The Awakening of W.E.B. Du Bois

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Abstract. This is an interpretive article that concentrates on the early W.E.B. Du Bois who shaped the wider world's understanding of the Black experience in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Under the intellectual compression of learning and scholarship at the highest level, an awakening Du Bois developed ideas evolved in his youth and early maturity about the primacy of African American "feeling" and its importance in rejuvenating the American personality as well as the regeneration of Africa. Influenced by William James's pragmatism and interest in the paranormal as well as the *verstehen* method of sociology learned in Germany, Du Bois sought a humanistic perspective by extending the frontiers of art, culture and spiritual values to fulfill a vision of the Africana great-souled person. As prelude to *The Souls of Black People,* Du Bois undertook his scholarship from the inside-out. Instead of positing the so-called "Negro Problem" as a problem to be solved in the style of academic Philosophy or statistical Sociology, Du Bois took the point of view of one who lived the strain and stresses afflicting African Americans, sharing their hopes and failures in the search for recognition and respect thereby introducing an alternative to traditional definitions of thought and reality.

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The paradox of race is nothing new to African Americans. As a problem, it has preoccupied philosophers and strategists alike, most notably, W.E.B. Du Bois, the race's leading academic during the first half of the twentieth century. His presentation on the "Conservation of Races" given at the inaugural meeting of the American Negro Academy in 1897 is considered the nation's seminal statement on the concept of race. In a tour de force of logic, Du Bois confronted the confusion over racial identity head-on, proposing that African Americans embrace the double aspect of race as a determinant of history. Recommending that the African and Anglo-Saxon components of America's race scene be preserved as complements of each other, he sought to achieve conciliation between two of the world's great peoples. The upshot was conceived as juxtapositions to support racial diversity as an answer to the question of the nation's one and many, which is cogently captured in the US motto, "e pluribus unum."[1]

Philosophers of race recognize in this innovation the doctrine of "double consciousness" and its corollary, the dilemma of personal and group identity. Customarily treated as the "problem of race" because of the difficulty of equilibrating oppositions of race in self and society, African Americans conditioned by western individualism have puzzled over how to retain race solidarity in a world still dominated by the color line. In that respect, Du Bois' conception of race has come under fire for being out-of-date if not wrong-headed. For instance, Cornel West has faulted Du Bois for what he labels his petit bourgeois "claims about Afro-American superiority" embedded in the outlook of the American Negro Academy. As a self-described humanist, he also depreciates the "assimilationist tradition" for taking part in racial "self-hatred, shame and fear," a criticism secondary to Du Bois but which falls not far from his early philosophy of race. Although others, including Adolph Reed, Anthony Appiah, and David Levering Lewis, have been less harsh in their assessments, the effect has been much the same – to invalidate Du Bois' bifurcation model. Reed strips Du Bois of the idea of double consciousness altogether, claiming that duality was not a "definitive element [or] a key organizing principle of [Du Bois'] thought." Not dissimilarly, Appiah argues for a new way of thinking about race – one based on pluralism, softer than Du Bois' equipollence, what he calls "cosmopolitanism." Lewis dismisses Du Bois' parallelism as a category mistake. In the balance are questions of self-definition, and duties to race as well as the worthwhileness of promoting historical memory and racial pride, among a new generation of Black people.[2]

Although Du Bois' overall philosophy of race is incomplete because of its evolving nature, it is neither superior-assuming nor irrelevant to current struggles over cultural integration and national identity. It supports his legacy as a pivotal thinker in the nation's race history. Indeed, those who wish to go beyond

Du Bois' philosophy must first come to terms with what Du Bois claimed. That requires placing his ideas in historical context.

Du Bois first conceived of the benefit of hyphenated race during his undergraduate years at Fisk and Harvard Universities. Steeped in the Scottish Enlightenment, the Fisk ideal assumed a common brotherhood among the world's races, emphasized race pride and service, and worked toward the goal of progressive assimilation, ideas that Du Bois seemed fully committed to. Important to his development, it also provided an atmosphere in which the children of Emancipation discussed the vital questions of social and political rights in full confidence of an integrationist "law of development." He used the experience to plot a course – even if vaguely –for implementing a special mission for the college-educated. Pleading in exceptionally good German for the recognition of a black Fatherland, he pressed for a new idealism that incorporated Hegelian assumptions of minority progress. Standing pat in the belief that the much-discussed questions of "social equality [and] amalgamation" would sort themselves out according to the "inexorable laws of nature [which] regulate and control such movements," he only hinted at the problem of double consciousness in his editorials written for the *Fisk Herald*. Even so, he was far more cautious than a classmate who "traced the history of the Anglo-Saxon race from its inception to its final supremacy," declaring that "it is destined to predominate throughout the world." Instead, he offered Prince Otto Bismarck of the German Empire as a flawed but successful leader who built a nation out of a "handful of petty quarrelling principalities." His offering underscored a conviction that the race was headed for important things but only if it acted according to "one idea" of purpose.[3]

