations on fear, I shall outline the political implications of Boas’s anxiety.

### Augustine’s Cities of God

In the *City of God*, Augustine of Hippo refuses to leave the pagans to their own devices. According to Augustine, the Roman Empire, no matter its aspirations, is not just since it does not rightly render God due worship. The city of man exemplifies existence at its worst: it desires poorly; calamity follows disordered desire because disordered desire means that one will love, seek, fear, and flee the wrong things. Thus Augustine famously begins his *Confessions*: “You stir man to take pleasure in praising you, because you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”<sup>31</sup> Likewise, Augustine could make the seemingly reckless admonishment, “Love God and do what you want,” because he knew that those who loved God ordered their loves well and would therefore *want* the right things. Augustine’s anthropology is one of desires.

So far, I have attempted to show the significance of Franz Boas’s seminal multiculturalism: Boas configured culture as a conceptual apparatus that allowed difference to be envisioned without hierarchical impositions, as had been the case with race. I now turn to an Augustinian appraisal of Boas and do so specifically by inquiring into the ends of Boas’s project: what exactly was it trying to accomplish, and from what did it imagine itself progressing? More specifically, what did it fear? While turning to a pre-modern source, especially a *patristic* voice like Augustine’s, may seem anachronistic, revisiting Augustine offers an alternative to modern ways of imagining the world and challenges presuppositions of inevitability. In contrast to multiculturalism’s presumed historicism—itself a moral claim—I utilize Augustine in a way that exemplifies precisely what he offers Boas: otherness denotes gift if we but risk vulnerability, which as Boas rightly saw, always entails possible dangers. Across

the ages, Augustine beseeches Boas, "What do you fear?" For Augustine, fear reveals much because he held fear as but the flipside of desire. One fears that which might inhibit one's desires from fulfillment. Appropriate fear aids one in knowing what to avoid, discerning between opportunities and temptations. For Augustine, fear is not itself vicious; however, fearing the wrong thing is deadly since confused fear denotes disordered desire. Since desire names tendency and fear names aversion, the worst thing one could do was fear wrongly, for to do so would mean that one, now tending toward vice and fleeing virtue, had lost her way. In the pilgrimage from the city of man to the eternal city, if one did not appropriately fear, just as if one did not appropriately desire, one would not know how to exist in time. That is, one would not know how to be a creature. I will first turn to Augustine's characterization of Roman fear and then utilize that figuration in order to articulate the fears inherent in Boas's multiculturalism.

Throughout the *City of God*, Augustine turns on its head the Roman complaint, "No rain, blame the Christians," by describing the crisis of pagan existence: worshipping creation rather than the creator, disorder undermines every Roman claim to order.<sup>32</sup> The earthly city loves poorly, orienting its heart to that which cannot offer eternal felicity. Augustine hopes to show the Romans that the earthly city is dying and that true religion witnesses to divine succor, without which the earthly city stands barefaced before impending death.<sup>33</sup> For the earthly citizen, the question is never *if* but rather *when*; that she stands naked before death is a product of pagan religious pretension. The absurd attempt to uplift the self meets its limit in the face of death, which cannot be conquered precisely because within its immanent horizon, death, just as life, is necessary rather than created and given.<sup>34</sup>

Notably troubling for Augustine is the pagan worship of "honest men." Roman participation in the worship of the *daemons* can be easily explained: base, they worship base gods basely. The failures of Roman society start there. A society entrenched in demonic worship cannot help but manifest those demons politically and socially. In turn, a malformed politics and society endemically endorse those practices and institutions that prolong its life.<sup>35</sup> Rome continuously re-enacts Romulus's fratricide. Roman society becomes the liturgical performance of Cain's curse, the being-toward-death of erecting earthly cities.<sup>36</sup> If it is the case, however, that the vicious worship vicious gods, how does the bishop explain the perdurance of pagan worship even among the virtuous ruled not by flesh but by philosophy, for which Augustine has much praise? In considering the worship of these "honest men," Augustine confronts the pinnacle of Roman society. Augustine's anti-Manichean ontology evinces that he countenances that which remains good while at the same time demonstrating how necessity reveals what is most determinatively wrong with the city of man, how even on its best terms, it still warrants rescue from the eternal God who alone grants eternal happiness. In order to show it to be the "true religion," Augustine must pit Christianity against that which is most virtuous in Roman society. He does so by characterizing fear as the *dynamis* of pagan worship. For Augustine, fear is epiphenomenal to disordered love: to the extent that one loves that which is not eternal, one's love positions one toward death, culminating in fear.

