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Christine Laurière

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Franz Boas and Paul Rivet's Relationship: Militancy as a Scientific Commitment

By Christine Laurière (Laboratoire d'anthropologie et d'histoire de l'institution de la culture, Paris)

The correspondence between Franz Boas and Paul Rivet (76 letters from Boas and 53 from Rivet), begun in 1919, reveals close ties between two founding fathers of anthropology. Perhaps because the contribution of Rivet (1876-1958) to French anthropology has been slighted, little attention has been paid to the Boas-Rivet relationship. Rivet was a major figure in the discipline during the first half of the twentieth century—general secretary of the Institute of Ethnology at the Sorbonne, occupant of the chair in anthropology at the National museum of Natural History, founding director of the Museum of Man in 1937, and a leader of the Société des Américanistes de Paris. He was also a world-renowned expert on South-Amerindian languages. This essay touches upon only a few aspects of his biography; for extended discussion of such matters as his battles against fascism, racism, and the regime of Marshal Pétain established under the German occupation of France during World War II, see Laurière 2008a.

In this paper, I reproduce a few of the letters Boas and Rivet exchanged and provide some contextualization, stressing how the two men understood the relationship between their scientific and political values as well as Boas's deep concerns about the European political scene. What makes these letters such compelling reading is the strong commitment to action they express—the view that anthropologists have responsibilities as citizens: they must protest, rebel, be activists, fighting prejudice courageously. Anthropologists' emphasis on studying non-western societies does not mean that their knowledge cannot inform action taken in their own societies.

The developing Boas-Rivet relationship was framed by the two world wars. There were three periods of intense interaction. The first was motivated by their desire to restore scientific internationalism immediately after World War I. The second (not represented in the letters printed here) reflected their concern to preserve Native American languages, although they disagreed about how to do linguistic research. Finally, they responded to the rise of Nazi power.

The first three letters show us Franz Boas and Paul Rivet getting to know one another. Their backdrop is the familiar story of Boas's painful wartime experience as an American citizen of German origins (see esp. Hyatt 1990, Lewis 2001a, Darnell 2006). Rivet spent the war as a military doctor, first on the French eastern front and then in Thessalonika. He returned to civilian life a fierce pacifist and socialist, eager to resume scientific relations with his German colleagues, opposed to then-prevailing French feeling, which inclined to revenge for the devastations of war. As an Americanist accustomed to interacting with colleagues all over Europe and America, Rivet placed a premium on scientific internationalism, and battled for it regardless of the consequences for his (still insecure) professional position, opposing the attempt by several members of the Board of Directors of the Society of Americanists to expel German speakers from the society; a vital member of the society and the editor of its journal, he proclaimed that he would resign if this proposal were executed. It is noteworthy that even before Boas and Rivet were acquainted, they minced no words in expressing themselves.

Bolton Landing, Warren Co., New York
August 23, 1919
Dr. Rivet
Société des Américanistes de Paris
61, rue de Buffon
Paris, France

My dear Sir,

I have in mind your invitation to contribute to the journal of the Société des Américanistes and your remark that contributions might be in Spanish or in English. I feel very keenly the need of international cooperation and am anxious to support every enterprise that is likely to further this object. From this point of view nothing has saddened me more than the circular sent out by our anthropological colleagues, principally of the Ecole d'Anthropologie [of Paris], a statement dictated by uncontrolled emotion, not by calm deliberation.

It is impossible to speak of these matters without speaking of the general political situation, and of what I think should be our aspirations as scientists. For more than thirty-five years, I have abhorred nationalism in the sense in which it has dominated the world for more than a century, —a nationalism that is merely a transformation of the old dynastic struggle for power. There is no European nation that has been free of this desire. All the policies of European States, as—alas—of the United States center on this one idea. It is a form of social thought in which all nations have participated, and all to the same extent, that has brought the world to a state of moral and economic bankruptcy. Unless we all turn to new and broader ideals we shall not save the world from further horrors.

If there is any science that teaches the narrowness of national aspirations for domination, it is anthropology. Do we not see the ever widening circles of social groups, beginning with primitive tribes, and leading up to modern nations? Do we not see, how the essence of the life of mankind is first based on the cultural unity of the tribal group, later, on that of the diversified social groups that no longer coincide with geographical and national limits; and how our present feelings are still swayed by the confusion of these two tendencies?