At Harvard, this preoccupation with the historic role of Afro-America received unanticipated support from the philosophy faculty. Although William James was at first critical of Du Bois' penchant for reading Hegelian purpose into western developments of ethics and science, he praised the writing style, "original thesis," and "independent thought" of his work. It was not until he studied American History under Albert Bushnell Hart that his "idea of applying philosophy to an historical interpretation of race relations" was finally reached. Nevertheless, James' openness to a scientific study of extraordinary phenomena made a significant impact on Du Bois' thought. In 1892, two years after Du Bois had finished his philosophy curriculum, James invited him to attend an interview with Helen Keller. For his part, James was intrigued with the question of how learning occurs in the absence of sight and hearing. It was Helen Keller's "blind[ness] to color differences," however, as well as her specialized capacity for learning by touch that made the most lasting impression on Du Bois. The

latter gave him the insight that the feeling, rhythm, and spiritual striving unique to African Americans did add dimension to America's self-knowledge. Indeed, through his poetry, books and essays and theatrical productions, he worked to refurbish the Cartesian, arguably imperious, "I think, therefore, I am," with the more, seemingly humane and African-like, "I feel, therefore, I am."[4]

More tellingly, Du Bois owed to James a scientific basis for believing in the philosophical worth of the divided self. As a student of psychology, Du Bois first learned of the phenomenon of secondary consciousness during his first year at Harvard. Discussed under the titles, "'Unconsciousness' in Hysterics," and, then again, in an 1890 publication, "The Hidden Self," James reported on the research of Pierre Janet on patients suffering from extreme anesthesia, a neurological disorder characterized by a lack of sensory function or sensitivity to normal stimuli. Janet discovered that under hypnosis, a "secondary consciousness" emerged in such persons, a self "entirely cut off from the primary or normal [self], but susceptible of being tapped and made to testify to its existence." Moreover, this second self could be consulted in determining the underlying cause of the primary person's trauma. Otherwise, the second self, enjoyed an autonomous existence unknown to the primary person. Far more sanguine than Janet about the pathology of such cases, James proposed that the emergence of secondary consciousness revealed a "susceptib[ility] to a certain substratum of the Zeitgeist [trend or spirit of the time]" from which "inspiration" is derived.

Moreover, he noted that even though double consciousness caused organized systems of development to be "thrown out of gear with others," if the "brain acted normally, and the dissociated systems came together again, we should get a new affection of consciousness in the form of a third 'Self' different from the other two, but knowing their objects together, as the result." For James, these findings verified his opinion that the "wild facts" of science are worth studying. But for Du Bois, the discovery of a hidden self with "second sight" gave evidence that the African-American struggle represented a resurgence of the nation's idealism "thrown out of gear" by the competitiveness of the industrial era. More grandiosely, it provided an empirical metaphor for race inclusion as a primal force for curing the dysfunctional American personality and for imparting a "special message" to the world. The significance was to incorporate the history of Afro-America, its sufferings, and spiritual adjustments, into a "science of mind" prefigured for racial change.[5]

Fortified by James' conclusion that "To no one type of mind is it given to discern the totality of Truth," Du Bois used his opportunity to address Harvard's 1890 graduating class to announce the emergence of an African American "third self." Taking the elite of Cambridge by surprise, he chose "Jefferson Davis

as a Representative of Civilization" as his subject. Counting on the throw-weight of history's failings, Du Bois gave Jefferson Davis his due as an American hero – a "Strong Man" representative of Teutonic valor – even while criticizing the Confederate for his neglect of core values. The idea was not to lambaste Davis but to argue the need for a new national consensus revolving around the "Submissive Man" – the African American – who stood ready to supplement the country's masculine past with an openness and vitality befitting a new humanitarian century.[6]

The oration revealed the extent to which Du Bois and other likeminded African American intellectuals read Hegel into the epochal changes of nineteenth-century race history. Emancipation and the subsequent increase of the Black people were taken as the unfolding of historic cause. In that respect, the purpose of forming the American Negro Academy in 1897 was to hold position in Hegel's triad of progress during a time of backlash and white complaint. To Du Bois, lynch law, disfranchisement, accommodation, and the pseudo-science of the period predicting race extinction, signaled a critical juncture in race relations in which Black people either moved forward in solidarity or backward in collapsed individuality. Yet, while "Conservation of Races" offered little new in race theory – it relegated color prejudice to the friction of adaptation in the way tectonic plates adjust to oppositional forces, cited Darwin for the doctrine of "Human Brotherhood," and rode piggy-back on existing theories of assimilation – it injected into the race question a new "spirit," a sense of world mission similar in function to Hegel's overriding Geist. Indeed, as a harbinger of the "battle of humanity… [that] is about to fall upon the shoulders of a Black nation," Du Bois pronounced the end of black individualism: "the organization itself has a life." Yet, even as Hegelian assumptions refreshed his work, Du Bois placed his own special gloss on the dialectical sequence of conflict, resolution and synthesis. Holding sway as the nation's railway switch operator, he sought nothing less than to alter "the tracks along which action [had] been pushed by the dynamic" of America's multicultural past. "Here, then, is the dilemma…," he presaged for the world's minorities. "What, after all, am I? Am I an American or am I a Negro? Can I be both? Or is it my duty to cease to be a Negro as soon as possible and be an American?"[7] Accepting the mantle as a "world historical" person challenged by the reinvention of race, Du Bois was undeterred by James' earlier criticism that a "science" of ethics was "impossible." In truth, his difference with James on the role of science in human action was complicated by his ambition to develop a philosophy of race. Unlike his mentor, Du Bois was committed to a theory of progress in which purposes were imprinted in the social and psychological determinants

of racial groups. Such approach to questions of fact and value was reinforced by the natural law sociology he adopted while in Berlin during a two-year stint beginning in 1892. Under the guidance of Gustav Schmoller, Germany's leading economic sociologist at the time, the "science of society" sought to discover the uniformities manifest in history and social interaction. Also influenced by William Dilthey's method of understanding social phenomena by linking subjective understanding with group custom (*verstehen*), Du Bois personalized the inner life of African Americans in his early writings. The trope running through the pages of *The Souls of Black Folk* expressed the trials, dilemmas, failures, and half-maturity of Black America, as well as its folklore, religion, aesthetics and morality with the aim of uncovering an inductive influence on the forward movement of race; importantly, from the point of view of one who lived the "Negro problem."[8]

