

W. E. B. Du Bois and the Dismal Science: Economic Theory and Social Justice

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In the midst of a whirling rush of economic development in the last twenty years, any student of economics knows that the South today is committing nearly every economic heresy [against] which the whole history of modern industrial development warns them forcibly, and even passionately.

W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Rural South”¹

Economics is not only descriptive; it is not only evaluative; it is at the same time constructive—economists seek to fashion a world in the image of economic theory.

Stephen A. Marglin, *The Dismal Science*²

In his autobiography *Dusk of Dawn* (1940), W. E. B. Du Bois remarked that the two years (1892–94) he spent studying for a doctoral degree in political economy at the University of Berlin, the premier university for study in the social sciences at the time, “modified profoundly [his] outlook on life.”³ His classes and seminars with leaders of the German “Historical School of Economics,” especially with his mentor Gustav von Schmoller, allowed him to see that the “Race Problem” in the United States was inextricably connected to racism suffered by peoples of color around the world and impelled him to begin to “unite [his] economics and [his] politics.”⁴ Scholars of Du Bois’s life and work have



Figure 1: University of Berlin students, ca. 1894. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University Libraries, University of Massachusetts Amherst.

devoted considerable attention to the influence that his Berlin education had on his development as a social scientist, especially on his sociological and political theories, during the late 1890s and first decade of the twentieth century, the so-called Progressive Era in the United States.⁵ One of the first such studies, Francis L. Broderick's "German Influence on the Scholarship of W. E. B. Du Bois," begins with the assertion that Du Bois "went to Europe in 1892 an historian; he returned two years later a sociologist."⁶ However, Du Bois's Berlin education and

experiences developed in him a deep and abiding interest not only in sociology (and history and political science) but also in what Thomas Carlyle called the “dismal science.” Du Bois was in fact the leading African American economist during and after the Progressive Era; and, as Robert E. Prasch has shown, he also made several contributions to the discipline of economics as it was developing during the early twentieth century, though his achievements were largely ignored or marginalized by white economists.⁷ In this essay I want to deepen and extend Prasch’s work by examining in some depth Du Bois’s determined attempts during the early twentieth century to convince such influential members of the American Economics Association (AEA) as Edwin R. A. Seligman, Frank Taussig, and Walter Willcox (all of whom served as presidents of the organization) that racial prejudice and not racial inferiority was responsible for blacks’ poverty and supposed economic “inefficiency.” In addition to his campaign to influence the fledgling discipline of economics during the Progressive Era, Du Bois also deployed New Historical economic principles in his two major creative works of the period, *Souls of Black Folk* (1903) and his first novel *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* (1911). In the final section of this essay I will trace how Du Bois continued to unite his economics and politics for the rest of his life, including in his fictional trilogy *The Black Flame* (1957–61).

Applying German Economic Theory to the “Negro Problems”

In *The Dismal Science: How Thinking like an Economist Undermines Community*, Stephen A. Marglin remarks that the modern “economist’s individual is fixed and unchanging” and that economic theory too easily ignores “real hardships to real people.”⁸ Marglin’s criticism does not apply to Schmoller and the Berlin historicists, nor to the American economists they profoundly influenced. Richard Ely, Seligman, and other reform-minded social scientists were among the many American students who traveled to Germany during the 1870s and 1880s to learn the new social science theories and methodologies taught there. Schmoller and the German New Historical economists opposed the English laissez-faire economic system that proceeded deductively from supposedly fixed, universal economic principles, arguing instead that economic theories and methods were products of particular historical, political, and national contexts. One of their basic premises was that the end goal of economic study was to advance the good of the community or society, rather than the individual, and thus their unit of analysis was the social group.⁹ They also contended that ethics and justice were central to economics, as Schmoller articulated in his 1894 essay “The Idea of Justice in Political Economy,” which Du Bois would certainly have read.¹⁰ Sympathetic to socialism but not socialists themselves, Schmoller and his colleagues challenged the idea that economics was a value-neutral discipline, and they argued that the legal order underpinning any economic system reflects the particular norms and therefore the system of distribution of income.

Not all American economists, however, embraced the new American economics that was modeled on the German Historical School. The conflict between historical and the more conservative economists, who included Yale's William Graham Sumner and his former doctoral student Taussig, resulted in a power struggle within the ranks of the fledgling AEA.¹¹ The AEA formally organized in 1885, under the leadership of Ely, Seligman, and other American economists who were opposed to the rigid orthodoxy of the Manchester School of economics, which Ely contended "deified a monstrosity known as economic man."¹² In 1883 Sumner and a group of other New England economists who were not prepared to abandon entirely *laissez-faire* economics formed the Political Economy Club. In response, Ely and his allies created the AEA, which Ely planned to construct on the German theoretical foundation: "The idea of the A.E.A.," he wrote Seligman, "is to accomplish in America what the *Verein für Socialpolitik* has done in Germany—not necessarily accepting all the doctrines of the Germans. What I would like to see is simply an association of the younger progressive elements, and the platform must be broad yet it must not include men of the [William Graham] Sumner type nor be used for partisan purposes either for free trade or protection."¹³ However, the majority of Ely's colleagues, including Seligman, ultimately rejected his socialistic vision in favor of one that emphasized professionalization and freedom of inquiry.

Such, then, was the state of the economics discipline when Du Bois entered Harvard as an undergraduate and became a serious student of economics. As he would later write, his political economy classes at "reactionary" Harvard tended to support English free trade, oppose labor unions, and embrace David Ricardo's "Wages Fund" theory, of which Taussig was a leading disciple.¹⁴ Put simply, the Ricardian Wages Fund theory proclaimed that wages were by economic necessity fixed at the subsistence level for workers. Du Bois was so engaged with the Wages Fund theory that he wrote an essay for the Harvard Toppin Prize in 1891 titled "A Constructive Critique of Wage-Theory: An Essay on the Present State of Economic Theory in Regard to Wages." In the handwritten 158-page discourse Du Bois develops the thesis that society had an obligation to regulate profits as the only mechanism for distributing wealth.¹⁵

After receiving his master's degree in history in 1891, Du Bois began pursuing a Ph.D. in political science at Harvard and was granted permission to study at Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin. During his first semester he took political economy from Adolph Wagner and was admitted to Schmoller's seminar in that subject, in which Schmoller asked him to prepare a paper on the "labor question in the southern United States."¹⁶ One portion of Du Bois's notes taken in an economics class lists about thirty of the major English, French, and German economic theorists of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including Adam Smith, Ricardo, John Stuart Mill, Alfred Marshall, the French Physiocrats, Jean-Baptiste Say, Bruno Hildebrand, Karl Marx, and Friedrich Engels.¹⁷ During his second term (winter 1892–93) he devoted most of his time to Schmoller's seminar and wrote a paper (in German) on the large- and small-

scale management of agriculture in the southern United States between 1840 and 1890. Du Bois reported that Schmoller was “much pleased” with his work and urged him to continue developing it as his doctoral thesis and for possible publication. Du Bois also joined the Verein für Sozial Politik, which he noted included many well-known economists.¹⁸ Unfortunately, lack of funding forced him to return to Harvard without the Ph.D. that he had come close to earning.¹⁹

