

Prologue

The concepts of freedom and liberty have played a huge role in the history of what might be called The American Ideology, with all manner of material consequences. On the anniversary of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, for example, an op-ed piece under President George W. Bush's name appeared in the *New York Times*. He there avowed that we "are determined to stand for the values that gave our nation its birth" because a "peaceful world of growing freedom serves America's long term interests, reflects enduring American ideals and unites America's allies." He then concluded that humanity now "holds in its hands the opportunity to further freedom's triumph over its age-old foes," adding, for good measure, that "the United States welcomes its responsibility to lead in this great mission."¹ These sentiments were in broad accord with the tendency in the United States to interpret the September 11 events as an attack upon distinctively American values of freedom and liberty, rather than upon the main symbols of U.S. military and financial power. In the weeks that followed, the Bush administration frequently signaled its intention to lead a distinctively American campaign "to further freedom's triumph over its age-old foes." Two years later, after the formal reasons given for the invasion of Iraq, orchestrated as a response to the September 11 attacks, were proven wanting, Bush increasingly resorted to the theme that the "freedom" of Iraq was a sufficient moral justification for the war. Bringing freedom, liberty, and democracy to a recalcitrant world in general and to the Middle East in particular became a persistent theme in Bush's speeches.

British prime minister Tony Blair took a far more cosmopolitan position. When he addressed the U.S. Congress in July 2003, shortly after the Iraq mission was supposedly accomplished, he proposed a friendly amendment to Bush's emphasis upon American values. "There is a myth," he said, "that though we love freedom, others don't; that our attachment to freedom is a product of our culture; that freedom, democracy, human rights, the rule of law are American values, or Western values. Members of Congress, ours are not Western values, they are the universal values of the human spirit."² Bush thereafter modified his rhetorical claims. In a speech before a select gathering of British notables in Whitehall in November 2003, he said: "The advance of freedom is the calling of our time. It is the calling of our country. From the fourteen points [Woodrow Wilson] to the four freedoms [Roosevelt] to the speech at Westminster [Ronald Reagan], America has put its power at the service of principle. We believe that liberty is the design of nature. We believe that liberty is the direction of history. We believe that human fulfillment and excellence come in the responsible exercise of liberty. And we believe the freedom we prize, is not for us alone. It is the right and capacity of all mankind."³

In his acceptance speech before the Republican National Convention in September 2004, Bush took the argument one step further. "I believe America is called to lead the cause of freedom in a new century, I believe that millions in the Middle East plead in silence for their liberty. I believe that given the chance they will embrace the most honorable form of government ever devised by man. I believe all these things because freedom is not America's gift to the world, it is the Almighty's gift to every man and woman in this world." And in his inaugural speech of January 2005, Bush further consolidated this theme. "We go forward with complete confidence in the eventual triumph of freedom. Not because history runs on the wheels of inevitability. It is human choices that move events. Not because we consider ourselves a chosen nation. God moves and chooses as he wills." While "history has an ebb and flow of justice," he observed, it "also has a visible direction, set by liberty and the author of liberty."⁴

The transition from distinctive American values through universal human values to values given by nature to, finally, the Almighty's intelligent design is of rhetorical as well as substantive interest. Bush, on this final reading, evidently saw himself leading the United States in its great mission to realize God's intelligent design on earth. Major decisions could then be cast within a stark and unyielding moral frame in which the absolutes of good and evil are frequently invoked and righteousness trumps

nuanced realities. The excessive resort to militarism partially derives from this, because, as Vice-President Cheney put it, “you don’t negotiate with evil, you defeat it.”

