

**From Injury to Emancipation**  
**Double Consciousness and the Experiential Roots of Political Action**

*Experience! Nothing else!*  
*And if we lose the ground of experience*  
*then we get into all kinds of theories.*  
– Hannah Arendt.<sup>1</sup>

*Teach us forever Dead, there is no Dream*  
*but Deed, there is no Deed but Memory.*  
– W.E.B Du Bois.<sup>2</sup>

Personal experiences of injustice drive much political contention and claims-making. It goes without saying that there is a connection between the politics of emancipation and the subjective experience of mis-recognition, though we find significant differences in understanding and theorizing this connection in contemporary political thought.<sup>3</sup> However, a somewhat different and often overlooked point is that while it seems commonsensical to say that emancipatory politics is motivated by the subjective experience of injustice the reverse relationship is not at all self-evident. It is far less obvious and requires more careful thought and argument to see how the experience of mis-recognition generates political responses. Between the subjective moment of injustice and the observable and theorizable

---

<sup>1</sup> “On Hannah Arendt,” in *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World*, edited by Melvin A. Hill (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 308.

<sup>2</sup> *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois: A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century* (International Publishers: 1968), 423.

<sup>3</sup> For an exploration of the same question see Tommie Shelby, *We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Belknap, 2005). The concern with lived experience, spontaneous consciousness, and its political potentiality is also central to the Marxist historiography of the middle decades. See E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964) and *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (London: Monthly Review Press, 1978/2008); Barrington Moore, *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt* (White Plains, NY: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1978). The harm inflicted by the experience of mis-recognition and its role in driving social conflict is central in the work of a contemporary Frankfurt School theorist, Axel Honneth. See *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, translated by Joel Anderson (Boston: MIT Press, 1995); *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2007). For an excellent intellectual history of the notion of experience in western thought and particularly its political possibilities see Martin Jay *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005).

phenomenon of emancipatory politics lies a complex psychological and infra-political terrain. This paper addresses the question of how we map this terrain and its pitfalls.

I engage this question through a close reading of W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* [hereafter *Souls*], especially the famous set of tropes he introduces in the first chapter, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings:" double consciousness, two-ness, and second sight. I analyze the problem of double consciousness as an affective complex marked by self-doubt and hesitancy. It escalates into the problem of two-ness which, I argue, is one of cognitive duality and shows in the inability to positively affirm choices and courses of action. Lastly, I reconstruct the trope of second sight as the possibility and capacity for authentic individuation, for constituting that self who is the proper subject of recognition. Double consciousness and two-ness negate the actualization of this possibility. In the context of racial prejudice and structural inequality, the positive potential signified by second sight is actually deformed into the negative condition of a fragmented and inauthentic self. The triadic schema of double consciousness – two-ness – second sight is symptomatic of the denial of recognition and its depoliticizing and incapacitating consequences. Then, is there a way out of the negative circle of the experience of misrecognition, a way that originates in the experience itself? Can the psychological infra-political terrain be successfully traversed without becoming a permanent limbo in which the self remains captive?

The extensive literature on this triad of Du Boisian themes has not paid adequate attention to their political implications. This is especially the case with second sight. In addition, most readings tend to conflate the three terms, especially double consciousness and two-ness, treating them as more or less synonymous. Most analyses have focused on their literary context and sources rather than on their conceptual content and political significance.<sup>4</sup> In order to do that, these terms must be differentiated and

---

<sup>4</sup> For the most important discussions on the context and sources of double consciousness see: Arnold Rampersad, *The Art and Imagination of W.E.B. Du Bois* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976/1990); Paul Gilroy, *Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868-1919* (New York: Holt, 1993); Eric J. Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature*

their functioning in the text and the political context examined. I analyze and articulate the conceptual content underlying the descriptive surface of double consciousness, two-ness, and second sight.

I begin by showing how Du Bois's experience of mis-recognition and its internalization in the affective complex of double consciousness is indeed the source of motivation behind his life of intellectual inquiry and political engagement. But the crux of the matter lies in the dynamics of the process and its inherent contingencies. Du Bois's personal narrative and theoretical insights provide rich material and direction in charting the complex terrain which consciousness must negotiate in moving from the negative moment of mis-recognition to its negation through political action and toward, in Du Bois's words, a "truer and better self" (*Souls*, 11). The externalization of the experiential-affective complex in and through political action is at once the personal quest for true self-consciousness and the claim to equality and inclusion in the political domain. As Du Bois himself states it is "a politics of self-realization" (*Souls*, 37).

In discussing the political implications of these Du Boisian tropes, I particularly engage with Robert Gooding-Williams's *In the Shadow of Du Bois: Afro-Modern Political Thought in America*, which offers one of their most thorough analytic treatment but concludes with a view of Du Bois's politics which, I argue, is not fully supported by it. Gooding-Williams's reconstruction of Du Bois's politics as one of "expressive self-realization" rests on a problematic application of political expressivism<sup>5</sup> which I elaborate

---

(Cambridge, MA: Harvard Belknap, 1993); Shamoan Zamir, *Dark Voices: W.E.B. Du Bois and American Thought, 1888-1903* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Adolph Reed, *W.E.B. Du Bois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Bruce Dickson D. Jr., "W.E.B. Du Bois and the Idea of Double Consciousness," in *The Souls of Black Folk*, edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Terri Hume Oliver, 236-244 (New York: Norton, 1999). For conceptual analyses see: Shamoan Zamir, *Dark Voices*; Lawrie Balfour, "A Most Disagreeable Mirror: Race Consciousness as Double Consciousness," *Political Theory* Vol. 26, No. 3 (Jun., 1998): 346-369; Malcolm Bull, "Slavery and the Multiple Self," *New Left Review* No. 213 (1998): 94-131; E. Victor Wolfenstein, *A Gift of the Spirit: Reading The Souls of Black Folk* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007); Robert Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow of Du Bois: Afro-Modern Political Thought in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009). The trope of second sight has not been given much detailed treatment in the available literature.

<sup>5</sup> The concept of political expressivism is from Charles Larmore, *Patterns of Moral Complexity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Larmore identifies a number of different articulations of political expressivism, all of which have the common basic feature that the highest personal ideal is mirrored in

and challenge below. If double consciousness motivates the possibility, though not necessity, of self-realization, the ambivalence of second sight opens the space for a new reading of it and the central argument of this essay: Self-realization for Du Bois is the constitution of a self reclaimed from historical experience, through the exercise of second sight, rather than the expression of a self given in the belief in some racial essence.

I begin with the condition of double consciousness and the state of withdrawal into an inner spiritual realm, then analyze the problem signified by two-ness, and finally offer a reconstruction of second sight. Double consciousness and two-ness constitute the negation of second sight, while the reconstruction of second sight is aimed at the negation of the negation and movement into the social-political realm of engaged activity.<sup>6</sup> As a preview, I state here the most pertinent questions in terms of which the arguments in this paper move forward. Double consciousness is the psychological complex, the set of affects and dispositions which arises from the negative experience of racial discrimination. But Du Bois does not merely offer a description of the complex; he makes the evaluative claim that double consciousness is not true self-consciousness. So the question arises, what constitutes the falsity of double consciousness and how can Du Bois make this judgment? Second, is double consciousness a purely false and purely incapacitating condition or is the possibility of movement toward true self-consciousness immanent in it? Moving on to the theme of two-ness, what is the conceptual link between double consciousness and two-ness, between experiential-affective complex and cognitive apparatus? Finally, does Du Bois think of second sight, which he describes as a gift, as something already given and possessed

---

the highest political ideal. Political expressivism views the polity as an undifferentiated and substantive unity and the state as embodying and expressing its commonly held conception of the good life. The legitimacy and authority of the state is founded on its expressive function. Gooding-Williams appropriates this concept with the qualifier that, of course, the particularity of the state (its monopoly over the use of legitimate force) does not apply to Du Bois's conception of black leadership (*In the Shadow of Du Bois*, 14). However, there are further problems as I detail below.

<sup>6</sup> E. Victor Wolfenstein, *A Gift of the Spirit: Reading The Souls of Black Folk* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), 22-23, contains the contours and the dialectical logic of the movement on which I build and provide further elaboration.

or as a potentiality to be achieved and exercised? If it is a potentiality rather than an actuality, how does Du Bois envision the process of actualization and its enabling conditions, the conditions in which the gift will indeed be a gift and not a curse? Do these enabling conditions emerge in the working of double consciousness and two-ness? These questions lead to the question of Du Bois's understanding of political action. In the text, second sight plays an ambivalent and dual role in identity formation. "This American world" distorts the self-consciousness of African-Americans possessing second sight, implying that without its distorting influence they would, exercising this gift, arrive at true identity and self-consciousness (*Souls*, 11). But if it is a prior condition for the formation of self-consciousness, distorted as well as genuine, then how can it be understood, as Du Bois claims it to be, as the special capacity of a specific group of people? I present my reading of double consciousness and two-ness in sections II and III and second sight in section IV. Section I below outlines the textual context in which the tropes are introduced and sets up the problematics which arise from it.

\*\*\*\*\*

To refer to the first epigraph above, Hannah Arendt made this statement regarding experience as the ground for thinking in response to a question about the subject of thought, and went on to say "when the political theorist begins to build his systems he is usually dealing with abstraction." I share Arendt's emphasis on experience in its relationship to thought. But her conceptualization of experience and political action stands in tension with my concern.<sup>7</sup> For Arendt political action itself is the experience par excellence, that is, acting in concert in the public political realm is the kind of experience which can be properly termed political. However, I am concerned with experience that motivates one to act politically,

---

<sup>7</sup> Arendt develops her theory of political action throughout her writings, especially *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958/1998). With reference to her study of Rosa Luxemburg in *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), she notes: "Rosa Luxemburg was very *much* concerned with the world and not *all* concerned with herself," and further: "The moment I act politically I'm not concerned with me, but with the world. And that is the *main* distinction" ("On Hannah Arendt," *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World*, 311). In these terms, this paper attempts to relate and maintain the personal self in the impersonal agent of political praxis.

that is politicizing if not political. Why and how one is politicized is a problem intrinsic to politics, which the notion of politics as an experience and end in itself does not address.

