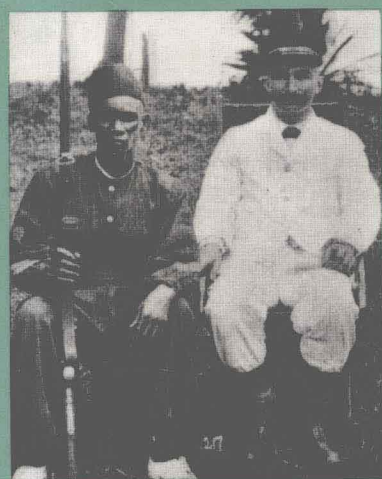




An Analysis
and Interpretation
of the Early Writings
of Robert E. Park



MILITARISM, IMPERIALISM, AND RACIAL ACCOMMODATION



Stanford M. Lyman

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*Dedicated to
The Faculty in Sociology
and Social Institutions
at the University of
California, Berkeley, 1951–1961*

My Teachers

Democracy is not something that some people in a country can have and others not have, something to be shared and divided like a pie—some getting a small and some getting a large piece. Democracy is an integral thing. If any part of the country doesn't have it, the rest of the country doesn't have it. The Negro, therefore, in fighting for democracy for himself is simply fighting the battle for our democracy. . . .

Robert E. Park*

We can no longer impassionate ourselves for the principles in the name of which Christianity recommended to masters that they treat their slaves humanely, and, on the other hand, the idea which it has formed of human equality and fraternity seems to us today to leave too large a place for unjust equalities. Its pity for the outcast seems to us too Platonic; we desire another which would be more practicable; but as yet we cannot see what it should be nor how it could be realized in facts.

Emile Durkheim**

*Robert E. Park to Horace Cayton. Quoted in Winifred Raushenbush, *Robert E. Park: Biography of a Sociologist* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1979), p. 177.

**Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. by Joseph Ward Swain (New York: The Free Press, 1965), p. 475

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A boy maimed by Congo soldiers.

Congo Soldiers.

PREFACE

Robert E. Park (1864–1944) is recognized as one of the giants of early American sociology. Yet, despite his prominent place in the history of the discipline, a conventional approach to his theoretical outlook and empirical studies has decreed the banishment of his early writings—i.e., virtually all of his works published before 1913—to a limbo land that not even his biographers have penetrated very deeply. Hence, Park's description and analysis of imperial Germany's military organization (1900),¹ his exposé and critique of Belgium's King Leopold II's atrocities in the Congo (1904, 1906, 1907),² and his studies of the black community in Winston-Salem, North Carolina (1905, 1913),³ and of Booker T. Washington's agricultural education program at Tuskegee, Alabama (1908),⁴ are not considered part of the annals of American sociology nor even a portion of his sociological *oeuvre*.⁵ The present book intends to remedy this situation. It provides an interpretation of these and a few other of Park's early writings and offers a new and different outlook on his sociology.

Because autobiographical notes and biographical studies of Park are readily available,⁶ it is only necessary here to present a brief sketch of those aspects of his life that are relevant to his early writings. Robert Ezra Park was born at his maternal grandfather's farm, six miles from Shicksinny, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, on February 14, 1864, to a twenty-three-year-old school-teacher, Theodosia Warner, and her twenty-six-year-old first cousin and husband, Hiram Asa Park, a soldier in the Union army. At the end of the war, the Parks moved to Red Wing, Minnesota, a Mississippi River town forty miles south of Minneapolis, where Hiram Park would become a locally prominent wholesale grocer. Robert spent his first eighteen years in Red Wing, taking notice of the local Indians and making friends with the children of the town's Swedish and Norwegian immigrants. Upon graduation from high school in 1882, Park attended the University of Minnesota for one year and then transferred to the University of Michigan, from which he matriculated with a Phi Beta Kappa key and a Ph.B. degree in philology in 1887. Among the professors who influenced him there were Calvin Thomas, a Germanist, and John Dewey, the philosopher.

will be argued that they form and illustrate a transition in sociological thought.