But what is also compelling about these speeches—and Bush made many of them even before the events of September 11—is the stark contrast between the nobility and high moral tone of their universal pronouncements and the ugly facts upon the ground: the documented murder through torture of prisoners under U.S. care in Bagram in Afghanistan; the degrading photographs from Abu Ghraib; the denial of Geneva Convention rights to anyone deemed by the Bush administration to be unlawful or enemy combatants; the painful pictures of shuffling prisoners held without trial for years in Guantanamo Bay; the U.S. Army refusal to keep records of “collateral deaths” thought to number more than 100,000 in Iraq in the first year of occupation; the “rendition” for interrogation to countries that practice torture of suspects arbitrarily (and, it turns out, often mistakenly) picked up anywhere in the world. The evidence mounts that these transgressions against human rights and decency are systemic rather than the result of the actions of a few “rotten apples” in the military barrel (as the administration often averred). In 2005, Amnesty International for one condemned the Bush administration for “atrocious violations” of human rights in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Guantanamo Bay. Within the United States, the Patriot Act restricted civil liberties, while abroad, the administration, despite noble pronouncements to the contrary, in no way ceased support for repressive, authoritarian, and sometimes ruthlessly dictatorial governments (Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Algeria, to name a few) when this served U.S. interests.

It is tempting, of course, to dismiss Bush’s speeches as rhetorical shams and peculiar to him. That would be a profound mistake. David Brooks, a conservative columnist for the *New York Times*, argues, correctly in my view, that they must be taken seriously. We should not assume, he says, that the real America “is the money-grubbing, resource-wasting, TV-drenched, unreflective bimbo of the earth” and that all this high-toned language “is just a cover for the quest for oil, or the desire for riches, dominion, or war.”⁵ While it almost certainly is a partial cover for these more venal aims, Brooks is quite right to insist that it is far from being “just” a cover. The ideals that Bush propounded have, it turns out, a longstanding political resonance in the United States at both elite and popular levels.

Consider, for example, the record of those with whom Bush most closely identified—Woodrow Wilson of the Fourteen Points, Franklin Delano

Roosevelt of the Four Freedoms, and Ronald Reagan. In his Whitehall speech Bush made much of the fact that the last person to stay at Buckingham Palace was Woodrow Wilson, “an idealist, without question.” Bush recounted how at a dinner hosted by King George V in 1918, “Woodrow Wilson made a pledge. With typical American understatement, he vowed that right and justice would become the predominant and controlling force in the world.” Yet this was the same Woodrow Wilson whose attorney general launched the infamous “Palmer raids” against immigrants and “anarchists” that culminated in the executions of Sacco and Vanzetti (now pardoned as innocent). The Wilson administration ruthlessly crushed the Seattle general strike in 1918 and exiled the leaders, dubbed “Reds,” to the newly minted Soviet Union. It imprisoned Eugene Debs for speaking out against the war and escalated its interventionism in Central America to put U.S. Marines into Nicaragua for more than a decade. The power politics that lay behind Wilson’s idealism were anything but pleasant. What Wilson actually meant when he again and again pledged to bring freedom and liberty to the whole world was this: “Since trade ignores national boundaries and the manufacturer insists on having the world as a market, the flag of his nation must follow him, and the doors of the nations which are closed against him must be battered down. Concessions obtained by financiers must be safeguarded by ministers of state, even if the sovereignty of unwilling nations be outraged in the process. Colonies must be obtained or planted, in order that no useful corner of the world may be overlooked or left unused.”⁶

Bush’s willingness to violate “the sovereignty of unwilling nations” and the enunciation of a “preemptive strike” military strategy (in violation of U.N. doctrine) whenever U.S. interests (commercial as well as military) are threatened, sits firmly in this Wilsonian tradition, as did his frequent association of personal freedom and democracy with free markets and free trade. Wilson’s invocation of the seventeenth-century principle known as *res nullius* in his commentary on implanting colonies is also telling. Most famously advanced by John Locke to justify the colonization of North America, this principle states that unoccupied or “unused” land could rightfully be appropriated by those who would render it more fruitful and more productive of value. That the land should become more productive of value is the key point. This was how the English justified their dispossession of the Irish in the seventeenth century (just as eminent domain can now be used in the United States to dispossess homeowners to make way for higher value uses such as box stores). “We’re sometimes

faulted for a naïve faith that liberty can change the world,” Bush said in his Whitehall speech, adding, “if that’s an error it came from reading too much John Locke and Adam Smith.” While the idea of Bush reading either seems far-fetched, his concern to situate himself in this seventeenth- and eighteenth-century liberal tradition is clear.