## **I. Double-Consciousness, Two-ness, Second-Sight: A Preliminary Analysis**

In *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois uses the trope of the “Veil” as the overarching symbol of white supremacy, and “double consciousness” as the symptom of the marginalization of African-Americans. The Veil signifies the objective color-coded organization of economic production and social life in post-slavery America, which in turn structures the subjective consciousness and the lived experience of racial hierarchy and its psychological consequences. In the famous passage quoted below, Du Bois sums up the problem of being black in early twentieth century America, voicing his response to the “ever unasked question ... How does it feel to be a problem?” (*Souls*, 9). The pains of slavery and post-slavery racism are inflicted not only on the body but on the psyche as well, and he provides us with the defining feature of this psyche: double consciousness.

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a Veil, and gifted with second sight in this American world, – a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (*Souls*, 10-11)

The racially marked self – “the Negro” – refers both to concrete individuals and the group as a whole. The strategy of deploying the form of personal narrative in the service of narrating collective history and experience, but also drawing out a political vision from that experience, is Du Bois's particular gift and characteristic of his narrative strategy in *Souls*.<sup>8</sup> In order to understand the role of experience and

---

<sup>8</sup> Robert Stepto, *From Behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative* (Chicago: The University of Illinois Press, 1979), Ch. 3, analyzes *Souls* as an immersion narrative wherein the structure of the text and the itinerary of Du Bois's personal journey both also map the symbolic geography and historical experience of the deep South. Susan Mizruchi also notes the mingling of the personal and the collective

its embodiment in historical memory in Du Bois's thought, one must analyze its thematization in the above passage and throughout *Souls*.

The passage contains two distinct formulations of the experience of marginality. The first formulation, double consciousness, signifies the condition of having *only* a borrowed self-image: "always looking at one's self through the eyes of others." But this perspective is charged with "contempt and pity" so that one cannot quite accept it as one's "true" self. Conversely, the acceptance of this self-image and internalization of its associated attributes implies the distortion, hence falsification, of self-consciousness. It is important to note that the condition of double consciousness means that the process of this internalization and falsification is not consummated but held in suspension, with its attendant sensations of alienation and ambiguity. The second formulation, two-ness, alludes to an internalized conflict between apparently two distinct and fully articulated ideals or value systems. Therefore, as will be elaborated in greater detail below, double consciousness signifies the *affective and experiential complex* while two-ness signifies the *cognitive apparatus*, the system of conscious belief, that make up the identity of an African-American.

The third arm of the thematic triangle is termed second sight but it stands in an ambiguous position vis-à-vis double consciousness and two-ness, an ambiguity which has rarely been noted and never received sustained analysis in the extensive literature on these Du Boisian themes.<sup>9</sup> Victor

---

in, "Neighbors, Strangers, Corpses: Death and Sympathy in the Early Writings of W.E.B. Du Bois," in *The Souls of Black Folk*, edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Terri Hume Oliver (New York: Norton, 1999), 274.

<sup>9</sup> The discursive and mythic sources of second sight are analyzed in: Malcolm Bull, *Seeing Things Hidden: Apocalypse, Vision, and Totality* (London: Verso, 1999), 240-48; Keith Byerman, *Two Warring Ideals: The Dialectical Thought of W.E.B. Du Bois* (PhD. Dissertation, Purdue University, 1978), 81. Works that consider its meaning/function in the text are: Cynthia Schrager, "Both Sides of the Veil: Race, Science, and Mysticism in W.E.B. Du Bois," *American Quarterly* Vol. 48, No. 4 (Dec., 1996): 551-586; Robert Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow of Du Bois: Afro-Modern Political Thought in America*, 78-79; Victor Wolfenstein, *A Gift of Spirit: Reading The Souls of Black Folk*, 9. The oversight of second sight is telling in otherwise excellent analyses of Du Boisian tropes and literary methods, for instance: Stanley Brodwin, "The Veil Transcended: Form and Meaning in W.E.B. Du Bois's 'The Souls of Black Folk,'" *Journal of Black Studies* Vol. 2, No. 3 (Mar., 1972): 303-321; Wilson J. Moses, "The Poetics of Ethiopianism: W.E.B. Du Bois and Literary Black Nationalism," *American Literature* Vol. 47, No. 3 (Nov., 1975): 411-426.

Wolfenstein provides a rare pointer in this direction (*A Gift of the Spirit*, 9). I borrow his insight regarding the epistemic ambiguity of second sight in reconstructing how Du Bois works out the resolution of this ambiguity. It also provides clues to understanding the basis of the claim to uniqueness thematized as second sight. As a preview of my argument in the last section, let me state that the claim to uniqueness, the path to recouping the positive potentiality of second sight and thereby its political function, is based in the reclamation of historical memory. Du Bois fills for us in the last chapter, "The Sorrow Songs," the empty trope of second sight he introduces in the first. Not that he actually completes the circuit, but the text makes available the warrant on the basis of which I reconstruct second sight as *epistemic privilege* gained by looking back to history and re-articulating historical memory in order to recover political agency.

Grasping and making sense of the ambiguity of second sight and theorizing its possible resolution requires us to dialectically link and trace the movement between double consciousness, two-ness, and second sight (*A Gift of Spirit*, 22-23).<sup>10</sup> In the textual arrangement, second sight is the first trope but it is without content in terms of its social and political meaning. It is said to be a gift but clearly a dormant or dysfunctional one; hence, we can construe it as a potentiality in the dialectical sense. That its dysfunctionality has to do with the climate of racial prejudice and inequality is obvious from Du Bois's intentions in the chapter and the entire anthology of essays that comprises *Souls*. Du Bois thematizes the experience of mis-recognition as double consciousness and two-ness, which we can link to second sight as

---

<sup>10</sup> Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated by A.V. Miller (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977) Ch. 4, is the *locus classicus* of the dialectic of recognition, of which this paper offers a particular not strictly Hegelian rendering. But there are other sources and constructions. Victor Wolfenstein's theoretical framework is Hegelian as well as psychoanalytic, *Gift of Spirit*, 12-17. For a recent synthesis using the early Hegel of the Jena lectures, the social psychology of G.H. Mead, and object-relations psychoanalysis see Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, translated by Joel Anderson (Boston: MIT Press, 1995), especially Ch. 5. While much of the contemporary theoretical discourse on recognition paradigmatically applies the Hegelian dialectic, Susan Buck-Morss offers a contextualization of Hegel himself in the eighteenth-nineteenth century discourses of slavery and the political event represented by the Haitian Revolution. See *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009).

its negated moment, albeit comprising two distinct dimensions. Double consciousness is the complex of affects and dispositions, while two-ness is an internally vitiated and dysfunctional cognitive apparatus. But the moment is not stable and settled; it is clear from the text that Du Bois emphasizes the unsettling and discomfiting sensations of double consciousness. Therefore, I argue that it implicitly generates the movement toward its overcoming. The shape of that overcoming is at once the reclamation and substantiation of second sight, wherein it becomes true to its concept.<sup>11</sup> The focus of my argument diverges from that of Victor Wolfenstein's insofar as he analyzes the renunciatory moment in the struggle to claim recognition, while I focus on the possibilities for social-political engagement contained in the thematization of personal experience in *Souls*. As he notes, the transformation of two-ness from conflictual and rejected duality to mutually recognized and affirmed duality is the concrete form of mutual recognition (*Gift of Spirit*, 23). I dwell on the transformation of second sight as the step preceding the possible realization of mutual recognition. However, my argument converges with his insofar as he ends his analysis on the note of the redemptive power of historical memory and the act of remembering (*Gift of Spirit*, 145-46). Following Du Bois's spirit in the second epigraph above, I argue that historical memory or rather memory as the deed of remembering is the actualized and positive meaning of second sight.

The primary contribution of this essay lies in the clarification of the meaning of second sight and with that a more nuanced understanding of Du Bois's political vision. The claim to epistemic privilege – second sight – is transparent in the lines of the text itself. However, this surface observation at which most of the current interpretations rest does nothing to illuminate, does not even recognize, the question of how this epistemic privilege is gained and what is its ground. The issue is not that Du Bois's statement has a deeper referential context which must be teased out. As far as the question of source and

---

<sup>11</sup> For a dialectical reconstruction of only double consciousness as the Hegelian unhappy consciousness, rather than linking the three tropes together, see Shamoon Zamir, *Dark Voices: W.E.B. Du Bois and American Thought, 1888-1903* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), Ch. 4.

inspiration is concerned, there are several contextualist readings which identify possible discursive contexts for this term and the probable allusions that it had in Du Bois's mind. I briefly note some of these below in the section on second sight. But apart from the question of literary provenance, second sight can be taken either as a purely rhetorical device or as based on a certain conceptual understanding of the historical-social process. Even if second sight is a rhetorical device, its intended rhetorical effect is the claim to epistemic privilege. What are the presuppositions underlying this claim? Is it socially determined, or an essential racial difference – the special gift of the race and essence of the African-American *Volksgeist*? The question raises the larger issue of Du Bois's understanding of race but treating the latter in any detail will take me well beyond the scope of this paper. The primary concern here is to understand how experiences of oppression and exclusion can be conceptually linked to the move toward formulating an emancipatory politics. What can we think of as already present and implicit in the experience of discrimination and its subjective complexes that is also the condition of possibility for emancipatory political action? The unique legacy of slavery, which for Du Bois constitutes the collective identity of African-Americans more than anything else, has to be remembered and reclaimed in envisioning a politics aimed at a more concrete emancipation from racial inequality. The exercise of political agency takes the form not so much of expressing a given racial essence, but of recuperating and reconstructing the meaning of historical experience.