Indeed, his recommendation to the American Negro Academy that it should adopt policies which squared with the "constitution of the world," revealed the extent of his natural law bias by 1900. Motivated by the need for an exact science to overcome the long odds faced by African Americans, he nevertheless sidestepped the question of how science and idealism come together to form self-willed moral action. Bringing to bear the perspective of his heritage, Du Bois was too easily drawn to a romantic version of history in which events are thought to record their meaning through trial-and-error adjustment. As a person of color born during Reconstruction, he personally felt the cause and effect of Emancipation. To him it set up a momentum of progress exactly because it established freedom as its prime mover. Indeed, history was to Du Bois a narrative of person and place, good and bad, courage and cowardice, with reason on the side of right. As such, it needed a scientific measurement of human initiative in pursuit of ideals, including the results of self-conscious pride, racial strategies, and the will to believe.

The key for Du Bois in establishing the race's credentials for inclusion was to translate its travails and small showings into patterns of broad humanity. Needing a science to support the positive value of racial diversity, he was drawn to the evolutionary theory of Herbert Spencer, the father of British sociology. Spencer declared that "nature is constantly departing from the simple to the complex; starting off in new lines from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous." Finding permission in this doctrine to treat racial differences as a developmental effect and racial traits as sociobiological virtues, Du Bois posited a program of "social equilibrium" with white America. Du Bois' request of the American Negro Academy to set aside the "smaller questions of separate schools and cars, wage-discrimination and lynch law" in order to plot the race's future, reflected

Spencer's optimism regarding the short life of "aggressive egoism" in human advancement.[9] Nonetheless, Du Bois harbored misgivings about Spencer's failure to apply the first principles of sociology to the concrete world of Afro-America. Du Bois also was not supportive of Spencer's rejection of idealistic cause or his over reliance on the use of analogy to solve social problems. More troubling still, he found Spencer's predictions of cross-cultural sympathy idiosyncratic considering America's cruelty toward African Americans. Yet, more than any other scientist, Spencer helped erect the form-walls of Du Bois' early conception of race. However, with Black Americans set adrift among the vague generalizations of detached sociology, Du Bois turned to the race's elite to provide a natural law adjustment to the imitative void caused by racist neglect.

As conceived by Du Bois, the Negro Academy was to serve as a template for an improvisational class of teachers, preachers, writers, and artists, but also grocers, technicians, and landlords, to furnish the black masses with models of racial success as well as hands-on training in work and ownership. Moreover, such missionary task was to be grounded in race consciousness, a duty new to sociology. Indeed, very deliberately, Du Bois offered the Talented Tenth of the race as a twentieth-century correction of Spencer's opinion that primitive people cooperated in common cause only under the "discipline of command." Importantly, they were to provide empirical evidence to a doubting world that African styled transformation relied on spirituality and an American sense of purpose.[10]

As significantly, Du Bois was conflicted by the standard science of his day governing race and cultural amalgamation. Based on Gilbert Tarde's *The Laws of Imitation,* released in 1890, the problem of race contact confronting expansionist Europe was conceived by the need to bring the "multiple divisions [of colonial rule] into a single peaceful human family." This was to occur according to a rule of absorption in which the selective traits of the dominant and privileged group were to be imprinted upon the customs and mindsets of national minorities, immigrants, colonized races, and captives. Ideally this should happen under conditions of reflex paternalism in which the superior class acts as a "social 'water tower' whence a continuous waterfall of imitation may descend." According to Tarde, however, the "American Negro" provided a notable exception to the rule. Because of the striking dissimilarity between African Americans and the more advanced Anglo-Saxon culture of their surroundings, progress by imitation was improbable.[11] Significantly, Du Bois was drawn to the idea by half. Setting aside the obvious, that Tarde's work was less scientific for ignoring caste racism and barely disguised the imperialistic bias of the era, Du Bois seemed to embrace Tarde's

theme of the eventual "unification" of divergent states.[12] Certainly, he lodged no special objection to the concept of imitation as a student at Harvard when he was first introduced to the concept in a course on applied ethics.[13] Moreover, by 1895, he was aware of its currency in American sociology and recognized its influence on Josiah Royce's Hegelian analysis of child development, from which he patterned his own childhood narrative published in *Souls* in 1903.[14] In addition, the theory coincided with Du Bois' experiences and misgivings. While a student at Fisk University he saw firsthand the damaging effects of forced separatism on Black communities in eastern Tennessee where he taught school in the summers of 1886 and 1887, as well as in the streets of Nashville's divided city. As a race in development, African Americans needed to be able to model their behavior after caring and competent judges who provided examples of nobility as well as verification of progress.