As sociology moved out from its possible location in German romantic philosophy¹⁰ and toward becoming the rational and excessively positivistic social science that is represented today by its mainstream professionals, it had to come to terms with the existence of evil in the world. At the time Park wrote his Congo essays, American Social Gospel sociologists had begun the formulation of a secular theodicy that would at one and the same time transvalue Protestant thought into a seemingly objective and positive science of social reconstruction and create a new academic discipline.¹¹ Working outside the academy and skeptical of the efforts of religiously inspired social reformers, Park, even when he was working in cooperation with the Baptist missionaries who made up the corps of the Congo Reform Association's field investigators, formulated a far more complex perspective on modernity's modes of evil. In effect, as will be elaborated in the second chapter of the present book, he developed a basis for a philosophical sociology of horror¹² that combined a critique of the political economy of capitalist imperialism with a *geisteswissenschaftliche* Gothic outlook on both the Protestant ethic and the personification of wickedness. That outlook analogized the capitalist form of imperialist exploitation of labor to that of the preternatural vampire, who must roam the earth in search of its source of life-giving sustenance, human blood, and in the process turn its victims into its soulless followers. The emerging sociology of modernity and values might gain much by considering Park's thought on the subject as one alternative to that of Marx.¹³

Upon completion of his work for the Congo Reform Association, Park accepted Booker T. Washington's offer to become the already renowned Tuskegee principal's private secretary, research analyst, and amanuensis. For the next seven years Park roamed through the American South's "Black Belt," which he described as "a strange country with a strange people . . ." He went on to observe that, "[V]ery few of us . . . have much real knowledge either about the Black Belt, or the people who inhabit it."¹⁴ With Washington, Park also toured Europe in quest of what the Tuskegeean called "the man farthest down," i.e., a people living under socioeconomic conditions as bad as or worse than those affecting America's blacks,¹⁵ and, uncredited, Park coauthored a two volume history of America's blacks.¹⁶ Under his own name, Park carried out and published a study of the black settlement at Winston-Salem, North Carolina, another study of the domestic standard of living in African-American homes, and a thoroughgoing analysis of Booker T. Washington's agricultural extension program in Macon County, Alabama.

In these studies—which are treated in the third chapter of the present book—Park presents an empirical analysis of what I choose to call the benevolent face of Booker T. Washington's applied variant of the Protestant ethic.¹⁷ In other words, when read together, Park's Congo and Black Belt studies

As such, Park observed at the end of his life, they would nevertheless still have to fight for their civil rights and long-deserved equal status.²²

During and after his academic years at Chicago, Park continued his travels all over the world. By the late 1920s, he had come to see that the dynamic of the “melting pot” applied to the whole world, that America was no longer the sole locus of that process—indeed, that by closing its “racial frontier on the Pacific”²³ to the peoples of Asia, the United States had become retrogressive with respect to the global trend toward assimilation of every people into the vortex of an industrial, commercial, meritocratic, and mass-oriented civilization. Yet, that civilizing movement generated its own atavistic regressions. From the 1920s on, Park took increasing notice of the character, scope, and direction of American racial prejudices, of the social, economic, and political implications of the rise of Italian Fascism, German Nazism, and Soviet Communism, and of the concomitant decline of Christianity as an inner-worldly moral force.