Augustine claims that honest and intelligent men know what all believers of the true religion know, that the worship of the Roman gods is done in vain.<sup>37</sup> Cicero, Augustine explains, goes to great lengths to dissociate Stoic religion from pagan ancestral superstition. In his writings, it is obvious that Cicero feels ashamed and embarrassed by the disorder of Roman religion, yet “he would not dare to whisper, in an address to the popular assembly, what in [his] treatise he so eloquently declares.”<sup>38</sup> Augustine argues, “no matter how eloquently [Cicero] may strive to dissociate himself from them and to be free, he is none the less himself under the necessity for venerating these images.”<sup>39</sup> Varro, in his turn, indicts cultic images as disreputable. Still, he holds that the maintenance of the city must be based on this worship because some things are not meant to be known by masses, including the falseness of their faith. Augustine says that Varro could not detach himself completely from this old worship because Varro could neither free himself nor resist the prejudice of custom. Indeed, once a people have a religion, to offer them alternatives would be dangerously inexpedient. Even though Cicero and Varro know Roman worship to be specious, they still claim its necessity. One fears the masses, fearing what would happen if he spoke honestly, while the other fears *for* the masses, fearing what would happen if the people began to question the city’s foundation. Though both Cicero and Varro decry pagan religion as superstitious, they too worship superstitiously, out of fear *of* and *for* the people.<sup>40</sup> Their worship enacts a liturgy of fear, most fully embodied in the theurgic arts.<sup>41</sup> This fear, a fear that demands worship, most patently exposes the limits of pagan worship. Unlike the martyrs who die well, the pagan worshipper lives in fear exactly because her gods cannot grant eternal life.

### The Boundaries of Boas’s Multiculturalism

What then did Boas’s project fear, and in so doing, did it fear well? In the final chapter of the 1938 edition of *The Mind of Primitive Man*, Boas turns to “The Race Problem in Modern Society”—initially titled “Race Problems in the United States” in its original 1911 edition, a change that no doubt reflects America’s growing distress regarding Nazi aggression. Boas summarizes his arguments, “An unbiased review of the facts shows that the belief in the hereditary racial characteristics and the jealous care for purity of race is based on the assumption of non-existing conditions.”<sup>42</sup> Boas thus debunked prognostications of cultural “mongrelisation” as they promoted ethnic violence under the panacea of racial purity. Instead, Boas hoped to “cultivate the variety of forms that human thought and activity has taken, and abhor, as leading to complete stagnation, all attempts to impress one pattern of thought upon whole nations or even upon the whole world.”<sup>43</sup> General accounts of social fixity became especially pernicious when utilized to justify segregation and discrimination. In 1940, with the menace of Nazi racism in the background, Boas commented in *Asia Magazine*, “Racism as a basis of social solidarity as against the cultural interest of mankind is more dangerous than any of the other groupings because according to its claims the hostile groups are biologically determined, and therefore permanent.”<sup>44</sup> Instead, for Boas, “race” never stands still; there is no one society or one race, but a multiplicity of cascading divergences. Race, for Boas, has

to be conceptualized organically, even dynamically as continuous flux between untold numbers and varieties of peoples and persons. However, though he accepted and indeed welcomed racial heterogeneity—for Boas, there is no race except as heterogeneous—he remained less willing to welcome cultural amalgamation because he worried that such interpenetration could not protect difference.

In *The Meaning of Race*, Kenan Malik argues that Boas' accomplishments finds their limits in the contemporary politics of multiculturalism, which foments an atemporal account of existence, "mummify[ing] 'native' cultures as a form frozen in time, and thereby to deny its creative character."<sup>45</sup> Initially, Boas espoused such fluidity and his charge against the panacea of racial purity was precisely that it ignored the diffusive nature of cultural development. Yet, while making room for such exchange, Boas's account of culture as *sui generis*, disregarded contingency because it could not imagine the good of intercultural exchange. The obvious inter- and intra-cultural interchange that constituted pre-colonial histories was veiled due to colonial presumptions about primitive societies. In its own turn, Boas's multiculturalism veils radical cultural engagement in the name of culture *qua* culture, seeking to delimit the confluence of competing accounts of existence. Thus, intercultural dialogue regarding "murder" can only name a relative and for the most part denuded exchange. In actuality, alternative cultural communities interact, often violently, in light of heterogeneity, a conflict that goes hand and hand with cultural difference, since, as Boas showed, cultures tend to hold non-negotiable commitments. Since Boas's era could not imagine such conflict as anything but violent, he sought to freeze culture in the interface between cultures. In this sense, Boas failed to turn his own best insights about race to his new articulation of culture. Just as there is no pure race, there can be no pure culture resistant to temporal and political engagement. For Malik, contemporary multiculturalism follows Boas in that it "overestimates the homogeneity and autonomy" and "underestimates the degree to which all groups are reciprocally implicated in the creation of cultural forms within a common framework of national political, social, and economic institutions."<sup>46</sup> As Malik goes on to argue, multiculturalisms that espouse tolerance as their central virtue proliferate certain political realities:

What Boas and the functionalists did was effectively to turn the evolutionary ladder of Victorian racial theory on its side, and to conceive of humanity as horizontally rather than vertically segmented. Humanity was not arranged at different points along an ever-rising vertical axis, as the social evolutionist had believed, but at different points along a stationary horizontal axis. Humanity was composed of a multitude of peoples each inhabiting their own symbolic and social worlds.<sup>47</sup>

Rather than a hierarchical chain of being, Boas established the "plural society."<sup>48</sup> Over against a univocal—we might say neo-Neo-Platonist—view of otherness one was confronted with difference *qua* category, or more precisely, difference *qua* container. Looking upon the world now entailed not *a priori* assumptions of onto-

theological singularity but rather increasing sensitivity to “contrastive features.” The ethical and political approach to a world resplendent with such foundational yet fragile difference required a strong account of quarantined space lest an epidemic of contamination break out.