In addition to his brief comments on Schmoller and the historical economists in *Dusk of Dawn*, Du Bois provides a positive assessment of them in a lengthy unpublished essay titled “The Socialism of German Socialists,” probably written in 1896. The essay, in which Du Bois describes seven distinct types of German socialists, reveals that he began paying serious attention to socialism while in Berlin, earlier than most scholars have claimed.²⁰ From a strictly economic point of view, one of the more important classes, he asserts, is composed of those agricultural laborers, factory workers, and handicraftsmen who “feel the intense pressure of those vast economic changes” occurring in contemporary Germany. These displaced workers were “living examples of the economic ills of society, before which the older economics can, in the nature of the case, have little to say.” In Du Bois’s opinion, German socialism had only one vigorous line of growth: the so-called Younger Historical School, led by Schmoller. Members of this school, he states, “confine themselves in practice to careful statistical investigation of the history and development of present economic conditions, and social phenomena.” They do not espouse a political ideology but rather attempt to recommend remedies for social ills based on careful interpretation of the facts at hand. The result of their efforts has been “economic and social changes in Germany, carried out on such distinctly socialistic lines that Germany has with reason been called the great socialistic state of the day,” with its vast and searching factory-inspection laws, employer’s liability laws, and governmental influence in industry, politics, and society.

As Du Bois writes in *Dusk of Dawn*, during the years surrounding 1900 he was “continually . . . forced to consider the economic aspects of world movements as they were developing at the time,” and he realized that the labor turmoil and political agitation had a “distinct economic tinge and object.”²¹ Booker T. Washington’s 1895 Atlanta Exposition address, he also states, helped link in his mind the American race problem to economic development.²²

Du Bois’s first major application of his Berlin education to the race problem was his Harvard dissertation and first book, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade* (1896), which, he states in the preface, was guided by the “general principles laid down in German universities.”²³ Those principles helped him reveal, after extraordinary scholarly research, the economic foundations of the transatlantic slave trade. He showed that economic conditions and motives determined the rise and fall of the slave trade and slavery in both the northern and the southern colonies. His language is often inflected by economic terms and figures of speech, as, for example, when he observes that when an oversupply of slaves arose in 1774–75, “many of the strongest partisans of the system were



Figure 2: Dean and professors at Atlanta University, ca. 1905. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University Libraries, University of Massachusetts Amherst.

‘bulls’ on the market” and therefore tried to increase the value of their human chattel by temporarily halting the trade.²⁴

The principles of the German universities also guided the research for his pioneering studies, *The Negroes of Farmville, Virginia* (1898) and *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899), which were funded by the federal Bureau of Labor through the efforts of its commissioner, Carroll Wright. Indeed, these projects were a continuation of the research on the labor question in the American South that had so pleased Schmoller. But Du Bois was now creating his own research questions and methodology. As Francille Rusan Wilson and others have argued, Du Bois established the foundation for black labor studies for decades to come.²⁵ In turning his attention to racial issues, Du Bois faced a major problem that did not affect his Berlin teachers, for he would have to challenge not only proponents of laissez-faire economics but also the Color Line. Because so little data were available on African American economic and social issues, Du Bois had to conduct personal interviews of black families, who were largely invisible to white economists, even those who practiced the New Historical methodology. In the opening sentence of *The Negroes of Farmville*, he asserts that the time is ripe for “thorough economic study of the economic condition of the American Negro” and that this investigative study and subsequent ones will focus on small, well-defined groups of blacks in specific parts of the country.²⁶

Du Bois spent July and August of 1897 living and working in the small, rural community, his first field laboratory, and he came to know the inhabitants and their culture intimately. He is appropriately cautious in making totalizing generalizations based on the data, but he suggests that the progress made by the most industrious blacks in Farmville represents the general tendencies of the group. One clear finding was that the Farmville residents had formed into economic classes. Thus he contends that future studies of the “Negro problems” must explore class differences instead of treating African Americans as a homogeneous population.

As is well known, for the *Philadelphia Negro*, Du Bois personally conducted thousands of interviews with black residents, providing him with a wealth of economic and social data on this northern urban population of African Americans. Challenging the widespread belief among whites that African American poverty and crime were due primarily to inherent character faults, Du Bois presented data indicating that the major obstacle to black economic progress was not biological inferiority but white racial discrimination. Drawing on his knowledge of Wages Theory, he also argued that since the vast majority of black workers were restricted to lower-paying jobs, they created a disequilibrium in the labor supply, which in turn indirectly depressed wages for white workers as well. The white workers then blamed black workers for bringing down their earnings, leading to increased racial friction. Thus Du Bois asserts what would be a recurring theme in his subsequent writings: “one of the great postulates of the science of economics—that men will seek their economic advantage—is in this case untrue, because in many cases [white] men will not do this if it involves association, even in a casual and business way, with Negroes.”²⁷ How long, he asks, could whites continue to pursue a blatantly “contradictory economic policy” of preventing a portion of the population from moving beyond the lowest jobs while hiring white immigrants to replace them?²⁸ Du Bois finds a glimmer of hope, however, in the development of black cooperative businesses, or black-owned enterprises, which would be of continuing interest to him.

When Du Bois joined the Atlanta University faculty in 1897 he immediately began inculcating the New Historical economic methodology in his students, who wrote research papers on topics that were being debated by mainstream economists of the day; for example, “Poverty,” “Rise of and Development of the Wages System in the South,” “Wages and Negroes,” and “The Negro Labor in Atlanta.”²⁹ He also extended his ambitious research program as the new coordinator of the university’s series of conferences on aspects of the “Negro problems.” The fourth Atlanta conference (1899) focused on the extent to which African Americans were entering into business life. Titled *The Negro in Business*, Du Bois wrote the introduction to and analyzed the results of the survey data. In the opening paragraph he states that the research for the study clearly revealed “the hard economic struggle through which the emancipated slave is to-day passing” and demonstrated that though physical emancipation occurred in 1863, “economic emancipation” was still far off.³⁰ On the positive side, the

data indicated that black entrepreneurs and professionals in the South, like their counterparts in Philadelphia, were making headway in professions that primarily served other blacks (e.g., undertakers, private cemeteries, physicians, drug stores, and newspapers). These relatively few cooperative enterprises were instances of what Du Bois called the “advantage of the disadvantaged,” and they would later be the focus of his in-depth Atlanta conference report, *Economic Co-operation among Negro Americans* (1907). The competition posed by large department stores and grocery chains, he noted, posed a special challenge for displaced black entrepreneurs, for unlike their white counterparts, the Color Line barred them from securing managerial and supervisory positions in the white-owned businesses.