During the late 1930s and early 1940s—already retired from the University of Chicago and, after 1936, ensconced at Fisk University—Park continued to address the sociology and social psychology of the race question in global and military-geopolitical, as well as national and local, terms. Although his former place of inspiration, Tuskegee, had not yet shown an interest “in adapting its program to the new frontier of American and Negro life,”²⁴ Park had. Among the hundreds of his students and followers, it is to be noted that many of those who were non-white adopted a broad, supranational, and often worldwide perspective. Samuel C. Adams, for example—who matriculated under Park at Fisk in 1940, went on to earn a Ph.D. at Chicago in 1952, entered the Foreign Service, serving in twenty-seven countries, and became United States Ambassador to Niger—claimed that one reason he held his first teacher in such high esteem was that Park had “had the art of knowing that the world around him was filled with secrets, waiting to be understood.”²⁵ St. Clair Drake (1911–1990), who in 1945 had co-authored *Black Metropolis* with Park’s former student, Horace Cayton,²⁶ joined with Kwame Nkrumah in establishing a post-colonial Ghana, analyzed the race problem in terms of its international scope and effects,²⁷ directed the African and Afro-American Studies Program at Stanford University from 1969 to 1976,²⁸ and, at the end of his life, authored a new interpretation of the history and meaning of the African diaspora.²⁹ In reconsidering the meaning of the years Park had spent with Booker T. Washington, Drake cast doubt on the claim made by Park’s detractors that his interest in “Negroes stemmed only from a desire to study them, to use them as data for his intellectual ruminations.” Park’s “pre-occupation with Africa and the New World diaspora,” Drake pointed out, “suggests that his interest ran far deeper than that.”³⁰ E. Franklin Frazier (1894–1962) not only empirically tested Park’s theory of the race relations cycle with respect to black American lifeways and, finally, came to reject it as either descriptive or prescriptive, but also developed a variant of Park’s

Park's final talk to his erstwhile colleagues at Chicago pointed to this discrepancy between public policy and national purpose.³⁶ It harked back to one of his earliest statements and might very well be his epitaph: "We must not lay down as a principle and apply to others what we do not want them to apply to us."³⁷ This book is dedicated to reminding us of the sociological relevance of that statement for our own time.³⁸

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"Re-reading Robert E. Park: Toward a Gothic Perspective on Capitalism and Imperialism," annual meeting, Mid-South Sociological Association, Hot Springs, Arkansas, October 24-27, 1990; annual meeting, Gregory Stone Symbolic Interaction Symposium, San Francisco, California, February 7-9, 1991.

"The Terrible Story of the Congo," *Everybody's Magazine*, XV (December 1906), pp. 763-72.

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Untitled review essay by Robert E. Park of *Die Drei Nationalökonomiwn*, by Werner Sombart, (München and Leipzig: Verlag von Duncker & Humblot, 1930), *American Journal of Sociology*, XXXVI:6 (May 1931), pp. 1071-77, permission obtained from James Redfield, the grandson of Robert E. Park.

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I have dedicated this book to the faculty in Sociology and Social Institutions at the University of California, Berkeley, 1951–1961, from whom I first learned of Robert E. Park and received the inspiration to pursue my lifelong studies in sociological thought. I should especially wish to extend my appreciation to Reinhard Bendix, Herbert Blumer, Kenneth Bock, Kingsley Davis, Wolfram Eberhard, Cesar Graña, William Kornhauser, Seymour Martin Lipse, H. Franz Schurmann, Philip Selznick, and Tamotsu Shibutani.

The drawing of Robert E. Park that serves as a frontispiece is taken from *Robert E. Park: Biography of a Sociologist*, by Winifred Raushenbush, published by Duke University Press, Durham, 1979. Reprinted with Permission of the publisher.

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"Robert E. Park Reconsidered: The Early Writings," *The American Sociologist*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Winter 1990), pp. 342-51.

"Civilization, Culture, and Color: Changing Foundations of Robert E. Park's Sociology of Race Relations," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Spring 1991), pp. 285-300.

"Robert E. Park's Congo Papers: A Gothic Perspective on Capitalism and Imperialism," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Summer 1991), pp. 501-16.

"Rereading Robert E. Park: Toward a Gothic Perspective on Capitalism and Imperialism," *Explorations: The Age of Enlightenment*, Special Series, Vol. IV (1990), pp. 29-107.



The essays by Robert E. Park were originally published in the following journals:

"The German Army: The Most Perfect Military Organization in the World," *Munsey's Magazine*, XXIV:3 (December 1900), pp. 376-95.

"The Yellow Press," *Sociology and Social Research*, XII:1 (September 1927), pp. 3-11.

["Sombart on Sociology"*], an untitled review essay of *Die Drei Nationalökonomien*, by Werner Sombart, (München und Leipzig: Verlag von Duncker & Humblot, 1930), *American Journal of Sociology*, XXXVI:6 (May 1931), pp. 1071-77.