Boas’s vision of plurality and its fear of “mongrelisation” show us that at the heart of his project, and the multiculturalism that followed him, stands the fear of disorder. Herskovits, in citing the moral relevance of Boas’s project, writes, “Boas lays the psychological groundwork for what, since his death, has become a new field, the comparative study of values...provid[ing] the basis for a cogent philosophy in a world where contacts between peoples having different ways of life are constantly increasing in incidence and intensity.”<sup>49</sup> For Boas, the alarming increase of “incidence and intensity” of cultural confrontation names a problem to be managed, the incarnation of an ontology of chaos in which the moral stranger rather than being labeled “primitive,” is allowed her sublimity, as long as her otherness does not threaten the present constellation of power. Alterity can only be conceptualized to the extent that it fits somewhere. Even sublimity has its place. Boas found himself in a ridiculously untidy world. The architectonics of his multiculturalism clamors to control the teeming masses and make sense of what was for Boas and his contemporaries the imbroglio of humanness. In the same way that Cicero feared the plebs and Varro feared a confused Empire, Boas championed multiculturalism as an “attempt to still the tumult of existence.” Against Nietzsche, David Bentley Hart writes:

Metaphysics in this sense, the articulation of unarguable principles, is always an attempt to still the tumult of existence; it is itself already war against war: finding difference unbearable, only governable strife, it seeks the unmoving foundations of being, there to build. As a science of essences, enabling us to discriminate proper from deficient realizations of those essences, it grants us a natural taxonomy by which to assign everything and everyone (e.g., masters and slaves) their correct places.<sup>50</sup>

As Cicero and Varro were frightened by and for the masses, so Boas was terrified of and for otherness. Boas’s atemporal view of culture and his demand that traditions be segregated for their own protection is but the other side of an anxiety that fears alterity, both the other’s and its own.

Malik is careful to remind us, “Boas is not contesting the concept of race, nor the division of humanity into different races.”<sup>51</sup> In other words, though Boas’s ideas were often ahead of their time, Boas was still a man of his times, a time infected with the toxic expansionism of the Nazis, which seemed to attenuate Boas’s ability to imagine culture as fluid in the same way that he rightly saw race. Malik goes on to deconstruct multiculturalism not as the “means to equal society, but an alternative to one, where equality has given way to toleration of difference, and indeed of inequality.”<sup>52</sup> Couched in the language of “the plural society,” the tolerance of multiculturalism proved invulnerable to critique exactly because it seemed to make possible a stable politics amidst increasingly threatening cultural diversity, a politics that justifies any-

thing according to a phantasmal notion of difference. Malik writes: "The inequalities of colonial society were rationalized as products of the different cultural outlooks and lifestyles of the various groups that constituted that society."<sup>53</sup> Boas could reject European imposition on grounds that it did not respect difference but on those same terms, Boas relinquished the resources that would allow him to articulate National Socialism as anything but cultural imposition. Claiming valuations such as "murder" as primarily encoded conventions, Boas could no longer meaningfully assert the evil of colonization on the one hand and its on-going consequences on the other. Multiculturalism gave the West a way to go on by inscribing the *civitas terrena* within the heroic narrative of tolerance. As such, Boas's critique of racist ethnographies typifies Enlightenment fantasies of Hegelian self-consciousness.<sup>54</sup>

Multiculturalism allows the impression of resisting racism by imagining a peace that threatens nobody, which of course is no peace at all. Genuine peace always comes at the cost of those who would use peace as a means to pacify those others who threaten the current order of things. Multiculturalism does not name peace after all but *stasis*, the freezing of the order of power in a way that privileges the powerful. Multiculturalism flipped the vertical hierarchy of racial power on its side thus envisaging horizontal spaces for difference. It is not hard to associate this vision of difference with zoos and museums where instead of peace one gets quaintness. As Malik states, "As immigrants remained ghettoized...so such differences became rationalized not as the negative product of racism or discrimination but as the positive result of multiculturalism."<sup>55</sup> Through multiculturalism, Boas's fears and desires become the philosophical essence of the way we live, or more precisely, of where, and where in relation to one another, we live. Americans imagine space along these lines, especially to the extent that space is associated with property. The promise of consumer capitalism means that every American can and may live where she wants. Capitalism becomes the efficacy of the American Dream also known as "separate but equal" most thickly displayed in suburbia. In *Cities of God*, Graham Ward characterizes Los Angeles as the quintessential postmodern city, where the very form of urbanity enacts desire for the sake of desire, or what Augustine understood in the *Confessions* as being in love with being in love:

Difference, defining one's place or role in opposition to someone else's, ceaseless competition, concern with personal satisfaction and the maintenance of external image—these are the characteristics of contemporary living in Los Angeles, the postmodern city. The urban theorist Susan Christopherson discloses that since the riots "dozens of neighbourhoods in Los Angeles have demanded the right to fence themselves off from the rest of the city, to become gated communities. The reason is not primarily personal safety by the protection of equity."<sup>56</sup>

As such, multiculturalism is most assuredly Hobbesian and therefore internal to the project of late modern capitalism. Fearing disorder, "culture" becomes the leviathan—something by which wanton selves are held in check when the staging

of freedom as absolute choice is unable to negotiate collateral consequences. Since Boas's account of democracy fetishizes freedom as a *modality without content* in a way that empties all other modes of valuation, culture becomes a trope under which sanctuary from the excesses of liberalism might be found. Rather than a politics that dictates how we might live well together, multiculturalism makes a much more modest proposal: reducing human being to what it assumes to be the lowest-common denominator, it asks only for the most basic trait of creatures, right to space. Multiculturalism's life-apart inculcates selves into its performance where separation—"independence"—now becomes the telos of authentic existence. Necessity lures bodies away from other bodies where so-called "free" selves now stand barefaced before the increasingly brutal demands of the market and the state, which want autonomous and unprotected consumers and citizens. Like pagan worship, spatial segregation draws bodies into anti-liturgies and habituates practices that heighten the sense that the ways things are is the way they should be, that the world created as separate but equal is indeed good. The city of man, not unlike Boas's modern university, becomes at best a series of ghettos, housing projects that allot every group their respective and independent legroom and at worse a series of castles, where tolerance gets ordered in terms of "privacy" and "safety" or what Ward calls "atomistic, individualistic, neo-tribal fortress faiths, generating virtual realities of their own."<sup>57</sup> In Boas's *Weltanschauung*, the world may be going to hell in a hand basket but at least each can be assured her own *private* hell. What is inconceivable is a sociality beyond functionalist considerations. Or more precisely, Boas's city cannot imagine gift-giving.

### Gifts, Gift-Giving, and Postmodernity

The race problem that Boas confronted and at least conceptually overcame was the view that race named zones of purity that could be clearly and cleanly demarcated. By examining difference in terms of culture rather than race, Boas was able to demonstrate the highly diffusive nature of racial types. Culture, for Boas, showed that those races which were thought to be biologically or historically "pure" were in fact deeply interdependent. The political implication of Boas's argument was clear: in the same way that a racialized view of the stranger allowed for hierarchical valuation, most directly the claim of primitivism, or even "the noble savage," so race as a fluid reality elided those same types of moral valuation.<sup>58</sup> It became, with Boas, less meaningful to envisage moral categories like civilization or anatomical development in "us" versus "them" terms because the dynamism of race—biologically, historically, interpersonally, and so on—rendered peoples culturally diffuse. If those were the terms of the world Boas discovered, and as those discoveries were supported by a demonstrable scientific realism, then it was not simply race that had to be reconstituted but also moral valuation itself. Not only was race relative, but so also racially embedded conceptualizations such as "evolved," "beauty," or "murder." Indeed, Boas's argument proceeded in the opposite direction: by showing "murder," "beauty," and "evolution" to be fluidly dependent on cultural bias, he showed race to be irreparably flawed as a mode of explanation. The recognition of diffusion conversely delimited imposi-

tion. By blurring the boundaries of race, Boas sharpened the boundaries of culture exactly because culture named everything and nothing in particular—diffusion as the emanation of an ontological play of force—and therefore could be utilized as self-justifying, self-explanatory, and self-affirming reduction: “Culture is a thing *sui generis*, which can be explained only in terms of itself.” Culture named an abstraction, an abstraction that could then permit anything under the guise of cultural difference. Yet this multiculturalism’s generosity hides an internal aversion to alterity, the same fear inherent in ethnographies of race. The innovation of Boas’s multiculturalism was its attempt to rid the world of race as fundamental. In doing so, however, it elevated culture to the untouchable, the “obvious” and “scientific.” Cicero and Varro worshipped the gods for fear of their own demise, worship that bespoke necessity rather than the contingency of gift. Likewise, believing he discovered difference, Boas advocated the unassailable essentiality of culture for fear of imposition, delimiting the possibility of gift-giving because difference needed protecting. Even at the cost of untruth, Cicero and Varro championed Roman worship for fear of what would happen to self and society. Even at the cost of his own best insights regarding the fluidity of difference, Boas championed cultural homogeneity for fear of what would happen to self and society. Ultimately then, culture does not eliminate categorization but intensifies it, elevating the role of the viewer, in this case the gaze of the ethnographer, until he can clearly anticipate lines of demarcation: this is “our culture” and this is “their culture” such that evolution, beauty, murder and all such moral valuations name the guarded boundaries of cultural totalities. This reimagining posited multiculturalism as a politics of tolerance under the clarion claim, “Moral diversity is real.”<sup>59</sup>