## **II. “A Peculiar Sensation:” Double-Consciousness and The Experience of Mis-Recognition**

In the key passage from *Souls* quoted above, Du Bois describes double consciousness as a sensation, that is, an emotional psychological state. He further makes the evaluative claim that it is not true self-consciousness. Accordingly, Robert Gooding-Williams notes: “In essence, double consciousness is the *false self-consciousness* [italics mine] that obtains among African Americans when they observe and judge themselves from the perspective of the white, Jim Crow American world ...” (*In the Shadow of Du*

*Bois*, 80). This is persuasive insofar as it is a reading of Du Bois's intention, but in that case Du Bois opens up a problematic space in which certain questions arise.

First, how is double consciousness false and, second, how does Du Bois arrive at the knowledge of its falsity? In categorizing double consciousness as false self-consciousness, one accomplishes a perspectival shift from immediacy and sensation – double consciousness is a feeling – to a judgment of truth/falsity which requires an external and objective standpoint for validation. Gooding-Williams takes the objective point of view in arguing that the falsity of double consciousness originates in the distorting perspective of white racism. The latter supplies empirically false stereotypes. Judging oneself on the basis of these stereotypes, accepting and internalizing them, one cannot but see a self that is objectively false. However, this is a process of cognition and reflective judgment in which the falsity becomes explicit from an external standpoint. Prior to this judgment, there is the experiential and affective antecedent or correlate of false self-consciousness. How does one *feel* the falsity of this mode of self-consciousness prior to one can be said to *know* through some process of reflection and inquiry that it is false? The answer of course, as Du Bois names it, is double consciousness. In other words, double consciousness is the affective antecedent or correlate of false self-consciousness, and we thus elaborate the predication that double consciousness *is* false self-consciousness.

Du Bois offers several descriptions of the affective content. Double consciousness is a “peculiar sensation.” Prior to that, he notes that “being a problem is a strange experience” despite its routine everyday character, “peculiar even for one who has never been anything else” (*Souls*, 10). The affective correlate of false self-consciousness, then, is marked by unpleasant strangeness, peculiarity, and the consequent failure of self-affirmation. It is a self one cannot quite fully accept and the condition is one of hesitancy and self-estrangement. In “The Faith of the Fathers” he notes that the dichotomy and inequality which marks American society coupled with rapid socioeconomic change gives rise to “a painful self-

consciousness, an almost morbid sense of personality and a moral hesitancy which is fatal to self-confidence" (*Souls*, 127). It is clear from Du Bois's description that double consciousness is unsettling, and so I contend that it implicitly generates the desire for overcoming it. If double consciousness is the affective complex generated by the experience of mis-recognition, then it also signifies the motivating desire for recognition.<sup>12</sup> In the mode of double consciousness, this desire is present in its abstract and implicit form with a driving imperative for its actualization. The latter is an open field of possibilities not an automatic response and, as I discuss below, in Du Bois's own career we find at least two different paths toward actualization along with his articulation of the contradictory urges and dilemmas which characterize the black community.

Both these paths toward actualization are alternatives which lead to intellectual and political contestation. However, the dilemmas of double consciousness do not necessitate either of these possibilities. They are realized in Du Bois's case and here we can perhaps recognize the heroic or at least relatively rare dimensions of his persona which played a role in making him a historical figure. The dilemma of double consciousness, on the other hand, is the universal predicament of marginalized individuals. It can just as well fail to motivate its overcoming, particularly when the fragmented self has no recourse and resource for its self-reconstitution. A desire that has no possibility of satisfaction tends to atrophy or lead to futile and pathological modes of behavior. In fact, failing to note this equally if not more probable possibility leads to a naïve and dubious valorization of double consciousness and marginality as such.

Following Du Bois's own recounting, we can trace the process and the possible resources whereby double consciousness does indeed generate a positive response. The experiential root of double

---

<sup>12</sup> The seminal analysis of the desire for recognition and the Hegelian master-slave dialectic is in Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, edited by Allan Bloom, translated by James H. Nichols, Jr. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969), 3-30.

consciousness for Du Bois, at least as he recalls it, is the rebuff he experienced in childhood during a game of exchanging visiting-cards. He recalls:

I remember well when the shadow swept across me. I was a little thing, away up in the hills of New England, where the dark Housatonic winds between Hoosac and Taghkanic to the sea. In a wee wooden schoolhouse, something put it into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting-cards – ten cents a package – and exchange. The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card, – refused it peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil. I had thereafter no desire to tear down that veil, to creep through; I held all beyond it in common contempt, and lived above it in a region of blue sky and great wandering shadows. (*Souls*, 10)

We can plausibly assume that along with this singularly traumatic experience Du Bois must have had others which reinforced the affective complex.<sup>13</sup> His response is to seek self-affirmation in “a region of blue sky,” that is, a realm of interiority, and “establish a psychological territory apart from the site of painful interaction” (*Gift of Spirit*, 17).<sup>14</sup> Note that what he does *not* do, but which are alternative possibilities, are to “tear down that veil” in a futile outburst of anger and violence or “creep through” in the mode of accommodating and servile conformity to the existing structure of inequality signified by the Veil.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> For Du Bois's tendency to idealize his childhood environs and repression of the harder facts of his experience see David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868-1919* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1993), Chs. 1 & 2. Lewis treats Du Bois's highlighting the visiting card incident as probable fact but cautions that its significance is not so much in its factuality but in its representative function (33-34). For an detailed psychoanalytic exploration which draws out the biographical and larger political significance of the visiting-card incident see E. Victor Wolfenstein, *Gift of the Spirit*, especially Ch. 2.

<sup>14</sup> The meaning and location of the spiritual realm is twofold, for it can mean both the inner realm of consciousness and the transcendental realm across the portal of death, and the two are connected with the notion of the immortality of the soul. For a careful sorting of this issue and Du Bois's entertaining, without necessarily believing in, the idea of the soul's immortality see *Gift of the Spirit*, Ch. 6. For an analysis of the social significance of death and how social exclusion is re-enacted around the personal-social event of death see Susan Mizruchi, “Neighbors, Strangers, Corpses: Death and Sympathy in the Early Writings of W.E.B. Du Bois,” in *The Souls of Black Folk*, edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Terri Hume Oliver, 273-295.

<sup>15</sup> Victor Wolfenstein psychoanalytically treats the possibility of anger and violence as a repressed rather than a rejected option and emphasizes the role of this repressed anger in forming Du Bois's character. While the flight into an inner spiritual realm is a defensive response, the repressed anger is sublimated in the form of the will to contest for rewards in the social realm and thus generates a movement downward or outward from the realm of interiority (*Gift of Spirit*, 20-22).

In Du Bois's case, what enables the third constructive response, the establishment of this other realm and the upward flight to a region above the Veil is, in the first instance, his sublimated anger which retorts to "the contempt of white folks" with "contempt for white folks (*Gift of Spirit*, 20). But ultimately it is access to education and cultivation. In the spirit realm of his own mind and above the Veil, he can commune with the shades that represent a higher and better form of life: "I sit with Shakespeare and he winces not. Across the color line I move arm in arm with Balzac and Dumas, where smiling men and welcoming women glide in gilded halls" (*Souls*, 74).

This imagined reciprocity and recognition is Du Bois's means to reconstitute his self under the burden of double consciousness. But such reconstitution has its limits. First, education and cultivation is a resource woefully in short supply for the majority of the black community. Second, even when accessible, as in Du Bois's case, it does not ensure the recognition that would be the lifting of the Veil to let one through without their having to creep or tear it down. In "Of the Training of Black Men," Du Bois deplures what the white world denies to the black, "slamming the doors of opportunity in the faces of their bolder and brighter minds," doors which lead into the college quadrangle and classroom and through there into a higher arena of rewards and fulfillment (*Souls*, 71). However, if the doors of opportunity are left a little ajar for Du Bois to enter, it does not follow that the arena of rewards and fulfillment is equally accessible. He notes, "the worlds I longed for, and all their dazzling opportunities, were theirs, not mine" (*Souls*, 10). He may commune in solitude with the spirits of greater and better beings but, after all, this is a solace sought in compensation, perhaps in vain, for the life denied in reality: "So, wed with Truth, I dwell above the Veil. Is this the life you grudge us, O knightly America?" (*Souls*, 74). In other words, what "I," Du Bois, am capable of is beyond the realm of possibility for "us" African-Americans.

The flight into the realm above the Veil offers crucial resources for self-reconstitution, but Du Bois ultimately realizes the limits of this mode of existence. On the one hand, his imagined life does not

correspond with the reality of his situation. It does not change the fact of his own experiences of misrecognition. Its unreality is reinforced by the social proportions of the problem that forms his individual predicament. The dim blue air above is perhaps too rarefied for a human soul to breathe; the welcoming reciprocity of shades conjured up from the spirit realm is but the shadow of the real recognition denied in society, and their company a lonesome affair in the absence of fellow human beings with whom to share the wealth of knowledge. The escape to the realm above is comforting but not enough and one must return to the realm below. This situation points to the necessarily intersubjective and collective dimension of recognition and the political project entailed in winning it. It cannot be for one individual unless it is also for the entire group. Retreat and withdrawal are only the beginning of the movement which eventually leads back into the social sphere of inquiry, communion, and contention.