In truth, the "hesitant and doubtful striving" Du Bois saw in his people, was a special corollary to imitation referred to by Princeton sociologist James Mark Baldwin as learning in context. Using his younger daughter as illustration, Baldwin described the frustration she experienced in learning a parlor game played by her older siblings. The object of the contest was for the players to walk hurriedly in contrary directions around the oval-shaped dining room table, end up on opposite sides, and shake hands with their facing partner. "So impressed with shaking hands," the younger girl followed her older sister [around the table] instead of passing on alone to the chair across." Criticized by the older girl, she "turned and started off alone in a hesitating and uncertain way and never seemed quite confident until she saw her sister coming around the table to meet her again." Baldwin concluded that the hesitation and embarrassment of his daughter was a "true indication of deliberation." The point was not lost on Du Bois. Racism not only isolated African Americans from normal socialization, but it also dictated the need for Talented Tenth validation.[15]

Yet he took Tarde's exception to African American assimilation seriously. Rather than reject the theory outright, his reply was to explain why the laws of imitation had failed to apply to the Black race. The answer was in the crazy-quilt patterns of work, housing, and commerce that had come to define race relations in the urban north and rural south since Emancipation. Indeed, what he discovered from fieldwork done during 1896 and 1897 in Philadelphia and Virginia was an almost perfect disconnect between black and white societies. Because of segregation, untutored blacks were simply not around cultured whites except as underlings, and because of discrimination were not likely to earn white respect in any case. Moreover, the emerging black middle class was isolated from the professional white classes as well as the black masses. The up-

shot was to leave African Americans without the opportunity to train across racial boundaries. Adding to the complication was the "centrifugal" effect of "class revulsion" he observed among the black elite of Philadelphia. Not wanting to be identified with the "veiled insult and depreciation which the masses suffered," they refused "to head any race movement on the plea that they [would] draw the very color line against which they protest[ed]." By contrast, the black community of Farmville, Virginia, responded to equally rigid segregation by creating a "whole group life" of black interdependence. Following more exactly Tarde's laws of imitation, the upper class of "farmers, teachers, grocers and artisans" set a moral standard for their struggling fellows. Church membership was open to all citizens, benevolent societies were formed to support rich and poor, and business capital was organized for the benefit of the community. For Du Bois, the answer to Tarde's verdict of race antipathy was to recruit a committed group of black leaders to prove the capacity of race and provide a typology for African Americans cut off from higher culture.[16] Thus, in making his case for the "Conservation of Races," Du Bois emphasized that black Americans were part of the larger Negro race and shared a common bond with the "Egyptians, Bantus and Bushmen of Africa." More important than bloodline or ancestry were psychical and historical similarities formatted for the transmission of culture.[17] More to the point, Du Bois sought to forge a conscious bond between the mostly mulatto elite he addressed that day and the eight million black masses which represented every shade of black and brown inherent to America's race problem. In the absence of twinning models that applied to persons of mixed ancestry, their duty was to provide the "advance guard" of the world's darker peoples. In this respect, Du Bois went beyond the ideas of Africanists Edward Blyden and Alexander Crummell, the two leading spiritualist figures of the black nineteenth century. While they recognized two-ness as a fact, they did not conceive of it in philosophical terms. Taking their cues from Plato's emanation of the Good, to them learning "white" and serving "black" was a moral duty of the fortunate Tenth, not a study in dual consciousness. As prophets of race, they counted on rectilinear progress based on redemption and race destiny. Accordingly, they had no taste for personal dilemma or social contradiction. Du Bois, on the other hand, sought a combination of black and white under conditions of true reciprocity, a conceptual breakthrough in race relations. Thus, he welcomed a pluralist solution to race differences but not in terms of simulation, forced amalgamation, or artificial desegregation, but through earned respect and cultural adaptation. Accordingly, "obliteration" of the race's distinctiveness was not the answer to questions of self-definition, nor was "servile imitation" or "absorption" the solution to America's race problem. The re-

maining problem was how to transform the African American "double-self into a better and truer [third] self."[18]

Ultimately, the question of pluralism in Du Bois' philosophy rests on the intelligibility of the merger he sought. Certainly, Du Bois had in mind an integration which retained African spirituality but was in other respects adaptable to American society. Yet, the term, "merger," carries the connotation of "consolidation," or "fusion of parts," which was not his true meaning. He offered, instead, a conception of self which melded African and American traits into a singular construction of experience. Breaking ranks with nineteenth century race theory, Du Bois pointed to a new interpretation of race assimilation brokered to solidify racial gains and reinvigorate race pride. The fact that he saw African American "two-ness" as both asset and problem, complicated the exact nature of the coming-together he sought. Nonetheless, he was bolstered by Hegel's sequential dialectic in which double consciousness represented a next-to-final phase in the history of consciousness; yet he struggled to translate the race's hesitant record as progress in the months following the "Conservation" speech. In a piece written for *Atlantic Monthly*, he offered more inspiration than explication for how to overcome the shakiness of the African American contested self. His one idea was to establish "self-conscious manhood" as the focal point for a new social identity.[19]

Trained to think autobiographically, Du Bois internalized the problem of double consciousness personally and philosophically. Following Hegel, it resulted from contradictions inherent to the "life and death" struggle of a "dependent" class seeking recognition as an aspiring people. From the condescending stare of the unconsciously prejudiced to the "downright meanness and incivility" of the openly racist, African Americans were forced to shift intermittently between split worlds of experience and self-perception. Indeed, actions perceived as "shiftless" by Southern whites, were interpreted as "good natured honesty" among rural blacks who lacked the incentive "to make the white man's land better, or to fatten his mule, or save his corn." Urban blacks, "thrown into relentless competition with the workingmen of the world," found themselves "handicapped by a training the very opposite to that of the modern self-reliant democratic laborer." The message was clear: deprived of a coherent standard of assessment, African Americans were left to judge racial progress through the indifferent "revelation of others." However, according to Tarde, African Americans seemed uniquely excluded from the world's progress. The effect was to distort the way African Americans thought of themselves, as neither black nor white, but a bad rendition of each. For Du Bois, the race idea was designed to solve the problem of self by concentrating the seeming chaos of retrogression, abuse, and false leads into an ordered narrative of purpose.[20]