For Augustine, the demarcation between the city of man and the city of God is not designated by clear borders between church and state, Christian and non-Christian, believer or unbeliever. Rather earthly and eternal citizenship are lived out amidst one another in time:

Remember, however, that among those very enemies are hidden some who will become citizens; and do not think it fruitless to bear their enmity until they shall come to confess the faith. On the other hand, while she is a pilgrim in this world, the City of God has with her, bound to her by the communion of the sacraments, some who will not be with her to share eternally in the bliss of the saints...In this world, the two cities are indeed entangled and mingled with one another; and they will remain so until the last judgment shall separate them.<sup>60</sup>

That the “two cities are indeed entangled and mingled with one another” weans the church from vitriolic presumption because only “the last judgment shall separate them,” and no judgment in time can be held as final because God, not the robber baron deluded by fantasies of infinitude or the bishop in all his learning, has the authority to judge.<sup>61</sup> Entangling and intermingling (*permixtarum*) means there can be no certain lines of difference.

*Permixtarum* ensues as gift-giving. Here, difference is both seen and engaged and the otherness of the stranger is both a threat and an invitation. No doubt, gift-giving may result in violent imposition. As well, it may result in peaceful blessing. Either way, no *a priori* certainties are available. Gifts cannot be necessarily safe, and only as contingent rather than necessary do they hold the promise of unexpected blessing. Rather than abandon the stranger to her own devices under the sovereign name of culture, gift-giving ensues by resisting the powers of fear. The *permixtarum* nature of temporal existence admonishes *Christian* vulnerability and receptivity in time—and this is Augustine’s point in emphasizing it—since no identity remains fixed, but all must be open to time’s “creative character.” To presume only Christians bear gifts is to mummify identity in a way that denies the earthly city’s intermingled constitution. Those outside the church, like those inside, bear every possibility for gifts and dangers. Augustine’s account of Cicero and Varro is not meant to valorize Christian and non-Christian, but to articulate the fear-defying power of the gospel—available to *non-Christians* and Christians, admonishing *Christians* and non-Christians. Assuming one gift more worthy and less dangerous than the other is to re-instantiate the colonizing tendencies Boas overcame, while precluding gift-giving because of those dangers is to re-instantiate the fears Boas’s multiculturalism could not overcome. What cannot be forgotten is that the church in this time subsists within the earthly city, where the intermingling of the two cities proffers gifts and dangers all around.

According to Augustine, Christ’s gratuitous sacrifice and the church’s gratuitous offering of worship break the fear-driven necessity of false worship, worship that must be paid in order to sustain its *sui generis* assumptions. Those determined by fear had to worship self-created idols because such worship was necessarily the enactment of self-protection. Even when they knew better, Varro and Cicero still worshipped for fear of a death that might come too soon. Opposed to this cycle of slavish worship, the church offers her worship as gift just as Christ offered his sacrifice as gift. The difference between the eternal city and the earthly city is the difference between cycles of necessity and cycles of gift-giving. The end of sacrifice and the new cycle of gift-giving is catastrophic to a world constituted by the will-to-dominance and cowering worship. Christ’s sacrifice is catastrophic not in the sense that there now exists two spaces, the divinely ordered city of God and the autonomous carnal city of man. Rather, Christ’s redemption renders all space replete with grace and hopefulness. Time is salvifically encroached not because there are now two times, a secular time of disobedience upended by a holy time of obedience, but because created time participates in and is saved by God’s eternal life: “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35). The church announces and embodies this new space and time. Juxtaposed to the eternal city, the city of man simply looks like the world, all of its anxious pretense revealed by martyrs who die joyfully.

Gift-giving begs interpenetration for that which is given and risked is nothing less than self. Refusing vulnerability means refusing gifts, including the *kenosis* of God’s self-giving. Living in the shadow of European aggression, Boas feared the violence of cultural imposition and so occluded the possibility of exchange. However, for Augustine, difference is to be honored as analogical mongrelization ontologically

determined in the Trinitarian claim of the one and the many. For Augustine and the ancient Christians, such mongrelization could not be avoided because the hypostatic union between God and creature, perhaps the worst kind of mongrelization, meant the assumption of humanity into divinity and divinity into humanity. The debates of the fourth and fifth centuries would creedally affirm the interpenetration of divinity and humanity such that the God-Man enters human space and time, “Emmanuel, God with us” (John 1:23). Demands for rights become requisite in a world that cannot fathom incarnation—“the word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14)—as the greatest vulnerability. Claims to self and property seek guarantees and so clamor after rights. Just as Christ did not claim rights for himself but freely gave himself, so life in the heavenly city claims space as given for self-giving. Over against the world’s demands for order epitomized in Boas’s caged multiculturalism, Augustine the bishop invites the pagans to the divine *ordo*, worship of the true God.