Of course, Du Bois’s major achievement of this period was *The Souls of Black Folk*. Scholars have paid relatively little attention to the economic themes and arguments in this work. Yet the influence of Schmoller and the New Historical economists—especially the ideal of justice in political economy—is central to several of the chapters. In analyzing the poverty and misery of black laborers and tenant farmers, Du Bois seeks to expose the historical, moral, and psychological factors that shaped the economic conditions of African Americans from Reconstruction into the period of modernity. Many of the essays are an implicit critique of the laissez-faire model of economics, or more precisely, of applying that model to a population deprived of its legal and civil rights. For example, in his famous essay on Booker T. Washington (chapter 3), Du Bois remarks: “This is an age of unusual economic development” that required Washington’s program to take on an “economic cast”; but he criticizes Washington for failing to recognize the economic principle that “it is utterly impossible, under modern competitive methods, for working men and property owners to defend their rights and exist without the right of suffrage.”³¹ Likewise, in “Of the Sons of Masters and Man” (chapter 9), Du Bois contends that the South’s antiquated economic system mimics England’s of the early nineteenth century, which “fired the wrath of Carlyle.”³² Overcoming the “wretched economic heritage” of slavery, he argues, will require trained black leaders, including “black captains of industry,” able to lead the oppressed black underclass to economic security.³³ The wretched economic heritage of slavery is poignantly illustrated by the struggles of Josie and her family in “Of the Meaning of Progress” (chapter 4), which critiques white progressivist conceptions of progress from behind the veil of racism. Near the end of the chapter Du Bois poses a simple question that powerfully suggests the moral imperative to consider the values underpinning any quantitative economic analysis: “How many heartfuls of sorrow shall balance a bushel of wheat?”³⁴ Like the “submerged tenth” of Germans referred to in “The Socialism of German Socialists,” Josie, the Burkes, and other black tenant farmers are “living examples of the economic ills of society, before which the older Economics can, in the nature of the case, have little to say.”

The irrelevance of classical economics to the plight of the freedmen after emancipation is the subtext of “The Dawn of Freedom” (chapter 2), in which Du

Bois reconstructs at great length the history of the Freedmen's Bureau. But Du Bois here does more than seek to recuperate the reputation of the much maligned Bureau; he is applying the New Historical economic model to the postbellum period so as to reveal the historical factors that shaped subsequent economic and social conditions of African Americans (i.e., the "wretched economic heritage of slavery"). The sudden emancipation of some four million former slaves, he observes, created a "labor problem of vast dimensions" that required swift and dramatic government action to avoid utter catastrophe.³⁵ In order to establish a "self-sustaining place in the body politic and economic" for the staggering numbers of homeless, uneducated, and unemployed former slaves, the federal government in effect made them wards of the state. The Freedmen's Bureau attempted to establish an entire economic system for them—capital, guaranteed wages, binding legal contracts, land, education—in the hostile and ravaged environment following the war. Though damned as a failure by most of his contemporary (white) progressives, the Freedmen's Bureau was, in Du Bois's view, remarkably successful in accomplishing its nearly impossible mission, and it might have fully succeeded had it not been so fiercely opposed and undermined by its foes. Du Bois notes that two of the most bitter economic events affecting the freedmen were the government's failure to fulfill its "forty acres and a mule" commitment and the crash of the Freedmen's Bank, the latter robbing blacks not only of their hard-earned savings but also their faith in the value of thrift. As the white South succeeded in establishing Jim Crow, the freedmen were once again cast into the "economic slavery" from which the Freedmen's Bureau had tried to rescue them.³⁶

Challenging the American Economic Association

Du Bois had gained the notice of and began developing professional relationships with Walter Willcox and other key members of the AEA even before *Souls* was published. In January 1902, Willcox (then professor of economics at Cornell and statistician of the U.S. Census Bureau) invited Du Bois to participate in a major study of black economic conditions planned by the Census Bureau that would be presented at the AEA annual meeting in 1904.³⁷ A future president of both the AEA and American Statistics Association, Willcox was arguably the most influential economic demographer and statistician of the Progressive Era, and he published scholarly articles in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, which Taussig edited.³⁸ Willcox had known of Du Bois's work on race at least since 1899, for he cites "The Conservation of Races" in his essay "Negro Criminality," which he delivered at the American Social Science Association (ASSA) meeting on September 6, 1899.³⁹ Du Bois accepted Willcox's invitation to contribute to the research project and to join the AEA. In November 1903 (several months after *Souls* was published), Du Bois invited Seligman, president of the AEA at the time, and other members of the organization to visit Atlanta University on their way to the upcoming annual AEA convention in New Orleans, and Seligman ac-

cepted.⁴⁰ Seligman was chair of the Department of Economics and Social Science at Columbia University and author of the influential *The Economic Interpretation of History* (1902). His 1902 AEA presidential address on “Economics and Social Progress” epitomizes the American strand of the New Historical economics; parts of Seligman’s speech would have struck a chord in Du Bois, as, for example, when Seligman reminded his audience of how the boasted Anglo-Saxon love of liberty fell victim to the profits of slavery in America, resulting in a Declaration of Independence signed by a large proportion of slaveholders.⁴¹ In the closing of his address, Seligman asserted that economics, still in its infancy, is “the creature of the past; it is the creator of the future,” and if correctly developed (i.e., according to the Berlin model), it is the “prop of ethical upbuilding, it is the basis of social progress.”⁴² A week after he returned from his visit to Atlanta, Seligman wrote to thank Du Bois, adding that the (unknown) “documents that you sent us were the subject of much discussion on the train during the remainder of our trip, and I think that the seed that has been planted will bear fruit.”⁴³ This was the beginning of a long friendship between Du Bois and Seligman, one of the founding members of the NAACP.

How much fruit the meeting and unknown documents bore is impossible to measure, but for the next several years Du Bois strenuously attempted to lift the veil on economic and social discrimination for the AEA members. For example, in 1904 Du Bois sent Willcox a copy of his 1904 essay “Future of the Negro Race in America.” Willcox, however, was not swayed by the essay, replying to Du Bois that it was impossible to judge the extent to which African American poverty was due to “persistent characteristics of the people” and how much to the “heavy economic and social pressure upon them.”⁴⁴ Noting that Du Bois emphasizes the latter in his essay, Willcox asserts that statistical analysis supports neither position, and thus he will remain an “agnostic” on the issue. Willcox’s skepticism might appear reasonable in that no empirical data at the time could definitively prove whether African Americans were more prone to criminal behavior or less economically efficient than whites. However, though he distanced himself from rabid white supremacists like Mississippi governor James K. Vardaman, Willcox’s views on the “Negro problems” were at least in part shaped by his racial bias.⁴⁵

Du Bois responded bluntly to Willcox’s “agnostic” response to “Future of the Negro Race in America”: “The fundamental difficulty in your position is that you are trying to spin a solution of the Negro problem out of the inside of your office,” whereas he (Du Bois) has had “intimate soul contact” with southern blacks for a decade.⁴⁶ “If you insist on writing [about the Negro problem],” Du Bois fumed, “get down here & really study it at first hand. . . . There is enough easily obtainable data to take you off the fence if you will study it first hand & not thro’ prejudiced eyes—my eyes, or those of others.” In an attempt to get Willcox off the fence and have him see with his own eyes the work being done at Atlanta, Du Bois invited him in April 1905 to visit the university and make a brief speech to an audience of 400–500 of faculty, students, and people in ordinary walks of

life. The focus of the program, Du Bois informed Willcox, was to review the impact of the work done by students at Atlanta during the past decade, adding that he wanted to “discuss methods of work from the point of view of a student of economics and from the point of view of workers in the field.”⁴⁷