"Recent Atrocities in the Congo State," *The World To-Day*, VIII (October 1904), pp. 1328-31.

"A King in Business: Leopold II of Belgium, Autocrat of the Congo and International Broker," *Everybody's Magazine*, XV (November 1906), pp. 624-33.

*Title supplied by Stanford M. Lyman.

approach to study the character and predict the likely outcome of race and culture contacts in the post-colonial world.³¹ Although conventional, American, mainstream sociologists conceive Park's interest in "human ecology" to be applicable exclusively to the study of neighborhoods and cities, we have no less than the testimony of Werner Cahnman—who had received his Ph.D. from the University of Munich in 1927 and served as instructor and Julius Rosenwald fellow at Fisk University during Park's final years—that "Park had expressed the desire to see the principles of human ecology fortified by the methods of geopolitics and applied to the problems of the international scene."³²

At the time of his death (February 7, 1944), Park's concerns about the world of races, cultures, and civilization must have seemed to him to have come full circle. Germany's military might—which, he had pointed out in 1900, had achieved the pinnacle of modern organizational development under Bismarck's field marshall chief of staff, Helmuth von Moltke—had under Nazi direction so alarmingly challenged Western civilization that the field marshall's grand nephew had become a secret plotter against the regime.³³ Hitler's proposed Aryan racial order, his holocaust involving the destruction of Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, and other "undesirable" elements, had shown Park that, contrary to conventionally held linear theories of state development, the modern polity could coexist with, even be motored by, the atavistic horde, and that civilized public spiritedness could be overwhelmed by charismatically inspired, mindless crowd behavior. However, not only had Germany's and Japan's garrison states become the agency of a global totalitarian threat, but also the exigencies of the latter had evoked comparable militaristic developments in non-totalitarian societies that, as L. L. Bernard pointed out in 1944, boded ill for the postwar world.³⁴ Moreover, the modern city, once conceived as the place where freedom, civil society, and social and personal idiosyncrasy might not merely coexist but flourish, was now "like the civilization of which it is the center and focus, a vast physical and institutional structure in which men live, like bees in a hive, under conditions such that their activities are considerably more regulated, regimented, and conditioned than is likely to appear to the spectator or be perceived by the inhabitant."³⁵

In such a civilization it would be possible for the horrors of Hitlerism, even more than Leopold II's depredations in the Congo, to be routinized beyond the power of Gothicism to provoke an outcry. The lesson about the dangers of Gothicism that was explicitly drawn in Park's "terrible story of the Congo" had not yet been learned—in Europe or in America. The recognition of the individual worth of each human being, regardless of race, color, culture, or creed, had been repudiated by the Nazi regime and was still only an ideal in America—honored on occasions of patriotic self-congratulation but disregarded in the institutional practices affecting the lives and livelihoods of the country's African-Americans, Asians, Hispanics, and Amerindians.

form themselves into a comprehensive portrait of the double-sided moral character and socioeconomic effects of the Reformation. The Protestant ethic was the fount from which flowed both the preternatural horrors of capitalist imperialism in Africa and the beneficent incentives to chastity, honesty, frugality, and hard work in rural Southern black settlements in America. No previous analysis of Park's work has formulated the matter in this way. But, of course, no previous analysis has bothered to evaluate Park's "pre-Chicago" writings from a sociological perspective.

After resigning from his position at Tuskegee in 1912, Park accepted W. I. Thomas's invitation to become a teaching member of the faculty at the University of Chicago. Park offered his first course in the fall-winter quarter of 1913-14 and until 1920 in the annual summer sessions. He signaled his assumption of professional identity by joining the American Sociological Society in 1914, becoming its national president a decade later. Park served as president of the Urban League chapter in Chicago and played an important role in the Chicago Commission on Race Relations.¹⁸ For the next two decades Park became a principal guide and mentor to the graduate students at the University of Chicago and thereby established what has become his generally recognized place in the development of American sociology.¹⁹