Du Bois also saw in the duality of African and American, the difficulty imposed on artisans, professionals, and savants who underwent the judgment of their training while serving the black masses. Based partly on his study of the black aristocracy of Philadelphia as well as his own experience of class bias, Du Bois understood the alienation that came from straddling the color line because of education and outlook. He explored the theme in "Of the Coming of John," one of the fugitive essays he published in *Souls*. Caught between the expectations of the black community and the duties of his new assignment as a college-bred teacher, John was denied the acceptance of his people as well as the acknowledgement of white counterparts for his efforts to "livenin' things up at the darky school," resulting in a tragic end.[21]

Convinced that the color line had left African Americans without "true self-consciousness," Du Bois looked for a unifying "form of a possible experience" in "manhood" consciousness, indicating the primacy of self-identity to Du Bois' early philosophy of race. His indebtedness to the philosophy of knowledge was to show how the internal grid regulating self-perception was open to revision through strength of will as well as external recognition. Alone among sociologists, he contended that the science of experience has a teleological order. His summons to abolitionist self-determination in "Conservation of Races" ["The Negro Academy should stand and proclaim...with Garrison: *I will not equivocate, I will not retreat a single inch, and I will be heard.*"] was designed to define "African American" for a new era. In the bargain, the African American was allowed to "be himself and not another" – a dark creation new to the world – as neither a hybrid nor a double, but a single self-retaining aspects of both "Negro blood" and western achievement.

However, Du Bois' ambition to elaborate the merger he envisioned was derailed by personal tentativeness as well as problems of conceptualizing a new paradigm of self and the lack of white cooperation in solving the problems of the color line. Certainly, Du Bois' ambivalence toward activism during his formative period forced an unsure interpretation on the meaning of "manhood consciousness." He intended, at the very least, to emphasize citizenship rights, particularly the right to vote, which he saw as indispensable to racial defense and self-respect. Yet, he was not ready to push an abolitionist agenda except in name only. "A little more dogged work and manly striving would do us more credit and benefit than a thousand Force or Civil Rights bills," he declared in "Conservation of Races." Intriguing were the two memorials he wrote in 1895 to commemorate the death of Frederick Douglass. The one he sanitized for presentation to an audience gathered at Wilberforce University, praised Douglass for his world-historical contributions. The other, never delivered, was written

in the style of an Old Testament jeremiad. It called upon Douglass' hate of "unrighted Wrong" for inspiration, sounded the death "knell" of white oppressors, and beckoned "Africa [to] awake," but stopped short of advocating direct action.

Moreover, by 1897, he was clearly uncomfortable with his earlier endorsement of the "Submissive Man"—an idea which he took from the writings of Blyden. Caught up in the categories of Johann Herder's theory of race traits which headlined Africa's "sensual disposition" as one of culture's greatest achievements, Blyden found support in Herder's defense of Africans as a people "unpardonably sinned" against for Christianizing the African personality and featuring obedience as a black virtue. Unprepared to depart from Blyden's analysis altogether at the time of his Commencement Address, Du Bois suppressed the need to harmonize the dominant – and divergent – black positions of the nineteenth century: the one, representing American equality (Douglass), and the other, African civilization (Blyden and Crummell). Moreover, as a mode of historical progress, he was sidetracked by his over-commitment to Hegelian technique which required opposing Confederate arrogance with African spirituality. He was, nonetheless, bothered by the effeminate connotation of the "suffering servant" image, made evident in the pride he felt upon reading that a "Negro mob raised to capture a stuffed ballot-box...desist[ed] only after four or five of the white stuffers had been sent into eternity." Nor did it make any great difference to his argument that he contrasted the "dogged patience" of manhood pride with the subordination of "cowardice, laziness [and] stupidity." Lacking a more aggressive strategy in 1897, he seemed condemned to "await the action of time and common sense" to catch up to the control of events. The result of Du Bois' vacillation was to put on hold a clearer definition of the racial parity he proposed.[22]

As to the self, Du Bois was on his own in explicating the effects of racial bifurcation on self-perception and human action. Even though John Locke had observed the problem of "irreconcilable contradictions" in the social self, and William James explored the problem of "discordant splitting" in his studies of consciousness, neither analysis approached the radical division faced by Du Bois. Their findings were limited to dilemmas of conscience, differences of social role, and conflicts of privacy. Moreover, even though James located the "source of effort and attention" in the subjective "Spiritual Self" and emphasized its importance in social psychology, he was unprepared to think of manhood as a unifying theme of consciousness.[23]

Having explored double consciousness analytically, Du Bois turned to the intuitive method of German romanticism to depict the resolution he envisioned. In *Souls*, Du Bois pointed to the sorrow songs of African and African American

origin as a means for spiritualizing western life. Regarding them as the "greatest gift of the Negro people," their integration of hope and struggle stood to rectify the strife increasingly apparent in western civilization. To showcase the point, Du Bois prefaced each chapter of *Souls* with lyrics of world poetry laid over sorrow song music. The effect was to blend thought and melody of American, British, German, Hebrew, Persian, and Negro lyricists with the African psyche, revealing their common humanity while retaining the reality of differences. The device not only brought to the attention of the white world that blacks held an important key to solving the problems of modernity but depicted the goal of race development: a world united in its separate parts as rhythm and verse harmonize to make "one music." Du Bois bequeathed the problem of putting these components together to the reader, though it is just as likely that he completed *Souls* without having achieved the unity he interpreted for others as a philosopher of race. His statement of hope was, nonetheless, undeniable. The two races were to provide the soundtrack for America's future, not as diverse plurals nor as an identical fusion, but as concordant parts.[24]