I do not accuse those who are devoted to nationalistic principles, of being criminal offenders, —for how would it be possible to stamp suddenly as a crime what has been praised as the highest virtue for thousands of years, —but I do believe that their ideals must be overcome and I consider it our duty as scientists, to do our share in this battle of ideals.

Let me make myself clear. I do not argue for universal uniformity. Nothing, I believe, could be more detrimental to the advance of mankind than that narrowness of view that seeks to impose its own ideals upon the whole of mankind, as we Americans do. Man will and shall retain individual, national, and social character, that each may contribute his share to the common good. But differences should not mean mutual distrust, hate and wish for domination and suppression

I do not wish to hurt your feelings, but let me say that only one thing is more depressing to me than the shortsightedness of your Statesmen who are doing their level best to pave the way for future horrors, and who cannot see, owing to the cheap flattery bestowed upon France by England, that she has been reduced to the rank of a satellite who lives by her grace. That one thing is the miserable role played by our representatives in the Peace negotiations. I feel I have a right to speak as I do. My sons

served in the American Army, the sons of dear relatives in the French Army, and those of other dear relations and friends in the German Army. I know that all of them abhorred war. How long are we going to fight the wars of Louis XV, of Peter the Great and of voracious England? I dare say the time for an understanding between France and Germany will only come when it is indifferent to whom German Alsace belongs. Now to my point. If I am to contribute to your Journal, I want to write in German. Let me know when conditions are such that you can accept such a contribution and I shall be glad to send you the best I have.

Yours very sincerely

Franz Boas

Société des Américanistes de Paris

61 rue de Buffon

Paris, September 4, 1919

Dear Sir,

I thank you very much for the courageous outspokenness of your letter and I thank you all the more for it given that I am almost unknown to you. I shall answer it in the same spirit.

For five years, I waged war and devoted all my energy to the service of my endangered country and its suffering children. But I never lost my serenity even in the most troubled times and I did not lose the ideal that was mine before the war and is now more important than ever. I think that mankind must strive to abolish all nationalisms, I think that present human wretchedness will find a cure only in the reconciliation of all peoples by all possible means, I shall try to hasten the day when true peace will be in our hearts, not on a document, and I would be ashamed to be a man if I did not feel this unwavering faith deep inside of me.

I saw with sadness the creation of an unsatisfactory peace; I saw with deep sorrow the beautiful idea of the League of Nations subverted; I saw with despair that the great lesson of the dreadful slaughter was understood by only a few, and that they were ignored.

However, I tried my best to win acceptance for my ideas. When one proposed to strike off citizens of the enemy powers from the membership list of the Society [of Americanists], I did not shrink from forceful opposition. I condemned the proposal in the name of scientific internationalism and, when it seemed that I might not prevail, I declared that I would resign my position as assistant general secretary. Confronted, the Society accepted my position.

As soon as possible, I reestablished my scientific exchanges with my German colleagues through my friend [Erland] Nordenskiöld.

Everywhere, on every occasion, I preached hatred of war and I fully share the ideas that [Anatole] France recently asserted to the schoolteachers of France. I . . . repeat the fine words of our great writer: "in every people, at anytime, there are more victims than criminals..." and this other sentence: "All the peoples have a great deal to forgive of each other".

You now know my ideas and my viewpoint. I am not one who is easily discouraged by the enormity of a task; I will work patiently, tenaciously, to persuade my fellow countrymen of my ideas. But one must recognize that this work cannot be achieved immediately or through violence. A war like the one that just devastated the world has mortally wounded so many hearts that one cannot ask those most hurt to forget. Remember that in France as well as in Germany three million families mourn and it

would be foolish to ask them not to feel despair and hatred. These feelings, intensified by the newspapers, fostered by tendentious and often misleading campaigns, shall disappear or at least shall fade with the passage of time. Good sense shall triumph once more and be assured that all my efforts will strive to hasten the moment of triumph. But for the time being one must act with extreme caution; when I face one of these fierce sorrows that demand revenge I usually keep silent, and I wait patiently for the time when I can speak words of peace and sweetness without causing offence. This time has not come: the graves of the dead are too fresh and wounds are still bleeding. Going too quickly one could inflame the feelings one would like to soothe.