In “saving capitalism from the capitalists,” as he himself put it, FDR likewise launched all manner of domestic and international preemptive strikes against democratic governments and union power. He threw aside all constitutional protections in the name of security by illegally interning 120,000 Japanese Americans. Roosevelt’s enunciation of the “Four Freedoms” as the basis for a new world order appealed solidly to liberal conceptions of individualism and private property rights. These last principles were subsequently enshrined in the U.N. Declaration on Human Rights and were incorporated into the charters of a set of international institutions (the United Nations and what are known as the Bretton Woods institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) that were designed at the outset to consolidate freedoms of the market and to function largely as instruments of U.S. imperial power. That power was backed by a coalition (later based formally in NATO, in particular) of what is now known as “the willing” seeking to preserve the economic and political stability of a crisis-prone capitalism at all costs in the midst of a Cold War against the spread of communism. The Universal Declaration was clearly meant to embarrass the Soviet Union. The policies then set in motion culminated, after Roosevelt’s death, in the peculiar combination of a generous though self-interested Marshall Plan abroad and a very undemocratic McCarthyism at home. The United States insisted upon decolonization on the part of European powers, only to replace the European imperial regimes with distinctive forms of U.S. neocolonialism. The U.S.-backed overthrow of democratically elected governments in Iran in 1953 and Guatemala in 1954 (the list goes on and on) and support for any dictator who cared to take an anticommunist line confirmed U.S. contempt for the sovereignty of unwilling nations, as well as for any sense of the international rule of law. For his part, Reagan’s dedication to the cause of freedom was mired in, among many other things, attacks upon union power and the dismantling of many forms of social protection, coupled with tax cuts for the rich, deregulatory and environmental scandals at home, and the Iran-contra scandal (centered on illegal support for the war against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua), along with active support for military dictatorships and chronic abuse of human rights throughout much of Latin America.

Neil Smith, in his trenchant analysis of the “three moments” of U.S. globalization in the twentieth century, neatly connects the dots between these different articulations of the U.S. version of freedom’s march.⁷ He highlights the continuities between Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points through FDR’s Four Freedoms to the present phase of what he calls “the endgame” of globalization. The persistent pattern, over a century or more, of noble rhetoric coupled with grubby practices on the ground is as startlingly obvious as it is highly disturbing. The invocation of the Enlightenment and its special version known as “American exceptionalism” (the idea that the United States is different, outside of, inherently good and therefore beyond any external constraints) takes us onto tricky terrain, for it is customary in these postmodern times to attribute many of our contemporary ills to the hubris, errors, and omissions of Enlightenment thinking. But, as Foucault for one argues, we cannot just wish the Enlightenment away. “We must free ourselves,” he writes, “from the intellectual blackmail of being for or against the Enlightenment.”⁸ We have no choice except to come to terms with the fact that we are all, in some sense or another, heirs to its consequences. And this is far from being a peculiarly Western view because Mao, Nehru, Nasser, Nyerere, and Nkrumah (just to name a few significant political leaders from the developing and post-colonial world) were as much directly implicated in this tradition as those who, such as Ghandi, Franz Fanon, and Edmund Burke, defined themselves against it.

In the United States, as Neil Smith observes, the Enlightenment liberalism that inheres in “the political economy of Adam Smith, Kant’s cosmopolitanism, the willed reason of Rousseau, Hume’s practical empiricism and of course John Locke’s juridical politics of property and rights” is not “the political antithesis of contemporary conservatism but its political backbone.” “With Kant’s more enigmatic aspirations for cosmopolitan citizenship in the background, Locke and Smith together provided twin intellectual inspirations for a series of interlocked beliefs” about liberty, equality, and freedom that “anchored the political flowering of capitalism and the self-understanding of bourgeois society and its individualism.” These are the beliefs and the political-economic laws and practices that Woodrow Wilson represented and that President Bush promised to impose, by hook or by crook, by violence or by peaceful means, upon the rest of the world.⁹

Of course, this persistent strain of thinking within the U.S. political tradition has met with opposition. It has by no means been hegemonic.