Du Bois states in his autobiographical essays *Dusk of Dawn*: "My life had its significance and its only deep significance because it was part of a Problem; but that problem was, as I continue to think, the central problem of the greatest of the world's democracies and so the Problem of the future world" (xxix). Note the trajectory of his thought, which moves from reflecting in an intensely personal register on how it feels to be a problem in the opening passage of *Souls* to the words here implying that he is but one instance of a larger social and historical reality. Thus a motivational impetus is evident, though with its attendant contingencies, between Du Bois's experiential-affective complex and his intellectual trajectory and political vision.

The purpose of the above elaboration is to clarify the connection implicit in Du Bois between the structure of feeling and its externalization in action. The question is of the nexus between the affective-experiential complex, on the one hand, and the cognitive apparatus (the system of thoughts and beliefs) and modes of practical engagement, on the other. The visiting-card incident which first revealed to Du Bois that he was inferior in the eyes of the world had an immediate impact, took root inside him, so to

speak, and structured his self-consciousness. The understanding of systematic racism, reflective knowledge of social reality, and the impulse to change it followed from such formative experiences. In the next section, I show how two modes of cognition are evident in Du Bois, one scientific, observational, and contemplative and the other mediated through social-political engagement, where it is not simply a matter of knowing but also of realization. But both are rooted in the structure of feeling.

### III. “Two Warring Ideals:” Two-ness and the Contradiction of Double Aims

The argument above was that the experience of mis-recognition is disquieting and impels Du Bois to seek resolution, that is, turn from the realm of interiority and detached imagination and contemplation to exteriority and action. The negative experiential-affective complex determines his will to knowledge and action, initiating the movement toward its self-overcoming. The objective falsity of double consciousness lies in the negative stereotypes constructed by racism, but in order to expose negative and false stereotyping as such, one has to assume the standpoint of objective inquiry and engage in that task.<sup>16</sup> The cognitive apparatus that he thus is moved to acquire has two modalities, and the first is associated with his empirical sociological investigations of race relations most carefully detailed in *The Philadelphia Negro*.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Du Bois's stance can be contrasted with that of Malcolm X in his early years. Malcolm simply ignores the stereotyping, for his ego identification at this point is white. See E. Victor Wolfenstein, *The Victims of Democracy: Malcolm X and the Black Revolution* (London: Free Association Books, 1989), 144-46. However, Du Bois wants to disprove racist prejudice as such as false. He questions the stereotyping itself rather than just conclude that it does not apply to him.

<sup>17</sup> For the epistemological premises and emancipatory critical values informing Du Bois's social-scientific research see: Lucius T. Outlaw, “W.E.B. Du Bois on the Study of Social Problems,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* Vol. 568 (Mar., 2000): 281-297; Kenneth Barkin, “‘Berlin Days,’ 1892-1894: W.E.B. Du Bois and German Political Economy,” *boundary 2* Vol. 27, No. 3 (Fall 2000): 79-101; Robert Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow of Du Bois*, Ch. 1.

The totality of racial prejudices and negative stereotyping had a name: "The Negro Problem."<sup>18</sup> In the *Philadelphia Negro* Du Bois's purpose is to scrutinize the Negro Problem as a false construction. Writing at a time when it was dissected in both academia and the larger public with the tools of pseudoscientific racism, Du Bois's purpose is clear and simple: since the problem is supposed to be a factual one (it is taken as a fact that the Negro Problem accurately describes African-Americans) the relevant facts must be investigated. Two overarching themes are discernible in his marshaling of statistical and ethnographic information. First, he rejects the genetic/racial basis of behavioral phenomena, particularly crime, in favor of environmental causal factors: "Crime is a phenomenon of organized social life, and is the open rebellion of an individual against his social environment" (*The Philadelphia Negro*, 235). Second, in building a detailed factual description of the socioeconomic condition of blacks, which then enables him to propose a stratification of the community into four classes, he effectively challenges the tendency of whites to view blacks as a single undifferentiated group of people and stereotype them<sup>19</sup> His critique of racial prejudice rests on this attempted refutation of its factual basis. Since all blacks are not the same it follows that they should not be treated the same way. By throwing light on the great diversity of the community he was attempting to soften the hardened prejudice against it. Recalling this period later in *Dusk of Dawn*, Du Bois notes his initial belief in the process and power of scientific inquiry: "This social condition pictured itself gradually in my mind as a matter of education, as a matter of knowledge; as a matter of scientific procedure in a world that had become scientific in concept" (*Dusk of Dawn*, 17). In researching and writing *The Philadelphia Negro*, he transformed the motives of those who

---

<sup>18</sup> The study which led to *The Philadelphia Negro* was commissioned by The University of Pennsylvania whose understanding of the Negro Problem and major concern regarding the black underclass was the growing incidence of crime and urban blight. See David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: Autobiography of a Race, 1868-1919*, 188-89.

<sup>19</sup> "There is always a strong tendency on the part of the community to consider the Negroes as composing one practically homogeneous mass ... [a]nd yet if the foregoing statistics have emphasized any one fact it is that wide variations in antecedents, wealth, intelligence and general efficiency have already been differentiated within this group." *The Philadelphia Negro*, 309.

had commissioned the work into the actualization of his own purpose of scientifically revealing the true social situation of urban black communities.

However, the understanding of racial prejudice as a problem of ignorance and the conviction that factual revelations could unravel it was soon abandoned or at least attenuated: "Later, however, all this frame of concept became blurred and distorted ... Not science alone could settle this matter, but force must come to its aid. The black world must fight for freedom" (*Dusk of Dawn*, 5-6).<sup>20</sup> Du Bois's action orientation shifted from social-scientific inquiry to social-political praxis and its associated modes of cognition.

Stated thus, the matter seems simple and self-evident for Du Bois and for all suffering racial prejudice. However, the matter is not so simple. "Fight for freedom" stated as such is not the only, obvious, and affirmed aim for those living in the margins of society, in the world within the Veil. In truth, their thought and action are characterized by "two-ness" and "the contradiction of double aims" (*Souls*, 11). From the predicament of "double self" arises "double aims," "double movement," "double life," "double thoughts," "double duties," "double words," and "double ideals;" from "two souls" follow "two thoughts," "two unreconciled strivings," "two movements," and "two warring ideals." At the societal level in the world divided by the Veil, Du Bois discusses the "two systems" or institutions which structure and govern life on both sides and also proliferate dichotomies within the black world on the invisible and

---

<sup>20</sup> Manning Marable reads Du Bois's social scientific work and political activism as two dimensions of the same mode of thinking rather than in tension with each other, insofar as his practical efforts at reconstruction and self-help were informed by his sociological inquiries. See *W.E.B. Du Bois: Black Radical Democrat* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 1986/2005), Ch. 1. See Keith Byerman *Two Warring Ideals: The Dialectical Thought of W.E.B. Du Bois* (PhD. Dissertation, Purdue University, 1978) for a systematic analysis of Du Bois's entire *oeuvre* along four dimensions: the scientific, the political, the mythic, and the prophetic. Byerman emphasizes the tension between Du Bois's scientific epistemology and moral-political imperative. My argument is for connecting the two in a complimentary relationship because they both sprang from the same underlying motivation, but also cognizing the inherent tension at the epistemological level. The tension is resolvable at the practical level. It is resolved with Du Bois's realization that though scientific research and evidence concretize the living conditions and problems of blacks it cannot work for itself and dissolve racial bias. It is not enough and has to be instrumentalized in the service of political efforts.

marginalized side of the Veil. This constellation of significations is historically situated in the post-Emancipation era in which the light of freedom was dimmed by doubtful and confused striving.

The notion of two-ness works at a more concrete level of duality than double consciousness. While double consciousness is the unsettling sensation of self-estrangement, two-ness is linked to the conflict of “two warring ideals.” It is apparently the condition of having two conflicting identities, each of which is associated with characteristics, values, beliefs, aims, and norms at odds with those of the other. Du Bois designates the two poles of opposition “American” and “Negro.” On the question of conceptual content, the gradation from the sensation of duality of selves signified by double consciousness to the duality of identities signified by two-ness implies the presence of a cognitive apparatus and ideological framework that structures ways of relating, choices, and actions. But before proceeding further let me consider two prevalent approaches to the question of two-ness.

In the debate on the meaning of two-ness and the nature of the duality and contradiction which Du Bois repeatedly stresses in various assonant phrases, two-ness is either not distinguished from double consciousness or it is interpreted as the duality of cultural difference.<sup>21</sup> Taking an oppositional stance, Ernest Allen (Jr.) argues that the later twentieth-century emergence of a certain conception of culture and difference, of Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism, and its concomitant cultural-political paradigms can only be anachronistically imposed on Du Bois at the turn of the century.<sup>22</sup> The conclusion Allen draws is that the trio of themes being analyzed here were all “exquisitely crafted metaphors,” which served a “tactical” function in gaining the support and recognition of the enlightened strata of the white elite for the

---

<sup>21</sup> See Gerald Early, ed., *Lure and Loathing: Essays on Race, Identity, and the Ambivalence of Assimilation* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993). For an analysis of notions of culture predominant at the turn of the century see John Brown Childs, “Concepts of Culture in Afro-American Political Thought, 1890-1920,” *Social Text* No. 4 (Autumn 1981): 28-43; and for the Du Bois-Washington battle on this issue, “Afro-American Intellectuals and the People's Culture,” *Theory and Society* Vol. 13 (1984): 69-90.

<sup>22</sup> Ernest Allen Jr., “Du Boisian Double Consciousness: The Unsustainable Argument,” *The Black Scholar* Vol. 33, No. 2 (2003): 25-43; “Ever Feeling Two-Ness: 'Double Ideals' and 'Double Consciousness' in *The Souls of Black Folk*,” *Critique of Anthropology* Vol. 12, No. 3 (1992): 261-275.

relatively educated black leadership, the Talented Tenth (“Du Boisian Double Consciousness: The Unsustainable Argument,” 33). In describing the anguished nature of black self-consciousness – that is, what outwardly appears as weakness is inwardly a debilitating struggle – Du Bois aimed to enlist white sympathy and support for the black leadership's inward and outward struggles.