For the sake of the human cause that is dear to us one must use infinite tact and discretion. That's what I am trying to do in the small circle where I have influence. As I told you at the beginning when there was an urgent matter that had to be resolved, I did not hesitate to resort to intense pressure in order to have my point of view triumph, and I managed to do so after a month-long fight, but I cannot adopt this behavior consistently because I will stir opposition that will rob me of any authority.

After what I did to prevent the expulsion of German members, the publication of a paper in German in our journal now would be regarded by the vast majority of society members as a blatant provocation, especially when they see that you are the author, since everyone knows that you write in Spanish or in English as easily as in German. The immediate result would be to break the tool of international action I forged.

The time will come when the journal can publish a paper in German, and be sure that if it is up to me this time will come speedily, but it will be written by a German scholar, [Theodor] Koch-Grünberg or [Eduard] Seler or someone else. By asking you to contribute I had a clear purpose: I was working for a return to a completely international review. Everyone knows you have German origins; it would be a step forward to publish a paper by you in our journal and no one could protest.

Under present conditions, trying to do more would defeat my goal.

Needless to say, I am in no way involved in the action of the professors of the School of Anthropology of Paris that troubles you, having nothing to do with this School. Do not forget, by the way, that it is not an official establishment. Remember rather that the Academy of Sciences and the Society of Americanists have retained their German corresponding members. I apologize for the length of this letter. But I wanted to answer your letter as clearly as possible and to leave no point obscure.

Yours very respectfully

Paul Rivet

October 9, 1919

Dr Rivet, General Secretary
Société des Américanistes de Paris,
Paris, France

My dear Sir,

I wish to thank you most cordially for your letter which I received recently and which is the first ray of light in the darkness of international conditions at the present time. I am exceedingly glad to know that we share the same opinions and the same feelings in regard to the aims of scientific work and in regard to the duties of mankind, and you may be certain that I value your communication most highly. In regard to the matter about which I wrote, I think another point should be considered which prompted my suggestion that when conditions in France are sufficiently far advanced, I should be glad to contribute to your journal in German. We must not forget that exactly the same

difficulties which you meet at the present time among your French colleagues must prevail in Germany, and that if a man like Seler, who, I am quite certain shares our opinions, should send you a communication, he might experience considerable personal difficulties among his German colleagues outside of the narrower scientific circle. I am free of these influences, and for this reason, it would be infinitely easier for me to break the ban than it would be for a German. This was one of the principal considerations which I had in mind. As I wrote to you in my first letter, I do not by any means ask you at the present time to accept a contribution in German, but I ask you to let me know when the time has come, and then I shall be glad to send it. I beg you to consider my suggestion from this point of view.

*Yours very sincerely,
Franz Boas*

This epistolary exchange signaled the beginning of a long cooperation. Given prohibitive printing costs in the US, Rivet helped Boas to find a printer in France for his International Journal of Linguistics and acted as a go-between with the printer. Boas invited Rivet to join the editorial board of his review and frequently asked him for advice about papers in South Amerindian linguistics. Fully aware of the international readership of the Journal de la Société des Américanistes de Paris, Boas several times raised funds from American scholars and institutions to keep the journal going when it suffered from the depreciation of the franc and the increase of paper and printing costs in the mid-twenties. In the 1920's, Boas sought every possible means to alleviate the "intellectual starvation" affecting European scientific life (Hyatt 1990:134). An active member of the Emergency Society in Aid of European Science and Art, he sought Rivet's advice in setting up bibliographical exchanges and subscriptions to French reviews.

Boas and Rivet first met in 1924, during the International Congress of Americanists in The Hague and Goteborg, the first held since 1912 that brought together scholars from formerly enemy nations. It took place partly in a neutral country, thanks to Rivet's suggestion and friendship with Nordenskiöld. As Boas and Rivet's letters show, they were determined that it be a truly international event. At its opening session in The Hague, the Congress president paid tribute to Rivet and his by then well known fight for scientific internationalism. Indeed, in 1919 Rivet had described the German members affair for readers of the Journal de la Société des Américanistes, and he wrote in his 1923 obituary of Eduard Seler (a German Americanist and fellow internationalist), "If a scientist has a country, science can only be international" (Rivet 1923). A headline story in a Goteborg newspaper featured a photograph of the French Rivet shaking hands with the German Karl von den Steinen.