A populist nationalism has often dominated and operated as a powerful check upon liberal international engagements. The isolationism of the 1920s, centered at the time within the Republican party, stymied Wilsonian internationalism at home (the Senate rejected joining the League of Nations), while the imperialist policies of the European powers checked it abroad. George W. Bush's republicanism, initially cast in populist nationalist terms, was geared to avoiding international engagements, such as the "nation building" that the Clinton administration had pursued in Kosovo and (disastrously) in Somalia. Bush was openly scornful of nation building abroad and a form of liberalism that by the late 1960s favored managing the market (both at home and abroad) through strong government domestic interventions and costly adventures abroad (including full-scale wars in Korea and Vietnam). Bush's subsequent advocacy of Wilsonian liberal international idealism, including attempts at democratization and nation building in Afghanistan and Iraq, suffused with the rhetoric of individual liberty and freedom, signaled a major political break in how this strain in U.S. foreign policy was to be articulated. The September 11 attacks and the subsequent declaration of a global war on terror allowed populist nationalism to be mobilized *behind* rather than *against* Wilsonian internationalism. This is the real significance of the widespread claim (accepted within the United States but not elsewhere) that the world fundamentally changed with September 11. That this is where the neoconservatives wanted to be all along is also deeply relevant. Their longstanding minority views could now become dominant at least for a time within the administration, if not hegemonic within the country. By contrast, large segments of the Democratic party, along with the traditional Republican right wing, have become comfortable with ideas of protectionism and isolationism (eventually looking to abandon the Iraq venture to its ugly fate). True-blue conservatives, such as William Buckley, mindful of the strong tradition of noninterventionism in the affairs of others that stretches back at least to Edmund Burke, became ferocious critics of the Iraq venture.

Bush and the neoconservatives are not alone in their global vision for a new world order founded in liberty and freedom. Both neoliberals and neoconservatives can agree that free markets and free trade and strong private property rights should form the political-economic grounding of the global order. The neoliberal utopianism that has swept around the world since the mid-1970s and engulfed state after state, to the point where even political parties of the left as well as many key international institutions (such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) embrace

its fundamental tenets, presumes that personal and individual freedom is best assured by strong private property rights and the institutions of a free market and free trade. On this point Bush the younger and Clinton, as well as Thatcher and Blair, could easily agree. It is against this background that Bush's justification of a preemptive war against Iraq and a program to democratize the Middle East can partially be understood. We must, he said, "use our position of unparalleled strength and influence to build an atmosphere of international order and openness in which progress and liberty can flourish in many nations." The United States has no imperial designs, he claimed. We merely "seek a just peace where repression, resentment and poverty are replaced with the hope of democracy, development, free markets and free trade." The U.S. aim is to "promote moderation, tolerance and the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity—the rule of law, limits on the power of the state, and respect for women, private property, free speech and equal justice."¹⁰

Again, it is tempting to dismiss this rhetoric as the friendly mask for the less benign face of authoritarian neofascism at home and militaristic imperialism abroad. While undoubtedly such dark undercurrents flowed freely in U.S. politics as well as among certain elements within the Bush administration, I think this would be a profound misreading if taken too one-sidedly. To begin with, this is certainly not the self-perception of the majority of U.S. citizens whose libertarian traditions are easily aroused through such rhetoric. Nor can it account for those other aspects of U.S. policy in which there is a marked generosity, both public and private, toward the rest of the world. The widespread support for "doing good in the world" and for engaging in charitable and philanthropic works (whether it be on the part of the Gates and Soros Foundations or U.S. emergency assistance and governmental aid) may be misguided or misplaced (and often passes with strings attached), but it cannot easily be construed as merely a mask for some nefarious purpose.