There is no protected, autonomous secular space beyond the reach of the gospel’s invitation. Rather, the gospel makes possible “wild space” for gift-giving, embodied in Augustine’s *City of God*, a gift for the pagans.<sup>62</sup> Gift-giving as such sacramentalizes space, space between confession and forgiveness, sacrifice and acceptance, prayer and answer, servanthood and thanksgiving. In that space, rather than the world’s fearfully and violently secured order, the sinner stands in his “infinite culpability”<sup>63</sup> before God, *in regione dissimilitudinis*.<sup>64</sup> That he is permitted this space of genuine difference—that he may receive much less give—denotes mongrelization of the worst kind, an ontology of peace that saves the earthly city’s ontology of violence. Rather than the earthly city’s rights, the city of God has covenant; rather than guarantee, it offers grace. Cicero and Varro knew better but out of fear worshipped pagan gods regardless, settling for what was necessary over against what was true. In his turn, Boas proffered multiculturalism as a modest proposal necessary for a world fearfully at war with itself. To such cities, Augustine witnesses to that One who offers himself as gift in that unprotected space called the city of God. ■

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1 Kenan Malik, *The Meaning of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 1996).

2 *Ibid.*, 150.

3 *Ibid.*

4 *Ibid.*, 149.

5 I borrow the phrase “political organization of existence” from Sheldon S. Wolin. He writes, “The present is another name for the political organization of existence. It is constituted by competing/cooperating structures of power that advance and secure expectations and advantages of certain classes, individuals, groups, and organizations whose combination of authority and material resources enable them to concert power and thereby to exert major influence over which of the possible presents a society is going to have or, at the least, which ones it will not have.” *The Presence of the Past: Essays on the State of the Constitution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 1.

6 I recognize that “city of man” is insufficiently inclusive. However, I am attempting to stay close to Augustine’s language and where appropriate, offer alternatives.

7 Franz Boas, *The Mind of Primitive Man* (New York: The Free Press, 1963) 204–209. Refer-

- ences will be made between this 1938 edition and the original 1911 publication (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1911).
- 8 Boas, 1963, 223.
- 9 *In Search of Human Nature: The Decline and Revival of Darwinism in American Social Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 61.
- 10 Boas, 1963, 5–6.
- 11 *The Ethnography of Franz Boas: Letters and Diaries of Franz Boas Written on the Northwest Coast from 1886 to 1931*, eds. Ronald P. Rohner and Evelyn C. Rohner (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), xxi–xxii.
- 12 *Ibid.*, xxiii.
- 13 Still, Boas's work might be rather unremarkable if not for the pivotal thought of Claude Lévi-Strauss who bridged Boas's anti-humanist functionalism with post-structuralist and postmodernist theories of difference. Lévi-Strauss further supplanted the universalizing goals of the Enlightenment by viewing cultures as sealed compartments. Whereas modern theories of race had imagined difference in terms that could ultimately meet an Archimedean grounding beyond particularity, namely reason, Lévi-Strauss instead located both reason and bodies under the broader force of culture. Lévi-Strauss writes, "Far from having to ask whether culture is or is not a function of race, we are discovering that race... is one function *among others* of culture" (emphasis added). *The View from Afar* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), 15. As Lévi-Strauss writes, "We must accept the fact that each society has made a certain choice, within the range of existing human possibilities and that the various choices cannot be compared to each other." *Tristes Tropiques* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955), 385. Lévi-Strauss was explicitly anti-modernist in his refusal to grant legitimacy to positivism because he believed there was no "moral or philosophical criterion by which to decide the respective values of the choices which have led each civilization to prefer certain ways of life and thought while rejecting others." *The Naked Man* (London: Harper & Row, 1981), 636. No culture according to Lévi-Strauss "is fundamentally good, but none is... absolutely bad" (*Ibid.*). Lévi-Strauss does anathematize one culture: modernity, for its scheme of rationally and therefore hierarchically adjudicating difference from the privileged vantage point of its own ostensibly acultural position.
- 14 Herskovits, 11.
- 15 Sidney M. Greenfield argues that "Boas was not a multiculturalist, nor is it likely that he would have looked favorably on movements of identity politics... Boas was an assimilationist and an integrationalist. He wanted everyone to participate fully and equally in the new world under construction... This perspective is the very antithesis of multiculturalism and identity politics" (44). "Nature/Nurture and the Anthropology of Franz Boas and Margaret Mead as an Agenda for Revolutionary Politics," *Horizontes Antropológicos*, no. 16, (December, 2001), 35–52. Greenfield is correct to suggest that the identity politics that comprise contemporary discourses of multiculturalism would have seemed, to Boas, foreign and, from a scientific view, incoherent. However, Greenfield invokes too flat an account of multiculturalism and Boas can be seamlessly associated with identity politics exactly because, as this current paper argues, he was unable to negotiate the terms of cultural integration and assimilation beyond the hyper-individualized boundaries imagined in contemporary identity politics. Greenfield himself writes that Boas espoused "a view of humanity in which each group, or culture, the term he used to refer to the total way of life of each population, became in a sense like the individuals Boas so greatly admired" (43). To the extent that Boas's "culture" should be understood "individually," Boas played a critical part in laying the groundwork for the philosophical individualism at the core

of both Kantian and Nietzschean liberalism, either of which unfolds in modes of identity politics. Greenfield recognizes as much by stating that Boas “was to provide the imagery out of which multiculturalism and identity politics was to develop in the last several decades of the twentieth century” (Ibid.).