In the 1930's, the issues discussed in the letters changed dramatically. Following his receipt of Boas's courageous open letter to Marshal Hindenburg, Rivet wrote to him in April 1933 about his recent visit in Berlin, three months after Adolf Hitler had become chancellor. His trip opened the eyes of this French German-loving anthropologist, with strong pacifist and socialist opinions. Witness to Nazi anti-Semitism, he began to work on behalf of German intellectual exiles, Jews and non-Jews; together with such figures as Marcel Mauss and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Rivet struggled to find appropriate jobs for them. He hoped for creation of a hospitable institution that would provide good working conditions for elite refugees, but this project came to nothing.

National Museum of Natural History
Laboratory of Anthropology
Rue de Buffon n°61
Paris, April 27, 1933

Dear Mr. Boas,

I spent a fortnight in Berlin for the Easter holidays. I had a lot of research to do in the libraries and Museums of this great city. I also spent two days in Köln.

You know my state of mind when I went to Germany. I was convinced that the French newspapers had exaggerated events. Although I did see in Paris fugitive professors, Salmony, Barruch, artists like Kurt Weill, I thought they were exceptional cases. Furthermore I told myself that the policy pursued since 1919 towards Germany explained or partly excused the Hitlerian excesses. This is still my opinion. I think Hitler is the child [Georges] Clemenceau had by [Raymond] Poincaré .

This point made I must tell you that I was welcomed everywhere with affection by my German colleagues and that I am deeply grateful for the help they gave me and the warmth of their hospitality. [Theodor] Preuss, Walter Lehmann, [Robert] Lehmann-Nitsche, Krickeberg, Quelle, were charming to me.

I wanted to explain my state of mind so that my account will have more value in your eyes. . . . I returned utterly distressed from this country I love so much. All that the papers wrote is true. One night I took a walk on my own in Granadierstrasse and in Dragonenstrasse, the quarter of the small Jew storekeepers. I thought I was in a dead city. All the shops were shut down (it was 8 P.M.), no one or almost no one on the street. On every house and store window it was written: Jude or Lebensgefähr [Jew or Death warning]. The Swastika is everywhere. But on the other hand the Jewish-owned department store Wertheim was open. I was told that the German princes, who have a stake in this store, interceded for Wertheim, who fired all the Jewish employees. It seems that Hitlerism mainly persecuted the little ones, contenting itself with a one-day non-violent boycott of big firms. . . .

What is worse is that there is no reaction among the sensible people I saw. Preuss, Lehmann-Nitsche don't disapprove. In fact the intelligentsia is also anti-Semitic. Preuss spoke to me about the open letter you wrote to Marshal Hindenburg. I had the feeling he did not understand your disapproval. Yet he asked me on the day of my departure to try to find a job for one of his Jewish students who has been removed from his position, Mister [Heinrich] Lehmann. So I think this popular movement is accepted by the non-Jewish intellectual elite.

Walter Lehmann told me that Preuss, who is so powerful today, is trying to have him identified as a Jew in order to have him sacked. You know the hatred these two men have for one another. It is typical that Preuss does not hesitate to hold Judaism against Lehmann to get rid of him. What's certain is that all civil servants receive a questionnaire which asks them to indicate their religion, their parents' religion and their four grandparents' religion. A civil servant married to a Jew is considered a Jew.

In Köln I heard that the dismissals extend to the socialists. Mister [Justus] Lips, the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum curator, was discharged only because of his socialist opinions. I saw him. He is not allowed to go to his museum . . . He is cooped up in his home. His letters have been opened. . . . He was not allowed to go to France as he usually does every year. He was informed that his passport would be taken away if he tried to use a French visa to go.

Only Nazi-leaning newspapers are published. Your letter to the Marshal [Hindenburg] was only known from the people you sent it to.

In short it's obvious that a terror regime rules Germany and that this regime does not tolerate opposition.

I am told that the Nazis polled heavily from the disgruntled, from all the unemployed, from a lot of communists and a good many women. It may be so. But this disparate majority galvanized by its leader seems united so far. I did not perceive any sign of an impending end for the regime anyway and that's also the opinion of German refugees in France. So we must think of them for a very long while. In France, a big effort is being made to find jobs for them. But I am thinking particularly of the intellectuals.

Wouldn't it be possible to create in Switzerland for instance an important research center, like the "Collège de France," where all the talented proscribed (from Germany, Italy and Russia) would find occupations and livelihoods? It's difficult for the League of Nations to carry this out. I think it should be created through private funding. Jewish high financiers and sponsors from all countries could contribute. To me this would have the advantage of not denationalizing these scholars who could go back to their countries when circumstances permitted.