To dismiss what Bush was about misses what seems to me an essential and much broader point: all universalizing projects, be they liberal, neoliberal, conservative, religious, socialist, cosmopolitan, rights-based, or communist, run into serious problems as they encounter the specific circumstances of their application. Noble phrases and ideals crumble into shoddy excuses, special pleadings, misunderstandings, and, more often than not, violent confrontations and recriminations. If the U.S. effort to democratize Iraq has run into problems, then NATO has its problems to stabilize Afghanistan and the U.N. to bring the rule of law and demo-

cratic governance to a newly independent East Timor, much as Britain once had its problems in Cyprus, India, and Kenya; the French long ago in their invasion of Egypt; the Catholic Church in Latin America; the Soviet Union in Central Europe and Afghanistan; the Chinese in Tibet; and the Sandinistas with the Mesquite Indians on the Atlantic Coast. The list goes on and on. Such dismal histories leave a bitter taste. From them derives an understandable reticence to embrace universal solutions and utopian ideals of any sort. This gives us pause before we rush in to define any alternative universalizing project, such as that proposed through a revival of cosmopolitan governance or some international regime based on universal human rights. Such skepticism is pervasive, not only among postmodernists and the followers of thinkers like Foucault who explicitly reject all metatheoretical attempts at universal solutions as negative utopias. The reticence is widespread within the social movements that converge on the World Social Forum. While on the one hand these movements insist that “another world is possible” and that there is an alternative to neoliberal capitalism and imperialism, many of them, on the other hand, avidly resist articulating any global conception as to what such an alternative might look like and actively refuse to contemplate any global form of organized power. To take that path, they believe, is to embark upon a project that is bound to fail, to inflict more misery than it assuages, if not to produce an authoritarianism even worse than that which currently prevails. The new global order will emerge, it is said, from the million and one micro-projects to be found all around the world as people grapple with the circumstances of their daily lives and seek tangible and practical ways to improve their lot.

While I shall ultimately dispute this view, it is plainly important to have a solid grasp of why seemingly noble universal projects and utopian plans so often fail. The blatant and evident failures of the Bush administration to live up to its noble rhetoric allow us to reflect upon this more general problem. The first and most obvious step in such an inquiry is to see to what degree failure results from the lack of understanding of the particular circumstances of the democratizing project’s application. There are innumerable instances when this in itself seems to constitute a major part of the problem. Most commentators now retrospectively agree that the kind of knowledge of Iraq’s history, geography, anthropology, religious traditions, and the like that would be necessary to have even a smidgen of a chance of managing the transition to something resembling U.S. democracy in an occupied Iraq was sadly lacking. Hardly surprisingly, “stuff

happened” (in Donald Rumsfeld’s memorable words), and the situation in Iraq quickly ran out of control. But it is precisely at this point that this sort of explanation of failure itself runs out of control. The supposition is that there is some secure foreknowledge of the circumstances that could have guaranteed success. But what kind of knowledge would that be, where could it be found, and how secure could it possibly be?