Allen's characterization of two-ness and double consciousness does not make any distinction between them. His view that they are synonymous metaphors resulting from strategic political calculation rests on the counterfactual argument that if there had been any genuine content in these themes and if they had served their tactical purpose they would not have been left in such an inchoate form and altogether dropped in Du Bois's later writings. This is not a conclusive argument. Though Du Bois had larger political aims in writing *Souls*, its resounding tone of personal and collective testimony cannot be reduced to a purely strategic role in the service of these aims. The testimony was not strategically constructed in the service of his political aims; rather, the political aims were formed out of the personal experiences and reflections that fused into the narrative of *Souls*. Still, the view that two-ness is associated with normative and ideological conflict is not well-supported, for Du Bois clearly says elsewhere in the “Strivings” essay that the advancement of “the Negro people” should be “not in opposition to or contempt of other races, but rather in large conformity to the greater ideals of the American Republic ...”( *Souls*, 16). So, even conceding that two-ness – the internalized conflict of “two warring ideals” – should not be read as value conflict between incompatible belief systems, it is obviously some sort of conflict. The question still remains: What form and domain of conflict does two-ness signify?

Robert Gooding-Williams advances a different analysis of two-ness not so much in terms of elaborating the content of the duality but rather in terms of emphasizing the conflictual relationship that the duality *per se* signifies. He makes the important point of noting that it should be distinguished from double consciousness, but he does not delve further beyond stating that the conflictual nature of two-

ness is derivative of double consciousness. Without the necessary condition of double consciousness, which in turn arises from the objective reality of racism, two-ness would neither be conflictual nor a problem (*In the Shadow of Du Bois*, 81-82).

Two-ness is conflictual duality. Whether this duality is to be substantiated in terms of Du Bois's belief in cultural difference, racial essence, or some other amalgam of ideas is ultimately not answerable within the scope of Du Bois's own thinking at this juncture. Gooding-Williams notes Du Bois's failure to articulate his idea of difference in terms of specifically "Negro ideals" or to show how they are distinct from universal or even American ethical values and norms. But the point, according to him, is that Du Bois's politics of "expressivism" is premised on the assumption of an essential racial difference and the imperative to assert it in the public political domain (*In the Shadow of Du Bois*, 87). Du Bois's vagueness regarding the actual content of racial essence and difference is ultimately a non-issue, according to Gooding-Williams's argument, because he envisions a politics of "self-realization" as well in which the racial difference will be substantiated and its meaning made clear. I shall take up the idea of political expressivism below and argue that it does not quite fit Du Bois's political vision. The argument I wish to make here is that "two warring ideals" engendering two-ness is at one level about identity and difference of some sort (cultural difference or racial essence) but its conflictual repercussions ultimately show up in terms of social and political choices and courses of action. In other words, the conflict inherent in two-ness in the climate of race prejudice is not only at the level of irreconcilable ideas and ideals but also at the level of practice, where these ideas and ideals are mobilized into hegemonic ideologies structuring aims and expectations.

The notion of two-ness has the lack of reconciliation at its core. Stated simply, and in keeping with Du Bois's intention, it is the dilemma facing any black person that either they affirm their American identity or their African identity. Affirming both in the climate of race prejudice does not present itself as

a viable option for the individual. It implies being caught up in a fog of self-doubt and hesitancy. But instead of fixating on the meaning of being American or being African, that is, instead of dissecting the content of the dilemma, we can perhaps take the more productive approach of analyzing its political stakes. Instead of treating the dilemma at the level of the cultural and/or racial content of identity (which is of course part of it), we can map it in terms of contradictory life choices and paths which have political implications insofar as they further or impede the pursuit of equality and mutual recognition. Our understanding of two-ness is significantly incomplete without elaborating the link between the ontological or cultural and the socio-political in Du Bois's thought.

The textual warrant for this approach is that Du Bois talks of two-ness in close conjunction with “contradictory aims.” Two-ness is associated with “two unreconciled strivings,” which stem from trying to satisfy “two unreconciled ideals” (*Souls*, 11-12). We should understand these strivings as not only the dilemma of affirming one of two conflictual identities but in more concrete terms and with respect to the lived reality of black individuals as Du Bois saw it. His question was: What is it like for black individuals, on the one hand, to strive for self-advancement in a society undergoing rapid change and according to its predominant norms and values and, on the other, to improve the conditions of their own group, participate in their immediate social context and location, and identify with its particular ways, norms and values? The sum total of this lived reality and its various concrete dilemmas presents is what Du Bois thematizes as the dilemma of being American or being black.

Why is the affirmation of identity a political matter and not simply a matter of apolitical private choice? The simple version of the answer is that in the former case cultural difference coincides with the hierarchy of power and structural inequality. For the group on the wrong side of this cleavage – the wrong side of the color line, in Du Bois's terms – the possibility of upliftment depends on the personal choices of individual members of the group. This implies, moreover, that two-ness has multiple determinations

because, after all, it is not as though all black individuals are confronted with exactly the same dilemmas. Class position and other structural factors play a determining role. Thus, my argument is to displace the problematic of two-ness to the problematic of contradictory aims in order to clarify how two-ness impinges on Du Bois's conception of emancipatory politics. I conceptualize it as a cognitive apparatus, by which I mean the sum total of beliefs, understandings, rationalizations, and so forth – the ideological framework – which determines the choices and courses of action undertaken by individuals.

As discussed above, Du Bois presents three possibilities for the black individual confronted with racial discrimination: the flight into the realm above the Veil, the impulse to tear it down, or to creep through. The limits of a withdrawn and apolitical life of the mind make it an unacceptable recourse for Du Bois. It does not help him transcend the color line and certainly does nothing to resolve it at the societal level, though it gives him the resources to wage the battle. Moving beyond the personal register, he presents the contradiction of double aims in more generalized terms. In a world that is changing rapidly but differentially for those on the wrong side of the color line, the opportunity for material improvement coupled with the belied desire for recognition “tempt the mind to pretense or to revolt, to hypocrisy or to radicalism” (*Souls*, 127).

Du Bois sees the rule of material gain and instrumental rationality as a problem besetting the world at large and articulates the same disconcerted reaction we find in Carlyle, Bonald, and other figures of conservative thought during the industrial revolution. In this sense, the black world within the Veil appears as a microcosm of the world without. However, the reality of the Veil imposes itself anew and gives a different meaning to the deficiencies of a life governed by economic calculation. The question is not only of competing visions of the good life but also of the price to be paid for it in terms of denied recognition. For, if society at large is increasingly determined by instrumental rationality then adherence to its practices and ways of thinking reinforces the Veil and poses extra burdens for those within. The

possibility of economic betterment presents itself not only without the promise of full and equal status in American society, but makes that promise an ever receding possibility. The result: “two great and hardly reconcilable streams of thought and ethical strivings; the danger of the one lies in anarchy, that of the other in hypocrisy” (*Souls*, 127).

The problem of two-ness is the internalized conflict created by the push and pull between anarchy and hypocrisy. In its externalization the irreconcilability is displaced to the social plane with the creation of “double social classes,” “the one wedded to ideals remote, whimsical, perhaps impossible of realization; the other forgets that life is more than meat and the body more than raiment” (*Souls*, 127). The one is mired in irrationality and the other conforms to the immediate rationality of its situation without any trace of transformative potential. In this way Du Bois gives a schematic but succinct rendering of his view of politics within the black community and he also goes on to geographically situate the two tendencies and social types: The disillusioned and ghettoized radicals of the North and the subservient, hypocritically compromising blacks of the South (*Souls*, 128-29).

The register of the lines analyzed above is that of objective social analysis rather than a recounting of personal experience. Therefore, the question arises, does Du Bois present himself as the model for a third possibility of social being and consciousness? The answer is yes, if we consider the following lines: “[T]he attitude of the imprisoned group may take three main forms – a feeling of revolt and revenge; an attempt to adjust all thought and action to the will of the greater group; or, finally, a determined effort at self-realization and self-development despite environing opinion” (*Souls*, 37). Thus we, following Du Bois, have charted the course from the burdens of double consciousness to the emerging possibility of a political course of action. Du Bois articulates his vision of politics in terms of self-realization and self-development.<sup>23</sup> But what do self-realization and self-development mean for him? The

---

<sup>23</sup> Thus, Du Bois does not fit either category in the simple dichotomy of assimilation-separatism or integrationist-nationalist which has served as the most prominent analytic for examining black politics. For a standard explanation of assimilation-separatism see Bernard Boxill, “Two Traditions in African-

self implicated in this project is not only his personal particular self. He is referring to the collective self, and therefore the project is political, but it also requires us to consider his idea of the collective and how it informs his politics. The problem and project are twofold: Self-development is that of the collective, to be actualized in terms of the gains that follow from mutual recognition, while self-realization has to do with the construction of this collective in self-consciousness, for it is not given in any pre-reflective and pre-political sense.<sup>24</sup>

The meaning of second sight is best clarified in light of these questions regarding Du Bois's political vision. In the passage cited at the beginning, the trope of second sight chronologically precedes the other two. In this state and relation with double consciousness and two-ness, it is described as a gift but an ineffective and inoperative one, indeed as a curse. In the next section I examine second sight and how it organizes Du Bois's notion of the collective and the meaning and possibility of self-realization through political action. Political action is the path to recovering second sight as a gift. It is the about the

---

American Philosophy," in *African Philosophy: An Anthology*, edited by Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), 94. For a treatment of Du Bois as integrationist see George Frederickson, *Black Liberation: A Comparative History of Black Ideologies in United States and South Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 94-136.