But, read in the light of his pre-Chicago works, Park's academic writings can be seen as a further elaboration of his conception of the civilizational process and its effect on race relations and the development of a civil society. Civilization, Park believed, "is a consequence of contact and communication," while "races are the products of isolation and inbreeding." In Park's sociology, the city is the locus of civilization, the place in which "the forces which have been decisive in the history of mankind . . . have brought men together in fruitful competition, conflict, and cooperation."²⁰ In light of this formulation of the matter, it should be observed that Booker T. Washington's bi-racial ruralization program for the nation's blacks—much as it did to train them in the racial etiquette necessary for survival in the Redemptionist South and to shield them from the more virulent aspects of ubiquitous white racial prejudices—had also kept them isolated in the countryside and, hence, had held them back from participation in the inevitable rough and tumble of a democratic, urban, but racist civil society.

Once out of the black South, Park took a greater interest in America's urban blacks, seeing in their literary, artistic, and musical works, as well as in such movements as that for black civil rights, for Marcus Garvey's back-to-Africa program, and in the several racially conscious protests against their neglect by historical and humanistic scholars, the development of a sense of peoplehood, history, and culture.²¹ That emerging sensibility, he argued, transcended and would eventually overwhelm their identity as a merely physical presence, i.e., as a race. Rather than remaining abject subjects of a "natural history," Park came to recognize that the "new Negroes" would be active participants in a social history, much of which would be of their own making.

From the time of his graduation until 1898, Park worked as a journalist on various newspapers in the Midwest and in New York City. He had, he would recall in 1929, “made up my mind to go in for experience for its own sake, to gather into my soul as Faust somewhere says ‘all the joys and sorrows of the world.’”⁷ He completed but was never able to publish a novel, *The Isle of Enchantment*, about the social classes of Manhattan, and with Franklin Ford and John Dewey tried but did not succeed in bringing out a new kind of newspaper, *Thought News*. In 1894, Park married Clara Cahill with whom he would father four children between 1895 and 1902. In the fall of 1898, he enrolled at Harvard for an M.A. in philosophy, studying primarily with William James, George Santayana, and Hugo Münsterberg. One year later, he and his family moved to Berlin where Park registered at the Friederich-Wilhelm University. During his second year there, he took three courses with the man he would later call “the greatest of all sociologists,” Georg Simmel. It was during the second year of his graduate studies in Berlin that Park wrote and published his analysis of the new German army, the paper that is the subject of the first chapter of the present volume. Although it provides a virtually “Weberian” analysis of class, status, and military power in Germany and adumbrates his later writings on the rise of what Harold Lasswell would call the “garrison state,” Park’s study of General von Moltke’s organizational reforms has never been treated by sociologists as anything but journalism. Park journeyed from Berlin to Strassburg (later Strasbourg) and, soon after, to Heidelberg, where in 1903 under the supervision of Wilhelm Windelband he completed a doctoral dissertation entitled “*Masse und Publikum: eine methodologische und soziologische Untersuchung*.” It is a testimony to the neglect of Park’s early work that this study was not translated into English and published until 1972.⁸

Returning to the United States in 1903, Park accepted a one-year position as an assistant to William James in Harvard’s department of philosophy. One year later, he became secretary of an international protest group, the Congo Reform Association, whose American branch he had co-founded with Thomas Barbour, secretary of the American Baptist Missionary Society. After a quick but intensive study of the situation then prevailing in Belgian King Leopold’s Congo Free State, Park ghosted one essay for Booker T. Washington⁹ and under his own name in 1904, 1906, and 1907 published in *The World To-Day* and in *Everybody’s Magazine* four articles, entitled, respectively, “Recent Atrocities in the Congo State”; “A King in Business: Leopold II of Belgium, Autocrat of the Congo”; “The Terrible Story of the Congo”; and “Blood Money of the Congo.” These essays form what I believe is an embryonic theory and critique of capitalism and imperialism that proceed from a perspective that I have called “Gothic.” Although these essays have never been subjected to a thoroughgoing sociological analysis—and the first one does not appear on any published bibliography of Park’s works—here it