The vital importance of adequate knowledge of circumstantial and local conditions is frequently evoked. The development economist Jeffrey Sachs, for example, learned from bitter experience that the systemic theories of development economics (derived, of course, from the universalistic economic principles set out by Locke and Adam Smith) cannot be applied without “a commitment to be thoroughly steeped in the history, ethnography, politics and economics of any place where the professional advisor is working.”¹¹ Without an adequate knowledge of geography (by which he mainly means physical environment and relative location), history, anthropology, sociology, and politics, we are bound to end up with egregiously erroneous solutions to pervasive problems of global poverty and environmental degradation. But with Sachs, the universal principles remain untouched. The circumstances affect only the applications. Seyla Benhabib, in contrast, sees a tension—a whole series of internal contradictions—between the universality of human rights theories and their application in different cultural situations. Our fate, she says, “is to live caught in the permanent tug of war between the vision of the universal” and attachments to “particularistic cultural and national identities.” She also notes that universal theories have particularistic origins and invariably bear the traces of their origins. It was Parisian men, after all, who proclaimed “the rights of man.” When the U.S. constitution, frequently taken as a global model, was framed with the famous opening line of “We the people,” it articulated the views of “a particular human community, circumscribed in space and time, sharing a particular culture, history and legacy; yet this people established itself as a democratic body by acting in the name of the ‘universal.’”¹² For Benhabib, there is a tense, dynamic, and often contradictory relation between the universals and the particulars. The concepts of freedom and liberty that Bush now projects onto the rest of the world inevitably bear the traces of the circumstances of their particular origin in U.S. history. There is, therefore, always an imperializing moment in any attempt to make that particular formulation, drawn from the one place and time, the foundation for universal policy. To note this is not necessarily to dismiss any such universal principle as illegitimate, but to recognize that

the translation of a local finding into a universally accepted norm is itself a complicated process that requires building consent and understanding rather than brutal imposition of the sort now advocated in that theory of “military humanism” that was used to justify NATO military intervention in Kosovo and the bombing of Serbia.¹³

Similar caveats can be advanced when considering the current revival of interest in Kant’s cosmopolitanism as a unifying vision for global democracy and governance. Martha Nussbaum, a leading advocate of the return to a cosmopolitan morality as a new way of being in the world, parallels her advocacy with an argument for an entirely different educational structure (and pedagogy) appropriate to the task of rational political deliberation in a globalizing world. “Our nation,” she complains, “is appallingly ignorant of most of the rest of the world.” That ignorance is fundamental to understanding why “the United States is unable to look at itself through the lens of the other and, as a consequence, [is] equally ignorant of itself.” In particular, Nussbaum goes on to argue: “To conduct this sort of global dialogue, we need knowledge not only of the geography and ecology of other nations—*something that would already entail much revision in our curricula*—but also a great deal about their people, so that in talking with them we may be capable of respecting their traditions and commitments. Cosmopolitan education would supply the background necessary for this type of deliberation” (emphasis added).¹⁴

Nussbaum’s appeal to adequate and appropriate geographical, ecological, and anthropological understandings interestingly echoes Kant’s opinion. Young men, he argued, needed an understanding of anthropology and geography in order to better understand the world. “The revival of the science of geography,” he wrote, “would create that unity of knowledge without which all learning remains only piece-work.”¹⁵ And, in Kant’s view, this knowledge must be popular (that is, accessible to all) and pragmatic (useful), as well as scientific. He regularly taught both geography and anthropology alongside his logic, metaphysics, and ethics. He evidently tried—unsuccessfully, as we shall see—to practice what he preached. But in the extensive debate that occurred around Nussbaum’s appeals for the revival of a cosmopolitan morality, the critical role that education in anthropology, geography, and the environmental sciences might perform passed by unexamined. Nussbaum makes no attempt to define what a “cosmopolitan education” in these subjects might be about. Nor does she consider the possibility, so important to Benhabib, that the cosmopolitan principles themselves may have to be modified or even radically reformulated (as in

the case of human rights theory) under the impact of the geographical, ecological, and anthropological particularities encountered.