<sup>24</sup> To be clear, Du Bois himself does not elaborate and systematically theorize the distinction between self-development and self-realization. Rather, it is a distinction I draw out based on certain textual clues. First, it is clear that the overall political vision in *Souls* is that of gaining full legal equality and equal social status as promised by American Constitutional ideals but belied in practice. Du Bois in part aims for inclusion according to the terms of this ideal normative framework. Political equality is the aim at which self-development is directed. However, he also has a notion of the particularity of African-American identity, albeit a particularity whose construction is a task rather than a pre-given reality. It is the task of self-realization. He says in the "Conservation of Races:" "We are Americans, not only by birth and by citizenship, but by our political ideals, our language, our religion. Farther than that, our Americanism does not go. At that point, we are Negroes, members of a vast historic race that from the very dawn of creation has slept ... We are the first fruits of this new nation, the harbinger of that black tomorrow ... we must strive ... by race unity to the realization of that broader humanity which freely recognizes differences in men, but sternly deprecates inequality in their opportunities of development" (in *The Souls of Black Folk*, 181). I argue below that the turn in his thinking on race gives a different meaning to self-realization, making it more explicitly a task of construction rather than the expression of something antecedently given.

transformation of second sight from inoperative potentiality to realized capacity, and its transposition vis-à-vis double consciousness and two-ness – overcoming them – in the structure of the text.

#### IV. “The Gift:” Second-Sight and Epistemic Privilege

Let us recall the passage cited in the beginning which introduced the themes of second sight, double consciousness, and two-ness. In the ordering of the text, second sight is the first trope and is described as the special gift or capacity of “the Negro” who is “a sort of seventh son, born with a Veil, and gifted with second sight ... .” As with other Du Boisian tropes and themes, the notion of second sight is richly overdetermined and has multiple allusions.<sup>25</sup> My specific points of engagement are, first, to conceptualize second sight as epistemic privilege, second, to address whether Du Bois thinks of it as a potentiality or actuality. If it is a potentiality how is it to be actualized? And, third, how do we understand its uniqueness as a special capacity of African-Americans alone, particularly since second sight is implicated in the process of identity formation?

The complex of connotations attached to second sight can be sorted under two rubrics. First, it is a claim to an African connection and legacy and, second, it is an ability to see the ordinarily unseen or invisible. The second is, of course, derivative of the first but it is helpful to consider them as distinct and interrelated in order to examine how they function in the text. It is significant that Du Bois, in the very act of evoking black Americans' African heritage, makes it operative in the American context: “born with a

---

<sup>25</sup> Malcolm Bull mentions the turn of the century discourse on magnetism, especially in the work of British magnetist William Gregory, and Hegel's discussion of the clairvoyant in *Philosophy of Mind* in which he uses the German term for second sight. Bull emphasizes the functioning of the trope of the Veil in conjunction with the powers of second sight. See *Seeing Things Hidden: Apocalypse, Vision, and Totality* (London: Verso, 1999) 240-48. Also see Keith Byerman, *Two Warring Ideals: The Dialectical Thought of W.E.B. Du Bois* (PhD. Dissertation, Purdue University, 1978), 81; *The Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend*, edited by Maria Leach and Jerome Fried (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1972). Byerman locates his sources in African folklore, treating second sight in conjunction with the figure of the seventh son as well the Veil as a caul covering an infant's head at birth, both of which were believed to be sources of special healing and shamanic powers and, most importantly, markers of good fortune. The mark of good fortune, then, degenerates into a signifier of misfortune in the context of racial discrimination.

Veil, and gifted with second sight *in this American world* [italics mine]." In my reading which the subsequent course of the text bears out, he is ultimately laying claim, on behalf of "the Negro," to membership in American society but through the necessary mediation of African origins. The gift of second sight is the legacy of Africa but its realm of actualization is America. Consequently, it raises the question of what does Africa and its legacy actually signify in the American context and how are we to understand Du Bois's justification of membership in American society on the basis of a distinct African heritage? What is the relationship between Africa and America that the one identity should mediate the formation and recognition of the other? We find two basic answers in Du Bois, always intertwined but with varying emphasis, which represent between them the arc of his thinking about race and racial difference.<sup>26</sup> My specific purpose in introducing this admittedly enormous topic is to address how the trope of second sight can be mapped from its mythic and essentialist origins on to the social plane and conceptualized as a social category, which I call epistemic privilege, within the parameters of Du Bois's own thinking.

In "The Conservation of Races," Du Bois presents a clearly essentialist view of race in terms of both "scientific" (biological) and "civilizational" (cultural) notions of racial essence.<sup>27</sup> The category of race

---

<sup>26</sup> For discussions of Du Bois's conception of race see: Kwame Anthony Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument: Du Bois and the Illusion of Race," *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 10, No. 1 (Autumn, 1985): 21-37; "The Conservation of 'Race'," *Black American Literature Forum* Vol. 23, No. 1 (Spring 1989): 37-60; and "Race, Culture, Identity: Misunderstood Connections," *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, 1994; Lucius T. Outlaw, "Against the Grain of Modernity: The Politics of Difference and the Conservation of 'Race,'" *Man and World* Vol. 25 (1992): 443-468; Tommy L. Lott, "Du Bois and the Invention of Race," in *African Philosophy: An Anthology*, edited by Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), 291-304; Robert Bernasconi, "'Our Duty to Conserve': W.E.B. Du Bois's Philosophy of History in Context," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 108, No. 3 (Summer 2009): 519-540. For a contemporary update on the state of thought on race see Étienne Balibar, "Racism Revisited: Sources, Relevance, and Aporias of a Modern Concept," *PMLA* Vol. 123 No. 5, (October 2008): 1630-1639.

<sup>27</sup> "What is the real distinction between these nations? Is it the physical differences of blood, color and cranial measurements? Certainly we must acknowledge that physical differences play a great part ... But while race differences have followed mainly physical race lines, yet no mere physical distinctions would really define or explain the deeper differences – the cohesiveness and continuity of these groups. The deeper differences are spiritual, psychical, differences – undoubtedly based on the physical, but infinitely transcending them." "Conservation of Races," in *Souls*, 178.

in this essay works to typologize humanity into distinct types with distinct essences – gifts – which, ideally, should complement and harmonize with each other, although the actual content of these essences is never clarified. If world history is a stage and a script then each racial group has a distinct role to play and character to embody: “striving, each in its own way, to develop for civilization its particular message, its particular ideal, which shall help to guide the world nearer and nearer that perfection of human life for which we all long, that 'one far off Divine event'” (“Conservation of Races,” *Souls* 179).<sup>28</sup> However, the special situation and predicament of “the Negro race” is that they “have not as yet given to civilization the full spiritual message which they are capable of giving” (“Conservation of Races,” *Souls* 179). It is clear from these lines and the rest of the essay that Du Bois stakes a claim on the world stage as well as its American corner on the basis of the special destiny and gift of the race. In this essay the gift is not known, it is a destiny yet to be discovered and fulfilled. But we can interpret the gift of second sight, formulated in *Souls* a few years later, as the substance of the endowment. Or, to be more precise, we can say that the message, which in the “Conservation” essay is still an unknown and unexpressed potentiality, will convey the vision enabled by second sight. The claim to a unique position on the American, indeed, the world stage is justified on the basis of this unique potentiality that blacks – “the Negro race” – inherently possess and have to realize.

However, in *Souls* we find a much stronger emphasis on the historical experience of black Americans, a pronounced shift in the understanding of the basis of their cohesiveness as a group and their unique possibilities from racial essence to historical experience.<sup>29</sup> Du Bois acknowledges the shift in more precise terms years later in *Dusk of Dawn*.<sup>30</sup> The relationship between Africa and America is, above all, in

---

<sup>28</sup> A strong Herderian influence is traceable in this passage. Gooding-Williams's construction of Du Boisian politics as a politics of “expressivism” is largely based on the Conservation essay and its Herderian resonances (*In the Shadow of Du Bois*, 261n41).

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Holt makes the same argument in “The Political Uses of Alienation: W.E.B. Du Bois on Politics, Race, and Culture, 1893-1940,” *American Quarterly* Vol. 42, No. 2 (Jun., 1990), 304.

<sup>30</sup> “One of the first pamphlets that I wrote in 1897 was on “The Conservation of Races” wherein I set down as the first article of a proposed racial creed: 'We believe that the Negro people as a race have a

the dark waters of the middle passage, and African-Americans' gift of second sight is wrought in the travails of slavery and racial prejudice: "The rich and bitter depth of their experience, the unknown treasures of their inner life, the strange renderings of nature they have seen, may give the world new points of view and make their loving, living, and doing precious to all human hearts" (*Souls*, 73). The gift of second sight is an ability born not of essence but of experience.

The reconceptualization of the basis of African-American unity in terms of common historical experience is very much in evidence in *Souls*. Wherever Africa is evoked it is always in the form of memory, scraps of melody and fleeting images, the "Sorrow Songs," which grew out of the slaves' struggle and experience and are their endowment to the nation.<sup>31</sup> Du Bois describes the Sorrow Songs as a message: "These songs are the articulate message of the slave to the world" (*Souls*, 156). The question arises, what is the relationship between this message and the message, yet undiscovered and unarticulated in the "Conservation" essay, which African-Americans have for the world? What is the connection between the gift, in the sense of capacity, of second sight claimed in the beginning of the text, and the gift, in the sense of contribution, of "Song" and "Spirit" offered in its closing? Powers of sight and voice mingle synaesthetically and reinforce each other across the centuries, as "the heart-touching witness of these songs" paints a sorrowful vision of suffering and death and "the slave [speaks] to the world" transmitting a message "that is naturally veiled and half articulate" (*Souls*, 157, 159). If second sight is the potentiality of the descendants of slaves and the Sorrow Songs are their legacy to the nation

---

contribution to make to civilization and humanity which no other race can make.' Since then the concept of race has so changed and presented so much of contradiction that as I face Africa I ask myself: what is it between us that constitutes a tie which I can feel better than I can explain? ... One thing is sure and that is the fact that since the fifteenth century these ancestors of mine and their other descendants have had a common history; have suffered a common disaster and have one long memory. ... [T]he real essence of this kinship is its social heritage of slavery; the discrimination and insult ... It is this unity that draws me to Africa" (*Dusk of Dawn*, 117).