To his credit, Willcox accepted the invitation and attended the tenth anniversary of the Atlanta conferences on May 30, as did Lafayette M. Hershaw of the federal Title and Land Office. In his address, Hershaw asserted that the scientific studies of African Americans being conducted at Atlanta under Du Bois were a departure from previous investigations, which relied on opinions of “reckless and uninformed talkers.”⁴⁸ In his speech, Willcox also commended the conferences for their systematic collection of empirical data, and he joined Du Bois and Hershaw in a resolution stating that the Atlanta studies were fulfilling a demand for “verifiable knowledge rather than mere opinion.” Du Bois and his Atlanta colleagues and students must have been very pleased to learn that the two distinguished visitors and Du Bois agreed that it was “more and more unjust to characterize the race as if it were a unit,” that there was an increase in black “economic co-operation,” and that there had been a considerable decrease in crime since 1895. The joint resolution closed with a recommendation that future studies focus on remaining “unsettled” questions, including the negro’s “economic efficiency.”⁴⁹

The issue of efficiency was of paramount concern to Progressive Era economists, and as the following remarks by Katharine Coman at the 1906 annual AEA meeting suggest, economic theory was being welded to Social Darwinism. As society becomes increasingly industrialized, stated Coman (one of the first female economists and head of the Economics Department at Wellesley College), human “wants multiply, and because satisfaction is obtained only at increasing cost, economic enterprise grows more absorbing and more efficient. The formula of biological evolution, the survival of the fittest, should be reworded to state fitly the genesis of economic evolution. Industrial progress is determined by the survival of the most efficient.”⁵⁰ Taking this theorizing a step further, many white economists and sociologists believed that blacks were incapable of competing with whites in the economic arena and would therefore remain at the bottom of the economic chain. Thus it was imperative for Du Bois to demonstrate that blacks were capable of participating in the economic evolution wrought by modern industrialism.

Among the AEA members whom Du Bois labored strenuously for years to convert to his position was Willcox’s friend Alfred Stone. Willcox had appointed Stone and Du Bois to the Special Committee of the AEA on the Economic Position of the Negro, which presented its data and findings at the 1904 meeting of the AEA.⁵¹ Stone, a Mississippi plantation owner, was a nonacademic member of the AEA who published white supremacist perspectives on the “Negro problems.”⁵² Despite his firm belief in Anglo racial superiority and his conviction that Reconstruction attempted to bring about a “hopeless and senseless ‘equality’” of blacks and whites,” he seems to have respected Du Bois’s research.⁵³ Stone

initiated a personal correspondence with the Atlanta professor in March 1903 that continued for over five years, his letters punctuated with flattering comments such as the following: “It gives me genuine pleasure to say that I know of no more important work now being done in connection with the problems and questions surrounding the Negro’s life in America than that prosecuted by Atlanta University under your direction.”⁵⁴

When the AEA decided to devote a session to the “Economic Future of the Negro” at its 1905 annual meeting, Du Bois and Stone were selected as the two featured speakers. Their lengthy position papers were followed by responses from a panel of white AEA members and Roscoe Conkling Bruce, a Harvard-educated African American who held a position at Tuskegee. Du Bois’s former economics professor at Harvard, Taussig, would likely have attended Du Bois’s panel session, for he was the new president of the AEA. In his opening presidential address, titled “The Love of Wealth and the Public Service,” Taussig, in sharp contrast to his predecessor Seligman’s 1902 address, extolled the free enterprise system and urged “captains of industry” to devote their talents and knowledge to public service. He also argued that while it was true that some modern fortune builders fit the stereotype of the “robber baron,” their pursuit of wealth had benefited the common good overall. Tellingly, Taussig’s address made no reference to racial discrimination or segregation. Blacks were invisible. Indeed, the only time Taussig used the term “black” was when he remarked that the “party boss” is not always as “black as he is painted”—a metaphor whose irony would not have been lost on Du Bois.⁵⁵

Titled “The Economic Future of the Negro” Du Bois’s address focused on the racial minority ignored by Taussig. The author of *The Philadelphia Negro* and *The Souls of Black Folk* began by reminding the AEA audience that the ten million African Americans were not a homogeneous group and that any theories that viewed them as such were false from the start. Rather than applying an a priori analysis of a fictive Universal (Black) Man, Du Bois in good Berlin fashion began with a historical analysis, tracing the development of the four different economic paths black freedmen took after slavery: those of house servants, competitive industry, landholding, and the “group economy” of which he had written in *The Philadelphia Negro*. Du Bois identified four major factors affecting blacks’ current economic condition: their migration to urban areas, their relationship to group and national economies, the influence of race prejudice, and finally, the “great question” of economic efficiency—“How efficient a laborer is the Negro, and how efficient can he become?” if provided with training and encouragement.⁵⁶ He then repeated the argument he had made in his previous studies that whites were making concerted efforts to prevent blacks from making economic progress by excluding them from entering certain lines of industry, from being promoted to positions of authority, from buying land, from joining unions, and from defending their economic rights by the right to vote. In the longest portion of his paper, Du Bois analyzed the current economic situation of blacks and peered into the future. He noted that the independent class—the

250,000 African American farmers, merchants, and professionals—were at the forefront of the group economy movements. Meanwhile, black workers who remained in the South were subjected to peonage, fraud, and violence to keep them down. Setting aside for the moment the *moral* issues involved, Du Bois posed the “purely economic question”: Was the region richer by such practices? No, it was not. “To-day,” he stated, “the powerful threat of Negro labor is making child labor and fourteen hour days possible in southern factories.” Raising an issue that he had engaged in *The Philadelphia Negro* and that would continue to occupy him for the rest of his career, Du Bois asked, “How long will it be before the white workingmen discover the interests that bind him [*sic*] to his [*sic*] black brother in the south are greater than those that artificially separate them?”⁵⁷

In the closing section of his AEA address, Du Bois shed the calm and professional rhetoric of a Berlin-trained academic social scientist and attempted to shame AEA members into recognizing and taking action against social and economic injustice in the South: “For any set of intelligent men like you, to think that a mass of two million laborers can be thrust into modern competitive industry and maintain themselves, when the state refuses their children decent schools and allows them no voice or influence in the making of the laws or their interpretation or administration, is to me utterly inconceivable.” Adding that African Americans—including himself—had no more rights in the South than the worst criminal in a penitentiary, he chastised his audience: “You can twist this matter up and down and apologize for it and reason it out—it’s wrong, and unjust, and economically unsound, and you know it.”⁵⁸

Unfortunately Stone’s rebuttal to Du Bois was exemplary in its twisting the matter up, but without any apology. In one of his letters to Stone, Du Bois expressed hope that the Mississippi planter would “tell the truth and not distort it against a helpless people.”⁵⁹ But Stone’s speech typified the distorting, racist rhetoric of southern segregationists. His central argument was that African Americans were steadily losing ground to their white competitors in the labor market, not because of race prejudice but because blacks in general were lazy, shiftless, improvident, and unreliable. Stone himself was importing Italian immigrants to work his plantation, believing (wrongly, as he would learn) that they were more efficient workers than blacks. He peppered his long address with references to experts on the issues, including the research of “the best living authority on American Negro statistics”—not Du Bois, but rather Willcox, who concluded that, based on data from the 1900 census, the Negro is not “holding his own” in the competition with white labor.⁶⁰ In his single reference to *Souls of Black Folk*, Stone quoted Du Bois’s candid acknowledgement of ignorance, poverty, and vice among the lower-class black population in Dougherty County, Georgia, but without including Du Bois’s explanation of the root causes of the poverty and crime or his positive assessment of the majority of the exploited black residents. He also turned Du Bois’s famous notion of the “talented tenth” against him:

No man is further than I from attempting to discount the value to a race or nation of its exceptional few—the wealth it has in the possession of a “talented tenth.” But, after all is said and done, the race, it seems to me, must stand or fall by the character of its people. It cannot be saved by the poetry of Dunbar, by the novels of Chesnutt, by the music of Coleridge-Taylor, by the surgical skill of Williams, or by the culture and intellect of Du Bois.⁶¹

The four white respondents to Du Bois’s and Stone’s papers offered varying perspectives but generally dismissed Du Bois’s data and arguments and supported Stone’s belief in African American retrogression. University of North Carolina economist Charles Lee Raper, for example, replied that Du Bois’s emphasis on race prejudice as a primary obstacle to blacks’ economic progress was “for the most part incorrect and false,” and he agreed with Stone that blacks’ “lack of economic efficiency and stability” doomed them to a “dark and discouraging” future.⁶² In a comment that illustrates how the racial veil prevented white economists from objectively assessing the data and arguments that Du Bois presented to them, Raper supported his grim conclusion by stating that Stone and other southern planters who were doing “all in their power to aid the negro, tell us that the native white and imported Italian laborers” are driving the less efficient blacks from the cotton fields; thus, Raper accords more weight to the plantation owners’ biased perceptions than to a fellow scholar’s years of research on the issues.⁶³

The AEA panel session was of sufficient public interest to be reported in the *Washington Post* on December 30.⁶⁴ The anonymous reporter cited the names of all the panelists, but then summarized *only* Stone’s argument that blacks were being driven into menial occupations because they were losing out to the superior abilities of white competitors for better jobs. Du Bois’s scholarly and compelling presentation was completely ignored. In 1908, Stone and Du Bois skirmished again on the issue of race friction and racial difference in the pages of the *American Journal of Sociology*. Whereas Stone and other white racists were convinced that African Americans were dying out because of their inferior characteristics, Du Bois replied that blacks were “working [more] steadily and efficiently than ever before,” and he again hoped that “learned societies” would go on record as supporting “thorough and unbiased study” of the race problem.⁶⁵

Stone and Willcox remained impervious to Du Bois’s economic studies and arguments, as demonstrated by Stone’s 1908 *Studies in the American Race Problem*, a collection of new and reprinted essays, including his AEA address “The Economic Future of the American Negro.” Du Bois must have been dismayed to see that Willcox wrote the introduction and contributed three previously published essays to the volume. No longer an “agnostic” regarding the causes for African American poverty and crime, Willcox stated in his introduction that he had had a pleasant friendship with Stone since 1900, adding he had learned more about

“the realities of the race problems in the South” from Stone than from anyone else.⁶⁶ Indeed, by this time Willcox was using his influence to thwart Du Bois’s research and to help Stone secure the Carnegie Foundation funding that Du Bois had sought.⁶⁷ Neither Du Bois’s research during the past decade nor such horrific racial violence as the Atlanta race riot of 1906, which personally threatened Du Bois and his family, led Stone or Willcox to change a word of their previously published essays attributing black economic inefficiency and criminality to the “negro mind.”

While Du Bois was researching and publishing his Atlanta Conference research studies, including *Economic Co-operation among Negro Americans* (1907), he was also drafting his first novel, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece*. Though it was not published until 1911, Du Bois began writing it in 1905 and finished a draft in 1908. Maria Farland has shown how Du Bois used the rhetorical strategy of “transvaluation” in *Quest*.⁶⁸ The term describes how members of marginalized groups have employed but transposed the theories and categories of the dominant scientific discourse in order to challenge that discourse. Farland focuses on the novel’s implicit undermining of the racist “brain science” that supported the theory of black retrogression at the time. However, *Quest*—which Du Bois described as an “economic study of some merit”—is also a transvaluation of the data and arguments of his academic economic papers and his debates with AEA members, especially with Willcox and Stone.⁶⁹

The novel’s central plot revolves around the attempts of greedy northern capitalists and Colonel Creswell, a former slaveholder who owns a 50,000-acre plantation in Alabama, to corner the cotton market and keep blacks in a state of virtual slavery. Du Bois might have had Stone in mind when he created Creswell. The plantation owner is described as a representative type of the “high-bred gentleman of the old school” who believes that black workers are lazy and shiftless, and that Italian laborers are more efficient.⁷⁰ In an article titled “A Plantation Experiment,” which appeared in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* in 1905, the year that Du Bois began writing the novel, Stone reported on his attempts to retain black labor by providing his workers with what he considered to be attractive working and living conditions. The plan failed, however, and the great majority of the 100 black families left. Replete with data, Stone’s report seems scientific—until the concluding section of the paper, where he attributes the black exodus to racial traits: Negroes, he asserts, typically have a “restless, migratory tendency,” and their actions “have no logical or reasonable basis . . . they are notional and whimsical, and . . . they are controlled far more by their fancies than by their common sense.”⁷¹

Quest offers a quite different perspective on black labor on southern plantations. Zora and Bles, the protagonists of *Quest*, are intelligent and industrious African Americans who overcome numerous obstacles as they clear a swamp and create the “silver fleece” of cotton. Nonetheless, as Du Bois had argued in his AEA address, any economic system is contingent on the legal system that supports it, and if the legal system is unjust and if the workers are deprived of their

rights of citizenship, then the principles of laissez-faire economics do not apply. The impoverished and uneducated black tenant farmers and laborers in *Quest* are easily cheated out of their wages and the land they want to own. In one scene, for example, the planters decide arbitrarily what to pay their laborers, since there is no set or agreed upon wage. In primitive times and places, states Du Bois, the personal judgment of powerful landowners determined wages: "The Black Belt is primitive and the landlord wields the power" (183). The Black Belt landlords and their Wall Street conspirators, assisted by corrupt Washington politicians, develop a simple strategy to maintain their feudal power: "We'll plant cotton mills beside the cotton fields, use whites to keep niggers in their place, and the fear of niggers to keep the poorer whites in theirs" (391). The plan will work because, as Du Bois had argued as early as *The Philadelphia Negro*, white laborers' irrational racial prejudice will impel them to act against their own economic self-interests. When Creswell and his cronies build the cotton mill, it does not benefit white labor because it employs children, whom it seems to "devour" as if they were "pale white mites" (391). Meanwhile, young black men are forced into peonage for petty crimes or for resisting racial injustice, and black tenant farmers have no hope of ever getting out of debt. "It's slavery," cries one African American woman (134). Such scenes powerfully illustrate Du Bois's AEA speech that the whole southern economic system is "wrong, and unjust, and economically unsound" and indicate why he characterized *Quest* as an economic study.