If Nussbaum had paid more attention to these forms of knowledge, she might have noted the troubling fact of the difficult histories of both anthropology and geography as disciplines that had their origins in and have been seriously scarred by an intimate connection with colonialism, imperialism, militarism, and racism. While efforts have been made to eradicate the worst legacies of such tainted origins, traces still remain. But now we have also to face the equally troubling fact that these knowledges continue to be incorporated into, for example, the military apparatus to monitor, remotely sense, target and guide missiles, or to shape strategies of counter-insurgency. Geographical and anthropological knowledges are very much shaped by the institutional frameworks within which they are embedded; the World Bank, the CIA, the Vatican, and corporations, as well as the media, all promote specific ways of knowing, and these are often radically different from each other (the geographical knowledge purveyed by the tourist industry is very different from that found within the World Health Organization). Popular geographical knowledges (or lack thereof) have very often been put to crude political uses, even become embedded in government propaganda machines. When, for example, Bush characterized the world in terms of an “Axis of Evil” that includes Iraq, Iran, and North Korea, when particular states are arbitrarily designated as “rogue states” or “failed states,” then a distinctive map of the world is constructed that tacitly defines a legitimate terrain of potentially preemptive military action, which no one is in a position to gainsay without adequate counter-knowledge. Those cartoons of Reagan’s or Bush’s map of the world are amusingly instructive, but they also sometimes have deadly consequences. And it has precisely been the trope of U.S. foreign policy in particular, as Neil Smith points out, to conceal the actual geography of what Henry Luce back in 1942 dubbed “the American Century,” because U.S. geopolitical ambition has been global and universal, rather than specifically territorially focused, all along. Preferring not to state U.S. aims in terms of some “vastly different geography,” Luce advocated the use of big and “majestic” words like “Democracy, Freedom and Justice,” and in the process deliberately trivialized all forms of geographical knowledge. Smith concludes: “possessing the new global power, he sensed, meant not having to care about the world’s geography. Precisely because geography was everything—the American century was global—it was simultaneously nothing.”¹⁶ Cultivating the geographical ignorance of which Nussbaum

complains has, for many years in the United States, been a cardinal if covert aim of national educational policy.

But when whole territories, cultures, and peoples are demonized or infantilized as backward and immature, when whole swaths of the populated globe (such as Africa) are dismissed as irrelevant because they are unproductive of sufficient value, and when the studied and deliberate cultivation of geographical, ecological, and anthropological ignorance on the part of the mass of a population permits small elites to orchestrate global politics according to their own narrow interests, then the seeming banality and innocence of geographical knowledges appears more insidious. It is not simply that the devil lies in the geographical details (though it all too frequently does). It is the very political nature of the details that needs to be understood. Scientific understandings of global warming and greenhouse gasses, to cite a most recent and blatant example, get perverted by interventions of scientists with dubious credentials supported by lucrative contracts from the major energy companies. But this is then how oppositional politics always gets framed. When environmental groups challenge the World Bank's financial support for mega-dam projects, they invariably situate the proposed dam against the background of specific geographical, ecological, and anthropological conditions that allow losses and destructions to be highlighted—in contrast to the typical World Bank report that depicts the dam as some grand symbol of modernity generating rural electricity for a grateful populace en route to achieving a much superior standard of living. The core of the conflict often resides in which geographical, ecological, and anthropological description is deemed correct.

How then, to return to Nussbaum's seemingly innocent suggestion, are we to incorporate always conflictual and controversial as well as often perverse and self-serving forms of geographical knowledge into cosmopolitan projects? The danger of the unwitting deployment of political propaganda by way of geographical descriptions looms large. The revisions in our geographical, ecological, and anthropological curricula that might serve the purposes of Nussbaum's cosmopolitan education desperately call for critical examination. But few, particularly those in power, care to focus on the question as a matter of public urgency. In this book I seek to address this lacuna explicitly. I will concentrate mainly on the case of geography, since that is the terrain with which I am most familiar. But there are innumerable overlaps with anthropology, as well as with ecology and the environmental sciences, and I see no reason to police any fictitious borders that some may wish to impose upon overlapping and highly

interactive fields of study. My aim is to probe both the possibilities and the difficulties of achieving a cosmopolitan education in geography (alongside ecology and anthropology) that might meaningfully contribute to, perhaps even radically reformulate, the drive to construct a new cosmopolitan intellectual order appropriate for an emancipatory and liberatory form of global governance.

John Locke, incidentally, also recognized the foundational importance of adequate geographical knowledge to his universal project. “Without a knowledge of geography,” he wrote, “gentlemen could not even understand a newspaper.”¹⁷ Unfortunately, President George W. Bush, according to his own account, did not even care to read the newspapers.