<sup>31</sup> For one of the first analyses of the centrality of the Sorrow Songs to the narrative scheme of *Souls* and as a key to Du Bois's thought see Eric J. Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Belknap, 1993).

and the world, how does the potentiality relate to the inheritance? The significance of the question is that for Du Bois the issue is not solely about laying claim to a historical legacy but about what to make of it, how to unveil and amplify in the present the veiled and half articulate message from the past.<sup>32</sup>

In addressing this question, we can conceptualize the social and political function of second sight as epistemic privilege. The resignification of the African-American relationship effects a transposition of second sight from the mythic folkloric plane to the social-historical plane and in the process it acquires a political function. It is more than an ascriptive and descriptive characteristic. The message of the slave past, "its unknown treasures," its "rich and bitter depth of experience," is for the world but unknown and unrecognized by it. It is the unique knowledge and memory of the descendants of slaves, and their task is to seek its recognition and, through it, recognition for themselves. But this unique knowledge and memory is not ready to hand as an articulate and transparently meaningful narrative or an idealist spiritual essence "antecedently uniting" black Americans, to use Robert Gooding-Williams's terms. It has to be re-membered and re-articulated. The remembrance and affirmation of history is thus a self-transformative experience and the accomplishment of its universal recognition is socially transformative.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> For detailed analyses of the differences between Du Bois and other black leaders, namely, Frederick Douglass, William H. Ferris, Alexander Crummell, and Booker T. Washington, on the political question of what to make of the slave legacy see: Arnold Rampersad, *The Art and Imagination of W.E.B. Du Bois*; Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Bernard Boxill, "Populism and Elitism in African-American Political Thought," *The Journal of Ethics* No. 1 (1997): 209-238; Joy James, *Transcending the Talented Tenth: Black Leaders and American Intellectuals* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Adolph Reed, *W.E.B. Du Bois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Paul Gilroy *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Belknap, 2000); Robert Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow of Du Bois*, Ch. 5.

<sup>33</sup> I am evoking here Hegel's concept of experience [*Erfahrung*] which is a mutually transformative interpenetration of both the subject and object of knowledge, in this case, Du Bois and the history of slavery: "Inasmuch as the new true object issues from it, this dialectical movement which consciousness exercises on itself and which affects both its knowledge and its object, is precisely what is called experience. ... This new object contains nothing of the first [the object in-itself], it is what experience has made of it" (*The Phenomenology of Spirit*, 55). The question of how historical knowledge can be thought of as experience is a vexed issue and it is not within the scope of this paper to address it; I limit myself to stating that it is so for Du Bois for whom personal memory inobtrusively meshes with the integument of historical memory in the chapter "Sorrow Songs" (*Souls*, 154-55, 157). For a defense of the view that

But the effort entailed in each proceeds simultaneously, so that instead of saying that Du Bois imagines a politics of self-realization *and* expressivism, as Gooding-Williams does, it is more accurate to say that self-realization *through* recognition of an identity at once personal and historical is the political aim and practice. This is the significance of the shift in Du Bois's thinking about race and collective identity from essentialist to historical-experiential ground,<sup>34</sup> and with it second sight comes to function as epistemic privilege, a connection with a historical past and its memory which has to be established and which is generally unknown and unrecognized.

This particular conception of second sight and understanding of what exactly is the ordinarily unseen to which it has access does not take away from or contradict available interpretations. Rather, it adds a temporal dimension to the unseen realm revealed to second sight.<sup>35</sup> But more importantly, it elicits its positive dimension and potential. In the context of racial prejudice, second sight functions in a distorted mode as “double vision” (*Gift of the Spirit*, 9). Epistemic privilege exists but as a dormant potentiality, a perspective and state of consciousness that is possible but not automatically attained and exercised. If this American world is the realm of double vision, then the remembrance and activation of historical memory offers an alternative vision, an uncracked mirror for self-affirmation. The resources for

---

historical knowledge is experience see R.G. Collingwood, “History as the Re-enactment of Past Experience” and “The Subject Matter of History” in *The Idea of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 282-315.

<sup>34</sup> Sundquist makes a rather contrary argument regarding Du Bois's transition from racial-essentialist to historical understanding of race in saying that “the spirituals stood at the divide of culture in ways that were, and remain, difficult not to racialize. Increasingly in the early twentieth-century it was claimed that whites were not musically (or spiritually) competent to perform black music ...” (*To Wake the Nations*, 528-529). However, what the argument shows, and very truly, is that the boundaries between race and culture are fluid, showing the liminality of all definitions of identity. Since clear and abrupt disjunctures between the concepts of race and culture are hard to sustain, the question is one of emphasis.

<sup>35</sup> Gooding-Williams's interpretation is that it is the ability of those living on the margins to see the rest of society in a light in which it does not see itself is reinforced in most other arguments regarding second sight in particular and marginality as such (*In the Shadow of Du Bois*, 78-79). See Thomas Holt “The Political Uses of Alienation: W.E.B. Du Bois on Politics, Race, and Culture, 1893-1940,” *American Quarterly* Vol. 42, No. 2 (Jun., 1990): 301-323; Ange-Marie Hancock, “W.E.B. Du Bois: Intellectual Forefather of Intersectionality?” *Souls* Vol. 7, No. 3 (2005): 74-84. Hancock bases her analysis on Hannah Arendt “The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition,” *Jewish Social Studies* Vol. 6, No. 2 (Apr., 1944): 99-122.

the reconstitution of the self denied in social reality have to be reclaimed from historical memory, through its positive recalling and interpretation. But unlike Du Bois's initial solitary flight into the life of the mind, these resources are a collective legacy for the political task of self-realization through social recognition.

The gap between the objectively possible functioning of epistemic privilege and the actually existing condition of double vision is the space where political agency operates. In the preceding sections I have attempted to trace how it becomes possible to activate this agency in the case of Du Bois. The chasm of double consciousness and two-ness is also the path leading from double vision to the realization of second sight; the reclamation and activation of historical memory is the corrective to the distortions of double vision. But it is important to keep in mind that the overcoming of double vision is the subjective moment of the emancipatory project, for the ultimate chasm is in the social reality itself in the form of the color line. The imperative to overcome double consciousness and reconcile two-ness leads to a mode of political engagement which is both a process of regaining second sight, of seeing oneself in a whole rather than fragmented reflection, and of trying to effect social transformation through mutual recognition. Self-realization and mutual recognition are two aspects of the same possibility.

Seeing Du Bois's political vision in terms of interpreting the meaning of second sight allows us to see the latter function in the active reclamation of history with a political purpose very much directed at the present and future. However, I want to distinguish the political vision it offers from a major contemporary reading offered by Robert Gooding-Williams.<sup>36</sup> He conceptualizes Du Bois's politics as a politics of "expressive" self-realization (*In the Shadow of Du Bois*, 64). It has three constitutive elements: a conception of political agency as "rule" and possessed by an elite minority, a conception of group essence (the group as a "folk" "antecedently united" by a "common ethos or spirit"), and a vision of politics which

---

<sup>36</sup> The argument below is similar to Patchen Markell's in "The Recognition of Politics: A Comment on Emcke and Tully," *Constellations* Vol. 7, No. 4 (2000): 496-506.

is the exercising of political agency as the “expression” of this group essence (*In the Shadow of Du Bois*, 9-10, 13-15, 56-57). The ultimate political aim in Du Bois's statement is “assimilation *through* self-assertion,” which Gooding-Williams interprets as an expressivist path to inclusion in the group life of the nation.

The logic underlying Gooding-Williams's reconstruction is to analytically distinguish between expressivism and self-realization and argue that Du Bois's politics is an aggregate of these two political modes. To state it rather formulaically, his politics is of transforming through the agency of an elite group the anomic black “masses” into a unified black “folk” (self-realization) and asserting this spiritual folk identity on the national, even international, public stage (expressivism). However, I contend that the relationship between the construction and assertion of identity is a dialectical one and problematizes the applicability of the term expressivism to Du Bois's politics. For, if the expressivist thesis is that “black politics must embody a collectively shared and racially specific spirit (an ethos) that *antecedently unites* [italics mine] black Americans” then we have to see the task of self-realization as chronologically prior to the politics of expressivism (*In the Shadow of Du Bois*, 218).

This, however, is not Du Bois's vision.<sup>37</sup> It is clear from the numerous statements mentioned above regarding his understanding of race and its present and future significance that there is nothing unproblematically given in it, nothing that must simply be expressed or asserted by an aristocratic elite and imposed, even if with their consent and in their name, on passively obeying black masses.<sup>38</sup> As

---

<sup>37</sup> The antecedent givenness of that which is expressed is essential to Larmore's concept of political expressivism and hence also Gooding-Williams's deployment of it. In the process Larmore problematically conflates Hegel and Herder, even Kant, as instances of a certain kind of political romanticism. See *Patterns of Moral Complexity*, Ch. 4 & 6.