Yet**,** even as Du Bois pondered the question of two-ness, he was outflanked by the vast prejudice he encountered during his Southern sojourn from 1897 to 1910, causing him to morph the problems of "master and slave" into a reexamination of public protest. Du Bois walked a fine line between Hegelian method and sociological law. Indeed, when Du Bois confessed to double consciousness in 1897, he assumed that reason, morality, and religion still counted for something in America. On the one hand, he saw the race question in terms of dialectical constraints, while, on the other hand, he stressed the uniformities of social progress. Du Bois was not metaphysical by temperament and did not push the other-worldly aspects of the Zeitgeist. He was, first and foremost, an empirical sociologist who regarded the "struggle of races and social groups" as the measure of primary fact. Also, he remained committed to a scientific breakthrough based on the reciprocity of earned respect. But his adoption of natural law sociology did not quiet his misgivings about America's willingness to tolerate a multicultural future. In that respect, the zig and the zag action of Hegel's movement seemed more depictive of African American experience than the straight-line continuum advocated by British sociology. Even as an article of faith, the peaceable equilibrium Herbert Spencer promised was observed more in the breach than in fact. What he discovered by 1904 was that the nation was not interested in understanding the inner souls of black people or in the development of the African American race. In particular, he did not anticipate the misuse of his strategy to feature racial differences as a means of rationalizing popular prejudice.

His call for a Niagara Movement in 1905 to defend political and civil rights, was a redesign of "manhood consciousness" necessitated by new realities calling for more pragmatic solutions. Setting aside the abstractions of philosophy and sociology, he approached questions of definition experimentally. In truth, his turn to agitation to defend the race at home and abroad, the promotion of a race-based art and culture to focus black consciousness, and advocacy of socialist reform to prove the race's credentials as a just and spiritual people, were more than tactics for moving the race forward. They were the creative means by which Du Bois hoped to reclaim a synthetic relationship with white America through the conditioning of group action.

That this strategy bolstered the importance he placed on human action indicates the special place of choice and change in his philosophy. For Du Bois, truth was recruited for both an objective and subjective purpose. On the one hand, it observed the laws of logic and consistency to protect the race against chance and predict a course of development, yet, on the other hand, it relied on the influence of human will. The effect of this double perspective was to intertwine science with morality: just as sociology requires voluntary action, moral effort requires a rational plan. It is because progress responds to the outlook of culture and race as well as the evidence of law-like regularity that Du Bois could speak of the laws of human *action*. Although it would play a more prominent role in Du Bois' philosophy following his Atlanta failures, his lasting debt to James was instruction in the pragmatic theory of truth. The premise –that the "workable logic" of an idea confirmed its truth – liberated Du Bois from the limitations of traditional philosophy, and led him, eventually, to incorporate propaganda into a race science.

Also relevant to his outlook, pragmatism allowed Du Bois to believe in advancement without embracing its metaphysical trappings. In that respect, Du Bois' Hegelianism predicted for progress as a pragmatic hypothesis rather than as an abstract assumption or finding of fact. In 1897, the American Negro Academy was one such agent of change. Faced with intractable racism, Du Bois could not wait on Hegel's Zeitgeist or the confirmation of scientific law to solve America's color line. Nor were James' paranormal findings ultimately helpful. Ironically, the very year he published his summary finding that a "cosmic environment of other consciousness" could penetrate the everyday world with "supernormal knowledge" found Du Bois grappling with the violence of the Atlanta Riot. James' "instinctive sense of the dramatic probabilities of nature" nonetheless resonated with Du Bois. It informed his pragmatist inclinations and kept his hope alive that events would eventually break in favor of race recognition.[25]

In any case, Du Bois' preoccupation with the "ability and future of black

folk" during the 1890s left him vulnerable to scientific error. Indeed, the point of James' cautionary that a science of ethics is not possible was to remind Du Bois that the significance of events, their meaning and direction, are neither bracketed facts nor causal findings but interpretations of the field. In his haste to convert James' pragmatism into a causal science, he was guilty of overlooking the imprecision of his early sociology. As a philosopher of race, Du Bois preceded on the postulate that the storm and stress efforts of black Americans to survive the effects of racism itself delineated progress, and, in that respect, revealed the limits of chance events on forward movement. Accordingly, he maintained that the concept of Afro-America be preserved. For that purpose, the elite of race were bound by the categorical imperative to elevate black masses. Moreover, because the color of skin still marked a person's opportunity in America and in the face of race war was indifferently targeted by crazed mobs, there was no salvation as a lone black American. Simply put, African Americans had no alternative than to embrace the race concept. All the same, an analysis of race consciousness as stated in "Conservation of Races," leads full circle to the paradox of race that his philosophy was thought to solve: "If I strive as a Negro," he mused, "am I not perpetuating the very cleft that threatens and separates Black and White America?"[26]

Nevertheless, Du Bois' early philosophy looked to the future in which the contradictions of black and white were not so much solved as dissolved; a time when the worth of race would be established by science and social experience, and problems formerly signified by race would be better served under headings of social equality and personal rights. To accommodate such a future, Du Bois saw race, not as an ontological category or fact of genetics, but as a venue of history shaped by circumstance to liberate the world's marginalized peoples.[27]