Oddly enough, Salmony is completely hostile to this idea. He left Germany with no hope of return and disowns his country. I cannot believe this is the feeling of all the German Jews or Socialists who emigrated. For me if my country were to pass through a time of madness such as the one Germany is experiencing, I would like to keep open the possibility of returning once the crisis was over. I would like to get your views on this project that would guarantee for everyone the absolute independence that remains essential to me.

I just received your admirable letter to Hindenburg. This very evening I sent it to [the newspaper] Le Temps to have it published. This letter is the cry of human conscience. Thank you for having written it.

*PS: You know that the Angrand Prize couldn't have been awarded yet. [Martin] Gusinde got six votes and [Kaj] Birket-Smith got seven. I asked for a new vote in June and I hope I'll get it. I suspect that the majority might favor Birket-Smith, an excellent worker.
Yours very sincerely,*

P. Rivet

Both absorbed in their scientific and political activities, Boas and Rivet corresponded little in the next few years. Boas reactivated their correspondence in March 1937, accepting Rivet's invitation to attend the International Population Congress soon to be held in Paris (of which Rivet was vice-president), at which Rivet hoped he would challenge the German delegation. Active in the fight against race prejudice and Nazism (Barkan 1988, Hyatt 1990), Boas explained to Rivet what he had been doing and summarized the results of his study *Changes in Bodily forms of Descendants of Immigrants*, which, he knew, had received a cool reception in France in 1910-1912 from both the sociologist Emile Durkheim and the physical anthropologists (Laurière 2008a: 512-514). He reminded Rivet of its significance. Times had changed dramatically, and Rivet was receptive to Boas's message that humans' nature was not determined by physical characteristics. What was at stake was not anthropologists' debate about the accuracy or relevance of measured individual differences. The challenge thrown down by Nazi race scientists demanded a more positive reception of Boas's study, and Rivet fundamentally agreed with Boas. As a founder of *Races et Racisme*, Rivet had two of Boas' papers published in the review, the first of Boas' works translated into French and the only ones available in French for decades (Boas 1937a and b). Boas' trip to Paris

strengthened his relationship with Rivet, although, not surprisingly, the two did not alter German race scientists' views.

*Dr. Paul Rivet
61 rue de Buffon
Paris, France
March 18, 1937*

Dear Dr Rivet,

I just learned that you are interested in a congress to be held at the end of July, organized by the Groupement d'Etude et d'Education (contre les doctrines racistes). I am very much interested in this subject and hope that a congress of this kind can be held in such a way that it will command general confidence. In order to bring this about I think it would be very essential that the congress ought not to be against the race doctrines but for a discussion of the race doctrines and that the German fanatics or hypocrites should be invited. If they do not accept so much the worse for them and if they accept I should hope there would be enough solid material so that they will be squelched. . . . Of course, scientific questions can never be settled by a majority vote but there is the danger which was encountered in the British Congress a few years ago that although the Division on Anthropology wanted a resolution on this subject the Congress as a whole was too timid to accept it.

Last year I tried to get the American anthropologists to make a joint statement but there again I was confronted with the timidity of some and with the race prejudice which is fostered particularly by those interested in eugenics which made it impossible to reach an agreement. Since I am of Jewish descent I did not try to organize the statement myself but I got Prof. Hooton of Harvard to engineer the whole matter. He finally had to give up and made the statement published in Science, a copy of which I enclose. I was asked for a statement later on and I made a statement of which I enclose a copy. I wish you would be good enough to consider these suggestions and let me know in some details what the proposed plans for the congress are. If it is really promising I might be willing to attend.

During the last three years I have devoted a great deal of my time to this question because it seemed to me that with the increasing race prejudice in the United States we have to move in this direction. The object of the work I did here was essentially to show the instability of anatomical, physiological and psychological traits among immigrants and their descendants. I took up again the work on change in bodily type which I carried through in 1910 We also investigated the change in posture and gesture habits, the speed of motor habits which is dependent upon occupation as against the influence of racial descent, the changes of incidence of mental diseases and changes in criminality. All these showed a complete change with adaptation to the American social environment.