16 Rohner and Rohner, xiv.

17 Ibid.

18 “After placing educated, industrialized, nineteenth-century Europe and America (representing civilization) at the top of the structure, evolutionist scholars sequentially scaled the customs and societies of other people around the world into hypothetically earlier stages of development” (Ibid., xiv–xv). Rohner and Rohner document clear inconsistencies between Boas’s paradigm-shifting suggestions and his actual fieldwork. Below I will show how these inconsistencies reveal a thinker who was still fundamentally wedded to racist frameworks, regardless of his laudable achievements.

19 Boas, 1963, 17. Emphasis added.

20 Robert Lowie, *Culture and Ethnology* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1917), 66.

21 “Any evaluation of culture means that a point has been chosen towards which changes move and this point is the standard of our modern civilization” (Boas, 1963, 187).

22 Ibid., 167.

23 Ibid., 172. Emphasis added. Boas continues, “The human code of ethics for the closed social group to which a person belongs is everywhere the same: murder, theft, lying, rape are condemned. The difference lies rather in the extent of the social group toward which obligations are felt and the clear discernment of human suffering; that is in an increase of knowledge” (Ibid., 187).

24 Ibid., 227. Emphasis in the original.

25 Ibid., 241. Earlier, Boas writes, “The first impression gained from a study of the beliefs of primitive man is, that while the perceptions of his senses are excellent, his power of logical interpretation seems to be deficient. I think it can be shown that the reason for this fact is not based on any fundamental peculiarity of the mind of primitive man, but lies, rather, in the character of the traditional ideas by means of which each new perception is interpreted; in other words, in the character of the traditional ideas with which each new perception associates itself determining the conclusions reached.... It is not difficult to show that a very general and primitive attitude of mind is involved in the identification of the characteristics of an individual with the supposed typical characteristics of the group to which he belongs” (199, 228).

26 Ibid., 202.

27 Boas, 1945, 216. Boas made these remarks in a 1939 address entitled “Role of the Scientist in Democratic Society.” Boas claims that not only should the scientist exemplify intellectual freedoms in his role as a teacher but must advance the cause of freedom by demonstrating the scientific warrants for liberal democratic freedom. By the late 1930s, Boas realized that if he were to combat racism in either its National Socialist or its common American form, he would need to address wider audiences. This address, as well as many presented in this collection, is the attempt to disseminate Boas’s radical anthropology.

28 “Types Distinct from Our Own: Franz Boas on Jewish Identity and Assimilation,” *American Anthropologist*, 84 (1982): 545–565. Glick relates a sad history of German Jewish assimilation. The concerted efforts of German Jews to join German society continued to be rebuffed by a singular reality: “Most Germans did not believe that Jews, no matter how long they lived in Germany or how much they asserted their German identity, could ever become genuine Germans” (3). Ironically, the Jews failed to be accepted into German

- society not because Jews were not sufficiently willing to give up their cultural identity, as many were quite willing, but rather because the Germans were not willing to give up theirs, that their cherished notions of *Volk* “were envisioned as rooted in soil, the culture, and tradition, and the connections between racial ancestry, land, and cultural inheritance were perceived not as abstraction or metaphor, but as a literal and absolute bond that could not and must not be dissolved” (4). (Glick points out the further irony that Herder, from whom the Germans first received the notion of *Volk*, understood the Jews, not the Germans, as the enduring embodiment of *Volk*.)
- 29 “An Anthropologist’s Credo,” *The Nation*, Vol. 147, 201.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 565.
- 31 *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 3.
- 32 Specifically, Augustine names the mad drive to form temporal cities, will-to-dominance by an endless cycle of wars to end all wars, the desire of peace for the sake of the lowest kind of goods, and the fantasy of carnal immortality even in the face of impending death.
- 33 *The City of God against the Pagans*, ed. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 44. Augustine’s argument here relies on an underlying metaphysics that posits creation as willed emanation *ex nihilo*, a reality that names creaturely existence as gift to be received rather than possession to be dominated. His arguments call the Romans home from where they as creatures have rebelled to the eternal creator as their end, a call that requires exodus from the earthly city’s secured spatial and temporal *modus vivendi*.
- 34 Madness and violence follow as the external expressions of ateleological desperation. The history of war to end war followed by other wars characterizes the earthly citizens’ being-in-the-world as they continue the cycle of will-to-dominance by the sacrifices of war. In the midst of such terror, earthly citizens can only tell stories of untruth—“foreign invaders made us do it!”—as they desperately try to make wild living sustainable in the far country (Luke 15:13). Though the Romans hold an ontology that allows for the myth of the sovereign self, it is a myth that pays too great a price and an idolatry that demands more than the enervated subject’s parasitic inheritance can offer.
- 35 After all, Augustine argues, without the sustenance of the Romans, the impotent pagan gods would have been thrown out long ago.
- 36 Against the claim “No rain, blame the Christians,” Augustine need simply lay out, as he does in Book III, example after example of Roman demonic pride as the cause of its current plight. Rome’s history shows how it never could have been the eternal city, as is now evident, precisely because its desires are ordered toward the temporal; having pursued earthly goods in the name of the eternal, it has secured neither.
- 37 “For they themselves, even though they knew these things to be in vain, still held that religious worship should be paid, not to the God to whom it is due but to the order of nature established under the rule and government of the one and true God” (Augustine, 2002, 180).
- 38 *Ibid.*, 181.
- 39 *Ibid.*
- 40 Though Plato is not considered here, Plato and the neo-Platonists certainly represent the best of the earthly city, in the same way Cicero and Varro represent the best of Rome. Augustine, however, pinpoints the same centrality of necessity in their philosophy: to the extent that they hold to an ontology of diremption, most notably in terms of Plotinus’ unmediated emanation of the many from the one, creation simply exists by necessity rather than divine willing; as with Plotinus, there is neither sin nor grace and good and evil are constructed in terms akin to Gnostic dualism.