Unlike his AEA address, however, Du Bois (who was also busy during this period helping found the Niagara Movement and NAACP) suggests in *Quest* that if white leaders would not reform the racist and unjust economic and political system, then exploited blacks had to fight on their own behalf. But they need educated leaders from the "talented tenth" to inspire and guide them. Zora (a "born leader") and Bles fill that role, and together they attempt to establish the kind of black cooperative community that Du Bois recommended in *Economic Co-operation among Negro Americans*. Zora manages to secure the land for an independent, collectivist black community, and the black workers, unimpeded by white discrimination and oppression, work industriously and efficiently. She hopes to forge an alliance with laboring whites, but she realizes that blacks must bring to the alliance "as much independent economic strength as possible" (398). To his credit, Du Bois does not essentialize blacks or whites in the novel; positive and negative traits are represented by individuals of both races. Moreover, Zora realizes that southern whites, especially workers, are capable of overcoming racial prejudice. Ultimately, however, race trumps class, and the whites are easily recruited into the campaign by Creswell and his allies to "put the niggers in their places" (416). The novel ends with a white mob burning Zora's community to the ground and lynching two black men, a scene that renders moot any discussions of blacks' economic efficiency or ability to compete with white workers. No matter how hard the blacks labor, their efforts are no match for the ruthless efficiency of the white power structure that is determined to keep them in a state of virtual slavery.

Engaging the “Great Ethical Question” in Later Writings

Du Bois once stated that he “deserted” Schmoller after leaving Atlanta University for his new position as Director of Publications and Research for the NAACP in 1910.⁷² But Du Bois was exaggerating, for he never abandoned Schmoller’s ideal of an economics based on social justice. Though he ceased academic economic research after leaving Atlanta, and though he became increasingly committed to direct political action, Pan-Africanism, and Marxist political theory, he nonetheless maintained a strong interest in economics (as well as sociology, of course) during the rest of his career. By the time he left Atlanta for New York, he had come to realize that social science data and research could not *alone* combat racial prejudice and imperialism, but he remained convinced that any program for economic progress and social justice had to be grounded in scientific data. Thus, in his two great works published between the World Wars—*Darkwater* (1920) and *Black Reconstruction* (1935)—Du Bois explored the economic roots of race prejudice and labor exploitation. In chapters of *Darkwater* such as “Of Work and Wealth” and “The Souls of White Folks,” he sought to expose the economic underpinnings of racial oppression and violence from the St. Louis race riots, to the World War I battlefields, to colonized Africa and Asia. When he asserts in “Of Work and Wealth” that the “great ethical question today is . . . how may we justly distribute the world’s goods to satisfy the necessary wants of the mass of men,” he is not abandoning but continuing to develop along that “vigorous line” of socialistic thought represented by Schmoller and the German Historical School.⁷³ Similarly, in his groundbreaking study *Black Reconstruction*, Du Bois returned to his earlier explorations of the economic slavery forced upon blacks after Reconstruction, but now with a clearly Marxist theoretical framework.

Du Bois continued to unite his economics and politics during and after World War II. In his remarkable essay “Reconstruction, Seventy-Five Years After” (1943), he warned that the same forces of racism and capitalism that had undermined the Reconstruction of the United States during the 1860s and 1870s would imperil efforts after World War II to establish the foundations of world peace and justice. Social and economic research still mattered very much to Schmoller’s former pupil, who appeals in this essay to “young students of the social sciences” to study and clarify the historical facts that are already known but in many cases have been “deliberately hidden, inadequately interpreted and which call for further intensive research and collaboration.”⁷⁴ Shortly after the war ended, Du Bois warned that the “outmoded wages theory” taught to him by his former Harvard professor, Frank Taussig, was being used to justify opposition to labor unions and strikes, and that blind acceptance of this popular but false economic theory had “already played hell with the industrial organization.”⁷⁵

In the final years of his life, Du Bois returned to fiction writing and produced one of his most ambitious projects, *The Black Flame* trilogy: *The Ordeal of Mansart* (1957), *Mansart Builds a School* (1959), and *Worlds of Color* (1961).

Mixing historical facts and characters with fictional ones in the three novels, Du Bois sought to recount American and world history from the end of Reconstruction to the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s. The largely ignored trilogy was the culmination of Du Bois's lifelong attempts to demonstrate how race and economics have been inextricably connected in modern industrial capitalism. At this point Du Bois was, of course, a confirmed socialist who would in 1961 apply for membership in the Communist Party of the United States, and he believed that the Corporation had become the "Frankenstein" of the twentieth century and the "Robot ruler of Man," indomitable in a world in which "the greatest force was control of Wealth and the weakest the sense of Right."⁷⁶ As many intellectuals on the Left fell silent during the McCarthy Era and the Cold War, Du Bois raised his voice to a fever pitch in *Black Flame*, dramatizing, often through scenes of graphic violence, the country's history of racial and economic injustice.

Space does not permit a full analysis of the economic threads that weave themselves through the trilogy's thousand pages, so I will offer only a few examples here. In the opening of *The Ordeal of Mansart*, which is set in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1876, we are introduced to Colonel John Breckinridge, who is remarkably similar to Colonel Creswell in *Quest*. The Civil War has brought Breckinridge, as it did Creswell, to the brink of financial ruin, and in order to regain his position of economic and political power, he must conspire with lower-class whites to force freedmen like Tom Mansart back into virtual slavery. "We'll build a new world with 'niggers' at the bottom to do such work as no white man should stoop to; with white labor on top and the way open for all white men who can to rise to the very top," predicts Scroggs, spokesperson for white laborers and future leader of the Ku Klux Klan (26). Breckinridge, like Alfred Stone, is convinced that the inefficiency of blacks will cause them to eventually "die out," but their labor is needed in the meantime. On the other side of the Color Line, Tom Mansart (much like Zora in *Quest*) has been working "furiously and alone" to develop the small farm awarded by the Freedmen's Bureau. When the farm is taken back by the government, the stunned Tom is forced to become a tenant farmer, and the cheating and exploitation begin: "Slowly, slavery was returning," writes Du Bois (30).

In *Dusk of Dawn*, Du Bois urged African Americans not only to form segregated economies but also to gain "expert knowledge in the technique of production and distribution and of *scholarship in the past and present of economic development*."⁷⁷ Tom Mansart and other black characters in the *Black Flame* follow this advice. Tom realizes that in order to resist white economic domination, he must understand "how income was determined," that is, the Wages Theory. Later in *Ordeal*, the black political leader Sebastian Doyle goes even further in his economic education. Doyle studies economics in order to effect social reform. His readings include works such as *The Wealth of Nations* and the *Communist Manifesto*, and he "dipped into" Ricardo and Malthus as well as *Progress and Poverty* (*Ordeal*, 162). Later in the trilogy, in the 1950s, black activists Jack Carmichael and his wife Ann are passionately dedicated to

creating a self-sufficient and racially integrated commune on a former decaying slave plantation, recalling Zora and Bles's futile efforts.⁷⁸

Conclusion

During his senior year at Harvard, Du Bois, then twenty-two-years old, informed the university's Academic Council that he planned to pursue a Ph.D. in social science with the aim of applying his education to the "social and economic advancement of the Negro people."⁷⁹ Schmoller and the Berlin Historical economists provided the foundation for his life's work, furnishing him with the theoretical model and research methodology that allowed him to challenge laissez-faire economics and the pernicious Wages Theory that Taussig propounded at Harvard. Though his campaign during the Progressive Era to convince the AEA that segregation and racism were the major factors responsible for alleged black inefficiency did not succeed, he continued to "unite [his] economics and [his] politics" for the rest of his career, in his fiction as well as in his social science writings. His views on economics and politics changed over the decades, but he never departed from his bedrock principle that economic theory had to be historicized and grounded in the ideal of a just and humane society.