Another investigation which I carried through was a very painstaking study of the interrelation between Jewish thought and German thought which shows how intimately the two are associated. It brought out for instance, that when Wagner brought out his "urgermanischen" Parsifal he could not find anyone but the Jew Levy to conduct it and the Jewish Lily Lehmann to sing one of the principal roles. A summary of this absolute unity of German and Jewish thought seems to me particularly striking.

I wish you would be good enough to talk over these matters with some of the other men interested in this movement and let me know just what is going on.

Maybe you knew that Mrs. Irene Harand of 20 Elizabethstrasse, Vienna, is planning a

similar congress for the end of July whose work is obviously going to be propaganda and which is to include also questions of international relations and social security. I think if she could utilize the results of your congress it might be of very great help. I think it would be well if you would ask her in regard to her plans and prospects of success. If it were possible to hold your congress under the auspices of the University or some other highly respected organization it might be of very considerable help.

*Yours very sincerely,
Franz Boas*

*November 15, 1937
Dr Paul Rivet
62 rue de Buffon
Paris, France*

Dear Dr. Rivet,

After a good deal of preparatory talk I got together a Committee consisting of three anthropologists, three psychologists, two geneticists and three sociologists and we are working out a plan of work to explore the whole field of so-called racial behavior. I hope it may be possible to find the funds for such an investigation in this country.

You will remember our meeting of the second of August when after the very enjoyable lunch which you were good enough to tender me, we had a discussion of ways and means to combat the German pseudo-scientific propaganda. We were all agreed that there ought to be some time an authoritative Congress in which this matter should be discussed preferably by invited speakers and co-referents. In order to be successful such a Congress ought to be prepared with very great care and furthermore, in order to make it impressive it ought to be held by invitation of some European government or by the League of Nations.

I do not think it would be advisable to try anything of the sort before 1939 or 1940 but the invitation to such a congress should be sent out long before that time.

I also wrote to Sir Robert Mond that a number of similar committees should be set up in Europe, or if not committees, arrangements should be made that special investigators should be enabled to devote themselves to particular problems that interested them. I presume our friend, Dr. Zollschan would have to be one of these.

At that meeting Sir Robert Mond, practically, offered to form a European Finance Committee in order to make possible further investigations on these problems.

May I hope that you will discuss this matter with your friends in France and see what can be done?

*Yours very sincerely,
Franz Boas*

World War II broke out before this Congress could take place. After the German Army occupied France in June 1940, Rivet wrote three times to Marshal Pétain, saying that Pétain was the wrong man to lead a France in disarray: France did not need the winner of the battle of Verdun in 1917 but a new man (in Laurière 2008a: 665-670). Rivet was one of the twenty-seven "First Class Men" listed by the Rockefeller Foundation as in danger if they stayed in their country (Loyer 2007). But despite the urging of his closest

friends, he refused to leave France. He joined the resistance network created at the Museum of Man by younger colleagues (Blumenson 1977, Blanc 2000 and 2004). In February 1941, he narrowly escaped arrest by the Gestapo, hurriedly leaving France. Others in the network were not so fortunate; seven men were executed in February 1942, and the women were sent to a concentration camp. Rivet took refuge in Colombia, where, thanks to President Santos's support, he created an institute to train anthropologists. In August 1941, he wrote to Boas giving news and asking for his help to get books and funds for fieldwork missions. Boas was "exceedingly glad" to hear from him and promised assistance.

Their final meeting took place in New York, when Rivet was invited to give lectures about the international situation and to speak on a radio program to be broadcast in France. On December 21st 1942, Boas invited him to Columbia University to lunch with some of his former students (Lesser 2005, Herskovits 1953). Rivet was accompanied by Claude Lévi-Strauss (Lévi-Strauss 1996: 58 and 2002). The old friends were moved to see each other, five years after their last meeting in Paris (Rivet 1943). During the meal, Boas inquired about the subject of Rivet's lectures, and Rivet answered apologetically that he would discuss racism, implying that he would not be very original. Boas declared that the crusade against racism could never be abandoned. At that moment, he fell, dying from a stroke. "He died", Rivet wrote, "proclaiming one last time what had been a rule of life for him: his faith in the equality between men." (Rivet 1958) Rivet's presence at Boas's death was symbolically fitting. Indeed, Boas had instructed his children that upon his death his magnificent library was to be sold at a low cost to Rivet's Museum of Man; with Lévi-Strauss acting as go-between, the children tried to arrange the sale, but the necessary funds could not be raised.

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