If the race question can be divided between cultural pluralists who maintain race as a steady-state category, moderates who promote race as a contingent necessity, and contemporaries who advocate color blindness, then Du Bois' early philosophy more nearly sides with the moderates. Yet, as the historical evolution of his ideas has shown, Du Bois' concept of race was wrapped in assumptions dating to the late nineteenth century, which complicates an overall evaluation of his position. For instance, few theorists today believe in a dialectical theory of progress, and although imitation remains a basic theme in character education, it fails to account for the real-world effects of colonization, human choice, class economics, tyranny, and religious animosity on the transmission of culture. All the same, even as Du Bois' concept of race underwent revision beginning in the 1930's to feature Marxist categories, he remained committed to a racial definition of common suffering and striving.[28] Moreover, his controversial call for race

separation during the Depression to champion economic cooperation and black education was patterned after laws of imitation. And finally, his acceptance of Kwame Nkrumah's invitation in 1960 to supervise the writing of an Encyclopedia Africana to further African nationalism was patterned after "Conservation" unity. To his credit, Du Bois defended the ideal of race to the end of his life, albeit under new associations with the world's poor and neglected. Understandably, the experiences of Southern violence and western laissez-faire greed caused him to modify his optimism about America's destiny. Even as the categories of race identity gave way to the related problematic of reconciling colored poverty with white affluence by 1940, racial purpose remained his primary focus. Still in search of the world's "truer self," Du Bois continued to beckon African Americans to lead the spiritual revolution he envisaged in 1897.[29] In the bargain, he extended the concept of race to include the brown and yellow of Gandhi's India and Mao's China, as well as the colorations of Irish republicans and Slavic revolutionaries. The consequence of dropping white as a racial category was also the loss of blackness as an individuating trait. In that way, Du Bois passed on to Martin Luther King, Jr., a dream that in "one far off Divine event," the oppressed peoples of the world could be "judged [not] by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."[30]

Notes

1. W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Conservation of Races," in Nathan Huggins, ed., *Writings* (New York, 1968), 815-26. The pluralism proposed in "Conservation" recognized that in matters of political ideals, language, and religion, African Americans interfaced with white America, but in matters of culture and spiritual make-up, black America should preserve Africanity until such time as African Americans had learned to run with the world. The "Conservation" approach bore the idealism of Edward Blyden and Alexander Crummell who emphasized race destiny as a providential right. See James Mark Baldwin, *Mental Development in the Child and Race: Methods and Processes* (New York, 1894), 67-68, 71, 74-75, for the concept of developmental history.

2. Cornel West, *Prophesy Deliverance: An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity* (Louisville, 2002), 69-91; Adolph L. Reed, Jr., *W.E.B. Du Bois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line* (New York, 1997), 124; Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton, 2005), 109-10, 213-72; David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868-1919* (New York, 1993), 173-74, 529. See Aldon D. Morris, *The Scholar Denied: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Birth of Modern Sociology* (Oakland, Calif, 2015), 29-45, for a more comprehensive review of the Du Boisian criticism.

3. *Fisk Herald*, April 1885, for "law of development;" June 1888, for "Anglo-Saxon" speech; Du Bois, "Das Neue Vaterland" and "Bismarck: Commencement Speech," June 1888, in *The Papers of W.E.B. Du Bois* (Amherst, Mass. Microfilm ed.,1981), 87:138-46; 80: 1-9, for "principalities" and "one" idea.

4. Du Bois, "The Renaissance of Ethics: A Critical Comparison of Scholastic and Modern Ethics," in *The Collected Papers of W.E.B. Du Bois* (Amherst, Mass.), Box 365, Folder 5, 1890; Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois* (New York, 1968), 148, for philosophy quote. William James, "Laura Bridgman," in *Collected Essays and Reviews* (New York, 1969), 453-58. Du Bois, "Helen Keller," in Herbert Aptheker, ed., *Writings by W.E.B. Du Bois in Non-periodical Literature Edited by Others* (Millwood, N.Y, 1982), 164. Du Bois, "Steps Toward a Science of How Men Act," in *Du Bois Papers* 83:359-63, for primacy of feeling.

5. William James, *Principles of Psychology,* I (Gloucester, Mass.,1962), 202-29, 394, 399, for quotes; James, "The Hidden Self," in *Scribner's Magazine,* 7 (March 1890), for 'Unconsciousness' in Hysterics. See the former for "secondary consciousness;" the latter for "wild facts." Du Bois took James' year-long course in Psychology during his freshman year at Harvard. It was "The Hidden Self" he quoted in his Harvard Commencement Address. Du Bois, "Strivings of the Negro People," *Atlantic Monthly*, 80 (1897), 194-98, for "second sight" and "message;" James, "The Confidences of a 'Psychical Researcher," *American Magazine* (1906), 580-89, for "Zeitgeist." For a review of Janet's findings, see Alfred Binet, *On Double Consciousness: Experimental Psychological Studies* (Chicago, 1890).

6. Du Bois, "Jefferson Davis as a Representative of Civilization," in David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Reader* (New York, 1995), 17-19, for quotes.