Notes

1. Du Bois, "The Rural South," *Publications of the American Statistical Association* 13 (March 1912): 80, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2965052>. Paper read at the joint meeting of the American Economic Association and the American Statistical Association, Washington, DC, December 28, 1911.

2. Stephen A. Marglin, *The Dismal Science: How Thinking like an Economist Undermines Community* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 3.

3. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept*, in *W. E. B. Du Bois: Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1986), 586–87.

4. *Ibid.*, 588. As Barrington S. Edwards observes in "W. E. B. Du Bois between Worlds: Berlin, Empirical Social Research, and the Race Question," *Du Bois Review* 3, no. 2 (2006): 395–424, Du Bois's Berlin years were critical to his development not only because they fulfilled his educational goals but also because they gave him a reprieve from what Du Bois called "nigger-hating America" (397).

5. See, for example, David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race: 1868–1919* (New York: Holt, 1993), 117–49; Shamooin Zamir, *Dark Voices: W. E. B. Du Bois and American Thought, 1888–1903* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 71–81; Sieglind Lemke, "Berlin and Boundaries: *sollen* versus *geschehen*," and Kenneth D. Barkin, "'Berlin Days,' 1892–94: W. E. B. Du Bois and German Political Economy," *boundary 2* 27, no. 3 (2000): 45–78 and 79–101, respectively; Axel R. Schafer, "W. E. B. Du Bois, German Social Thought, and the Racial Divide in American Progressivism," *Journal of American History* 88, no. 3 (Dec. 2001): 925–49; and Robert W. Williams, "The Early Social Science of W. E. B. Du Bois," *Du Bois Review* 3, no. 2 (Sept. 2006), 365–94.

6. Francis L. Broderick, "German Influence on the Scholarship of W. E. B. Du Bois," *Phylon Quarterly* 19, no. 4 (Winter 1958): 367. Though the boundaries between economics and the developing discipline of sociology were often blurry, economics did have a distinct tradition and body of knowledge that Du Bois studied and applied to his discourses on race.

7. Robert E. Prasch, "W. E. B. Du Bois's Contributions to U.S. Economics (1893–1910)," *Du Bois Review* 5, no. 2 (2008), 309–24.

8. Marglin, *The Dismal Science*, 45, 198.

9. Prasch, "W. E. B. Du Bois's Contributions," 311–14. For a comprehensive study of the Berlin New Historical economists, see Erik Grimmer-Solem's *The Rise of Historical Economics and Social Reform in Germany, 1864–1894* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003).

10. See Lemke, "Berlin and Boundaries," 53, <http://muse.jhu.edu.lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/journals/boundary/v027/27.3lemke.pdf>.

11. For the history of the AEA, see Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 98–140.

12. Quoted in Benjamin G. Rader, *The Academic Mind and Reform: The Influence of Richard T. Ely in American Life* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1966), 28.

13. Letter from Ely to Seligman, June 23, 1885, in Joseph Dorfman, “The Seligman Correspondence,” *Political Science Quarterly* 56 (March 1941): 281. For a discussion of the German Verein, see Grimmer-Solem, *The Rise of Historical Economics*, 67–71.

14. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 583–84. For an explanation of the Ricardian theory of wages and value, see Robert B. Ekelund, Jr., and Robert F. Hebert, *A History of Economic Theory and Method* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975), 88–91.

15. Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois*, 110–11.

16. Du Bois, *The Correspondence of W. E. B. Du Bois: Volume 1 Selections, 1877–1934*, ed. Herbert Aptheker (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1973), 21.

17. Du Bois, *The Papers of W. E. B. Du Bois* (Ann Arbor, MI: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1980–81), reel 87.

18. Du Bois, *Correspondence*, 1:23. Unfortunately Du Bois’s Berlin thesis has not been located.

19. Du Bois requested a third year of funding from the Slater Foundation to allow him to study economics at Berlin as well as Paris, but despite strong letters of endorsement from both Schmoller and Adolph Wagner, his request was denied. Schmoller and Wagner then recommended that an exception be made to the requirement that doctoral candidates complete six semesters in residence, but protests from another Berlin faculty member frustrated that effort. Du Bois, *Correspondence*, 1:26–29.

20. Du Bois, “The Socialism of German Socialists,” in *Papers of W. E. B. Du Bois*, reel 87, frames 412–25. For a comprehensive analysis of Du Bois’s socialism, see Mark Van Wiene, *American Socialist Triptych: The Literary–Political Work of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Upton Sinclair, and W. E. B. Du Bois* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011). Adolph L. Reed, Jr.’s *W. E. B. Du Bois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) remains a valuable study of Du Bois’s lifelong “collectivist” ideology. Both books, however, ignore Du Bois’s Berlin education and his relationship with Schmoller.

21. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 592–93.

22. *Ibid.*, 594.

23. Du Bois, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America 1638–1870*, in *W. E. B. Du Bois: Writings*, 3.

24. *Ibid.*, 47.

25. Francille Rusan Wilson, *The Segregated Scholars: Black Social Scientists and the Creation of Black Labor Studies, 1890–1950* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 21–23. See also Jonathan Grossman, “Black Studies in the Department of Labor, 1897–1907,” *Monthly Labor Review* 97, no. 6 (1974), 17–27, <http://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/history/blackstudiesext.htm>.

26. Du Bois, *The Negroes of Farmville, U.S. Department of Labor Bulletin* 14.3 (January 1898), Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, 1.

27. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (1899; reprint, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 146.

28. *Ibid.*, 140.

29. See Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois*, 217.

30. Du Bois, ed., *The Negro in Business* (1899; reprint, New York: AMS, 1971), 1–3.

31. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, in *W. E. B. Du Bois: Writings*, 399. Du Bois would further articulate his economic differences with Washington when the two were selected as the principal speakers for the 1907 William Levi Bull Lectures at the Philadelphia Divinity School on the topic of the economic and spiritual condition of African Americans in the South. Implicitly challenging Washington’s agrarian and optimistic vision, Du Bois argued that because of the South’s former dependence on slave labor, the massive economic changes ushered in by the Industrial Revolution were only beginning to be felt in the South. Instead of adjusting its economic and social practices to the modern capitalist order, the white South clung to its feudal attachment to slavery and to keeping blacks down, thus creating a system of land serfdom that “bears many likenesses to the serfdom that replaced slavery in Europe” (“The Economic Revolution in the South,” in *The Negro in the South: His Economic Progress in Relation to His Moral and Religious Development: Being the Levi Bull Lectures for the Year 1907* [Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs, 1907], 93).

32. *Ibid.*, 479.

33. *Ibid.*, 481.

34. *Ibid.*, 414.

35. *Ibid.*, 374–75.

36. *Ibid.*, 390.

37. Walter Willcox to Du Bois, January 8, 1902, *Papers of W. E. B. Du Bois*, reel 1, frame 50.

38. Mark Aldrich, “Progressive Economists and Scientific Racism: Walter Willcox and Black Americans, 1895–1910,” *Phylon* 40, no. 1 (1979): 7.