- 41 We see here how worship forms souls and bodies by imitation of the activities of the gods worshipped. Augustine knows liturgy to be the formation of the virtues; worship of deceptive gods form deceptive people since worship is the performance of divinity within the body and bodies of believers. Since Varro and Cicero have not been set free by the Holy Spirit, which is to say they have not yet been transformed by the church, they cannot but fear even though by their philosophical intuitions and commitments they know better (Ibid., 242).
- 42 Boas, 1963, 231. In the 1911 publication, unlike the 1938 edition, Boas precedes the final chapter on the "Race Problem" with a penultimate chapter entitled "Summary" and then begins his final chapter: "We will now turn to the question what these results of our inquiry teach us in regard to the problems that confront our modern civilization..." as if to highlight this final set of claims as the capstone of his project (Boas, 1911, 251).
- 43 Boas, 1963, 242.
- 44 Boas, 1945, 29.
- 45 Malik, 172.
- 46 Ibid., 152.
- 47 Ibid., 156.
- 48 Following Boas, even the most rudimentary presumptions of natural selection were now envisaged through a cultural rather than genetic logic.
- 49 Herskovits, 11.
- 50 David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2003), 126.
- 51 Malik, 152.
- 52 Ibid., 170.
- 53 Ibid., 171.
- 54 John Rawls gives us the political theory for such a society; after all, Rawls' guiding question in terms of political liberalism was always: "How is it possible that there may exist over time a stable and just society of free and equal citizens profoundly divided by reasonable though incompatible religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines?" John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1993), xx. Multiculturalism as a condition of possibility has become, using Charles Taylor's aptly descriptive term for modernity, the "best account available" for how we might live together in the earthly city.
- 55 Malik, 177.
- 56 Graham Ward, *Cities of God* (London: Routledge, 2000), 67. Ward quotes Christopherson from "The Fortress City: Privatized Spaces, Consumer Citizenship," in *Post-Fordism: A Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell), 409–427.
- 57 Ibid., 70.
- 58 See "The Noble Savage Theme as Fetish" where Hayden White shows the inevitability of the "Noble Savage" trope. *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 183–196.
- 59 Tristram H. Engelhardt begins his book with this stark claim: "Moral diversity is real. It is real in fact and in principle," *The Foundations of Bioethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3. Engelhardt's ethics displays the uses and limits of diversity as the *esse* of ethical existence and its facticity as an animating principle. In contrast to bioethics based on Kantian universal principles, Engelhardt recognizes moral diversity as the ground for a bioethics that, in the ruins of a universal content-full secular morality, espouses the central practices of collaboration and consent amongst what he calls "moral strangers." Nietzsche on one hand and the Aristotelian Thomist Alasdair MacIntyre on the other influence

Engelhardt's project. Unlike either, however, Engelhardt's ethics, like Boas's anthropology, does not account for the rich dynamics that attend engagement with moral strangers. By centering on consent as the final arbiter of bioethics, Engelhardt seems to indicate that the moral agent remains fixed in enclosed particular commitments. If that is the case, it remains unclear in what way collaboration and consent comes about if the rigidity of the sovereign subject must be held a priori. After all, bioethics, along with most issues of great concern, require more than a thin overlapping consensus of respect. Like Boas, Engelhardt does advance the conversation by articulating the centrality of diversity, yet his alternative denudes genuine dialogue.

60 Augustine, 2002, 48, 49.

61 "But by the judgment of God, which will be the last judgment, delivered through His Son Jesus Christ, the glory of that city will by God's gift appear with a clarity so great and so new that no trace of what is old shall remain" (Ibid., 1003).

62 In his essay "Greeting: Beyond Racial Reconciliation," Emmanuel Katongole borrows this phrase from Sallie McFague. Father Katongole writes: "It is by standing within the wild space that is worship that Christians can now see themselves in a different perspective." *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*, eds. Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 73–74.

63 This quoted phrase comes from Amy Laura Hall's *Kierkegaard and the Treachery of Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 2.

64 Augustine, 1991, 123.