7. Du Bois, "The Spirit of Modern Europe," in Herbert Aptheker, ed., *Against Racism* (Amherst, Mass., 1985), 50-64; Harry Elmer Barnes, "Lester Frank Ward: The Reconstruction of Society by Social Science," in Barnes, ed., *An Introduction to the History of Sociology* (Chicago, 1948), 173-90, for struggle of races; Kieran Allen, *Max Weber: A Critical Introduction* (London, 2004), 123, for switchman quote; Du Bois, "Conservation of Races."

8. Shamoon Zamir, *Dark Voices: W.E.B. Du Bois and American Thought, 1888-1903* (Chicago, 1995), 78-81 for Schmoller; Matthew W. Hughey and Devon R. Gross, "With Whom No White Scholar Can Compare," *The American Sociologist* 49, no. 2 (June 2018), 181-217, for verstehen method; Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, (New York, 1989).

9. Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Sociology*, I (New York, 1897), 100.

10. James G. Kennedy, *Herbert Spencer* (Boston, 1978), 99.

11. Gabriel de Tarde, *The Laws of Imitation* (Gloucester, Mass.,1962), xxiv, for "single peaceful human family;" 221, for "water tower;" 316, for "American Negro" exception.

12. Ibid., 388-89, for "unification." See also, Josiah Royce, "Race Questions and Prejudices" in *Race Questions, Provincialism and Other American Problems* (Freeport, N.Y., 1967), 3-53, for criticism that Tarde-like assertions of a race's inability to assimilate have "never been so fairly [tested] by the civilized nations of men [to]...give us any exact results."

13. The course was "The Ethics of Social Reform" taught by Francis Peabody.

14. See Baldwin, 367, 381-85, 477-78, for the influence of imitation theory in early American sociology. Josiah Royce, "Preliminary Report on Imitation," *Psychological Review* 2 (May, 1895): 217-35.

15. See Baldwin, 383-84, for game.

16. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (New York, 1967), 316-18, 322-26, 392-93, 177-78; Du Bois, "The Negroes of Farmville, Virginia," in Lewis, ed., 231-36.

17. Anthony Appiah argues that Du Bois' attempt in "Conservation of Races" to provide a normative basis for racial identity based on common ancestry and mission is ultimately unsuccessful as a definition. For African Americans many generations removed from chattel slavery and institutional segregation, Du Bois' definition of race lacks the clarity needed to unite African Americans in common cause. Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument: Du Bois and the Illusion of Race," in *'Race,' Writing, and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Chicago, 1986), 21-37. Finding a suitable alternative remains a primary focus of scholars seeking a basis for race unity. See Tommie Shelby, *We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005), for explication of problem.

18. Du Bois, "Strivings," for "better self."

19. *Ibid.*, for "merger" and "two-ness." See Alexander Crummell, "Sermon," in James L. Golden and Richard D. Rieke, eds., *The Rhetoric of Black Americans* (Columbus, 1971), 288-98; Crummell, "Civilization, The Primal Need of the Race," in Wilson Jeremiah Moses, ed. *Destiny and Race: Selected Writings, 1840-1898* (Amherst, Mass., 1992), 284-88, for assimilation. In fact, Du Bois did not associate the "assimilationist tendency" of his mentor Alexander Crummell with race inferiority. Forced into nineteenth century contrasts of the masculine and feminine, Du Bois wavered between militant and non-violent strategies of race advancement until late in his life when he traded the dilemma of self and society for the monism of African citizenship.

20. G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford, 1977), 111-19, for "master and slave;" Du Bois, *Philadelphia Negro*, 386-87, 396-97, for "unconscious prejudice;" Du Bois, *Souls*, 126-27, 137, for "shiftless" and "handicap."

21. Du Bois, "Of the Coming of John," *Souls*, ch.13, for the isolation of the black middle class.

22. Herbert Aptheker, "Du Bois on Douglass: 1895," *The Journal of Negro History* 49 (October 1964): 264-68; Du Bois, "The Passing of Douglass;" and "Did the United States Government Act Wisely in Conferring the Right of Suffrage upon Negroes?" *Du Bois Papers*, 88: 1471-79; 87: 177-196; Edward Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, (London, 1887), 139, 128, for content; Blyden, "Study and Race," in Hollis R. Lynch, ed., *Black Spokesman: Selected Published Writings of Edward Wilmot Blyden* (London, 1971), 195- 204, for African personality; Johann Herder, *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man* (New York, 1966), 151, 149, for "sensual disposition" and "sinned" against. Du Bois, "The Spirit of Modern Europe," for vacillation.

23. James, *Principles*, 292-98; John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, I (London, 1961), 301.

24. Du Bois, "The Sorrow Songs," *Souls*, ch.14, for the "rhythmic cry of the slave … the most beautiful expression of human experience born this side of the seas." See also

Sterling Stuckey, "W.E.B. Du Bois: Black Cultural Reality and the Meaning of Freedom," *Slave Culture*, ch.5 (New York, 1987), for the meaning and significance of the sorrow songs.

25. James, "Confidences of a Psychical Researcher."

26. Du Bois, "A Negro Student at Harvard at the End of the 19th Century," *The Massachusetts Review* (1960): 439-54, for "ability."

27. This paragraph is informed by Paul Gilroy's characterization of Bob Marley's cosmopolitan career, in which the "power of identity [was] based, not on some cheap, pre-given sameness, but on will, inclination, mood, and affinity." Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge, Mass., 2000), 133.

28. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept*, (New York, 1968), 98.

29. *Ibid*., 171-72.

30. Du Bois, "Conservation of Races" for "one far off divine event;" King, "I have a Dream" delivered on August 28, 1963, at the March on Washington.

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