39. Willcox, "Negro Criminality" (1899); reprinted in Alfred Holt Stone, *Studies in the American Race Problem: With an Introduction and Three Papers by Walter F. Willcox* (1908; reprint, New York: Negro University Press, 1969), 443–75.
40. Du Bois to Edwin R. A. Seligman, November 23, 1903, in *Papers of W. E. B. Du Bois*, reel 1, frame 48.
41. Seligman, "Economics and Social Progress," *Publications of the American Economic Association* 4, no. 1 (Feb. 1903): 54, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2485840>.
42. *Ibid.*, 57, 70.
43. Seligman to Du Bois, January 4, 1904, *Papers of W. E. B. Du Bois*, reel 1, frame 49.
44. Du Bois, *Correspondence*, 1:74–75.
45. Aldrich, "Progressive Economists and Scientific Racism."
46. Du Bois, *Correspondence*, 1:75.
47. See correspondence between Du Bois and Willcox, in *Papers of W. E. B. Du Bois*, reel 3, frames 701–10.
48. *The Bulletin of Atlanta University*, no. 156, June 1905, 2, <http://hbcudigitallibrary.auctr.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/rww/id/1371/rec/2>.
49. *Ibid.*
50. Katharine Coman, "Stages of Economic Development-Discussion," *Publications of the American Economic Association*, 3rd series, 8, no. 1 (Feb. 1907): 128, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2999900>.
51. Willcox, et al., "The Economic Position of the Negro," *Publications of the American Economic Association* 6, no. 1 (Feb. 1905): 216–21.
52. See James Hollandsworth, Jr., *Portrait of a Scientific Racist: Alfred Holt Stone of Mississippi* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2008).
53. Alfred Holt Stone, "Mr. Roosevelt and the Negro," in *Studies in the American Race Problem* (1908; reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 261.
54. Stone to Du Bois, June 8, 1907, *Papers of W. E. B. Du Bois*, reel 3, frame 1910S. *The Papers of W. E. B. Du Bois* contain a chain of correspondence between Stone and Du Bois, beginning with Stone's letter to Du Bois of March 3, 1903, and ending in June 1908, with Stone inviting Du Bois to meet him to discuss their differing perspectives on racial issues.
55. Frank W. Taussig, "The Love of Wealth and the Public Service," *Publications of the American Economic Association* 7, no. 1 (Feb. 1906): 14, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2999962>.
56. Du Bois, "The Economic Future of the Negro," *Publications of the American Economic Association* 7, no. 1 (Feb. 1906): 225, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2999974>.
57. *Ibid.*, 239–40. Du Bois would further develop these arguments in his 1910 essay "The Economic Aspects of Race Prejudice," but he widened his scope to the global stage. The "unwisdom from an economic standpoint of repressing the colored races," he contends, not only harms black and white workers and generates racial riots, but also has a deleterious effect on America's world trade, because the dark peoples of the emerging markets for American goods in Asia, Africa, the West Indies, and South America resent being treated as racial inferiors (*Editorial Review* 2 [May 1910]: 490).
58. *Ibid.*, 241–42.
59. Du Bois to Stone, June 23, 1906, *Papers of W. E. B. Du Bois*, reel 3, frame 1910S.
60. Stone, "The Economic Future of the Negro: The Factor of White Competition," *Publications of the American Economic Association* 7, no. 1 (Feb. 1906): 262, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2999975>.
61. *Ibid.*, 292–93.
62. Charles Lee Raper, "The Economic Future of the Negro—Discussion," *Publications of the American Economic Association* 7, no. 1 (Feb. 1906): 307–9, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2999976>.
63. *Ibid.*, 308.
64. "Negro's Economic Future," *Washington Post*, December 30, 1905: 4.
65. Du Bois, "Race Friction between Black and White," *American Journal of Sociology* 13 (May 1908): 834–38; reprinted in *Writings by W. E. B. Du Bois in Periodicals Edited by Others*, compiled and ed. Herbert Aptheker, vol. 1, (Millwood, NY: Kraus-Thomson, 1982), 386–90.
66. Willcox, "Introduction," in Stone, *Studies in the American Race Problem*, xv–xvi. Willcox also let stand his opinion regarding the infamous lynching of Sam Hose in 1899, an event that had personally traumatized Du Bois and disrupted his research (see *Dusk of Dawn*, 602–3). Willcox criticized the northern press for inaccurate reporting of the public lynching and remarked that the alleged victim had suffered more than did Hose, who had been tortured and burned alive ("Negro Criminality," in Stone, *Studies*, 465).
67. Wilson, *The Segregated Scholars*, 78–79.
68. Maria Farland, "W. E. B. Du Bois, Anthropometric Science, and the Limits of Racial Uplift," *American Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (Dec. 2006): 1017–44.
69. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 751.
70. Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* (1911; reprint, Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1989), 40, 390, 363. [Subsequent references to this novel will appear in parentheses within the text.] In the same year the novel was published, Du Bois, now working for the *Crisis* in New York, read two economics papers at professional meetings: "The Rural South," delivered at the AEA

conference on December 28, 1911 (quoted in the epigraph to this essay and cited above); and “The Economics of Negro Emancipation in the United States” at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Society, July 18, 1911. The latter begins with the assertion that “the main question of emancipation is, of course, not legal but economic,” and closes with an appeal to social scientists to join the civil rights campaign by blacks and their white progressive allies in the newly formed NAACP (“The Economics of Negro Emancipation in the United States,” *Sociological Review* 4 [Oct. 1911]: 303–13).

71. Stone, “A Plantation Experiment,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 19, no. 2 (Feb. 1905): 270–87; reprinted in Stone, *Studies in the American Race Problem*, 144–45.

72. Du Bois, “My Evolving Program for Negro Freedom,” in *What the Negro Wants*, ed. Rayford W. Logan (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944), 55–58.

73. Du Bois, “Of Work and Wealth,” *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil*, introduction by Joe R. Feagin (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2003), 116. In the same essay he refers to teaching economics and sociology at Atlanta, where he applied theory to concrete human problems. “Work and wages were thrilling realities to us all,” he remarks (102).

74. Du Bois, “Reconstruction, Seventy-five Years After,” *Phylon* 4, no. 3 (1943): 205–12. “The problem of the reconstruction of the United States, 1876,” wrote Du Bois, “is the problem of the reconstruction of the world in 1943” (212).

75. Du Bois, “Outmoded Wage Theory,” *Chicago Defender* (March 16, 1946), p. 15, col. 4.

76. Du Bois, *Ordeal of Mansart* (1957; reprint, Millwood, NY: Kraus-Thomson, 1976), 261. [Subsequent references to this novel will appear in parentheses within the text.] Arnold Rampersad, *The Art and Imagination of W. E. B. Du Bois* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 266–87, provides a useful summary and analysis of the trilogy. For differing perspectives on Du Bois’s complex engagement with socialism and communism, see William E. Cain, “From Liberalism to Communism,” in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, ed. Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 456–73; Gerald Horne, *Black and Red: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War, 1944–1963* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986); and Eric Porter, *The Problem of the Future World: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Race Concept at Midcentury* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

77. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 709–10.

78. Du Bois, *Worlds of Color* (New York: Mainstream, 1961), 285–86. Though clearly sympathetic to socialism, the novel does not necessarily endorse communism; rather, as one character suggests, Americans should explore what communism “really means” and “what Capitalism can’t do or won’t do” (308).

79. Du Bois, *Correspondence*, 1:7.