<sup>38</sup> My aim is not to take issue with the entirety of Gooding-Williams's take on Du Boisian politics. It is multi-dimensional and has a number of different purposes. For one, he sees it as a (non-democratic) politics of rule, adducing evidence in support of Du Bois's admiration for disciplined leadership, effective organization, and policy-making (*In the Shadow of Du Bois*, Ch. 1 & 6). The efficiency and efficacy of such organization necessitate a certain degree of hierarchy, and the question of whether this implies a democratic or an authoritarian elitist conception of politics is not the focus here. The point is that even if Du Bois had an elitist non-democratic notion of leadership, as Gooding-Williams argues, the meaning of black identity is not self-evident and available for that leadership to express.

discussed above, the message of the slave to the world is a veiled and half articulate one. The excess as well as indeterminacy of meaning which Du Bois sees in the slave legacy does not lend itself to hierarchical and authoritative imposition.<sup>39</sup> But more importantly, its meaning is dormant unless recognized. The legacy of slavery, the Sorrow Songs, enables the struggle for seeking recognition, but only such recognition in turn will give a firm or final shape to its meaning.<sup>40</sup> Or, make its remembering not inherently of political significance. Till that eventuality which perhaps will always lie in the future, the act of remembering, the construction of identity, is an unfinished and ongoing political process.

Du Bois emphasizes the remembrance of the history of slavery but the act of remembering the past, as much as the specific content of that memory, is what defines and binds the collective. This is a positive mode of self-realization in defiance of the negative imposition of racism. The legacy of slavery is the ethos of endurance, renunciation, and hoping against odds – values which do not coalesce into any kind of expressivist notion of identity, but are better construed as political ideals valuable in the waging of an emancipatory struggle (*Souls*, 162). Even so, Du Bois sounds a note of caution: “Is such hope justified?” (*Souls*, 162). The answer, ultimately, lies in the future and in the vicissitudes of political strife. It cannot be prejudged and programmatically imposed in advance. For Du Bois, the passive experience of misrecognition can be negated in political engagement, through the mediation of the active experience of historical remembering, the deed of memory. The way out of the dilemmas of double consciousness is

---

<sup>39</sup> On Du Bois's balanced and careful evocation of the meaning of slavery also see Arnold Rampersad, “Slavery and the Literary Imagination,” in *The Souls of Black Folk*, 295-311. The ambivalence lies in the fact that Du Bois has two seemingly countervailing aims, unless they are dialectically connected. He is at once attempting to reclaim the humanity of slaves and the value of their message for the world, as well as denounce the dehumanizing institution that was slavery. Rampersad contrasts this Washington's emphasis on forgetting the past because it was neither particularly excessive in its brutality nor did it shape valuable and unique depths of experience.

<sup>40</sup> See Shamoan Zamir, *Dark Voices*, Ch. 5, and Victor Wolfenstein, *A Gift of Spirit*, 135-146, for different strategies of argumentation on Du Bois's claim, with the Sorrow Songs, to challenge the racial-cultural hierarchy and conception of the nation. While my argument is in keeping with the spirit of these analyses, its particular claim is that of the connection between the gift of second sight and gift of Song and Spirit.

through political action, actualizing second sight, in which the experiential narrative of one's own life attains higher significance as part of the collective historical experience.

## References

### Books

Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1958/1998.

Boxill, Bernard. "Two Traditions in African-American Philosophy." In *African Philosophy: An Anthology*. Edited by Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, 94-103. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1998.

Bruce, Dickson D. Jr. "W.E.B. Du Bois and the Idea of Double Consciousness." In *The Souls of Black Folk*. Edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Terri Hume Oliver, 236-244. New York: Norton, 1999.

Buck-Morss, Susan. *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009.

Bull, Malcolm. *Seeing Things Hidden: Apocalypse, Vision, and Totality*. London: Verso, 1999.

Byerman, Keith. *Two Warring Ideals: The Dialectical Thought of W.E.B. Du Bois*. PhD. Dissertation, Purdue University, 1978.

Collingwood, Robin, G. *The Idea of History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois: A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of its First Century*. International Publishers, 1968.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1984.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Talented Tenth." In *The Future of the Race*. Edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Cornel West, 133-157. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1996.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1899/1996.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications Inc., 1999.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Terri Hume Oliver. New York: Norton, 1999.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Conservation of Races." In *The Souls of Black Folk*. Edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Terri Hume Oliver, 176-183. New York: Norton, 1999.

Early, Gerald Early. Ed. *Lure and Loathing: Essays on Race, Identity, and the Ambivalence of Assimilation*. New York: Penguin Books, 1993.

Frederickson, George. *Black Liberation: A Comparative History of Black Ideologies in United States and South Africa*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Gaines, Kevin. *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

Gilroy, Paul. *Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture beyond the Color Line*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000.

Gooding-Williams, Robert. *In the Shadow of Du Bois: Afro-Modern Political Thought in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009.

Habermas, Jürgen. *Theory and Practice*. Translated by John Viertel. Boston: Beacon Press, 1973.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Knowledge and Human Interests*. Translated by Jeremy J. Shapiro. Boston: Beacon Press, 1971.

Hegel, G.W.F. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated by A.V. Miller. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Hegel and the Human Spirit: The Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (1805-06)*. Translated by Leo Rauch. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983.

Hill, Melvin. Ed. *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979.

Honneth, Axel. *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*. Translated by Joel Anderson. Boston: MIT Press, 1995.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*. Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2007.

Kojève, Alexandre. *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*. Assembled by Raymond Queneau. Edited by Allan Bloom. Translated by James H. Nichols, Jr. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969.

Larmore, Charles. *Patterns of Moral Complexity*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Lewis, David Levering. *W.E.B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868-1919*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993.

\_\_\_\_\_. *W.E.B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000.

Lott, Tommy L. "Du Bois and the Invention of Race." In *African Philosophy: An Anthology*. Edited by Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, 291-304. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1998.

Lukács, Georg. *History and Class Consciousness: A Study in Marxist Dialectics*. Translated by Rodney Livingstone. London: The Merlin Press Ltd., 1971.

James, Joy. *Transcending the Talented Tenth: Black Leaders and American Intellectuals*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Jay, Martin. *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute for Social Research, 1923-1950*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005.

Leach, Maria and Jerome Fried. Eds. *The Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend*. New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1972.

Marable, Manning. *W.E.B. Du Bois: Black Radical Democrat*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 1986/2005.

Muzruchi, Susan. "Neighbors, Strangers, Corpses: Death and Sympathy in the Early Writings of W.E.B. Du Bois." In *The Souls of Black Folk*. Edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Terri Hume Oliver, 273-295. New York: Norton, 1999.

Mostern, Kenneth. *Autobiography and Black Identity Politics: Racialization in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Pinkard, Terry. *Hegel's Dialectic: The Explanation of Possibility*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Rampersad, Arnold. *The Art and Imagination of W.E.B. Du Bois*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976/1990.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Slavery and the Literary Imagination." In *The Souls of Black Folk*. Edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Terri Hume Oliver, 295-311. New York: Norton, 1999.

Reed, Adolph. *W.E.B. Du Bois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Scott, Daryl Michael. *Contempt and Pity: Social Policy and the Damaged Black Psyche*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

Shelby, Tommie. *We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005.

Sollors, Werner. *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Stepto, Robert. *From Behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative*. Chicago: The University of Illinois Press, 1979.

Sundquist, Eric J. *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993.

Wolfenstein, Victor. *The Victims of Democracy: Malcolm X and the Black Revolution*. London: Free Association Books, 1989.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Psychoanalytic Marxism: Groundwork*. London: Free Association Books, 1993.

\_\_\_\_\_. *A Gift of the Spirit: Reading The Souls of Black Folk*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007.

Zamir, Shamoon. *Dark Voices: W.E.B. Du Bois and American Thought, 1888-1903*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

### Articles

Allen, Ernest Jr. "Ever Feeling Two-Ness: 'Double Ideals' and 'Double Consciousness' in *The Souls of Black Folk*." *Critique of Anthropology* Vol. 12, No. 3 (1992): 261-275.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Du Boisian Double Consciousness: The Unsustainable Argument." *The Black Scholar* Vol. 33, No. 2 (2003): 25-43.

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. "The Uncompleted Argument: Du Bois and the Illusion of Race." *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 10, No. 1 (Autumn, 1985): 21-37.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Conservation of 'Race'." *Black American Literature Forum* Vol. 23, No. 1 (Spring 1989): 37-60.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Race, Culture, Identity: Misunderstood Connections." *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*. 1994. At <http://www.tannerlectures.utah.edu/lectures/index.html>

Arendt, Hannah. "The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition." *Jewish Social Studies* Vol. 6, No. 2 (Apr., 1944): 99-122.

Balfour, Lawrie. "A Most Disagreeable Mirror: Race Consciousness as Double Consciousness." *Political Theory* Vol. 26, No. 3 (Jun., 1998): 346-369.

Balibar, Étienne. "Racism Revisited: Sources, Relevance, and Aporias of a Modern Concept." *PMLA* Vol. 123 No. 5, (October 2008): 1630-1639.

Barkin, Kenneth. "'Berlin Days,' 1892-1894: W.E.B. Du Bois and German Political Economy." *boundary 2* Vol. 27, No. 3 (Fall 2000): 79-101.

Bernasconi, Robert. "'Our Duty to Conserve:' W.E.B. Du Bois's Philosophy of History in Context." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 108, No. 3 (Summer 2009): 519-540.

Boxill, Bernard. "Populism and Elitism in African-American Political Thought." *The Journal of Ethics* No. 1 (1997): 209-238.

Brodwin, Stanley. "The Veil Transcended: Form and Meaning in W.E.B. Du Bois's 'The Souls of Black Folk.'" *Journal of Black Studies* Vol. 2, No. 3 (Mar., 1972): 303-321.

Bull, Malcolm. "Slavery and the Multiple Self." *New Left Review* No. 213 (1998): 94-131.

Childs, John Brown. "Concepts of Culture in Afro-American Political Thought, 1890-1920." *Social Text* No. 4 (Autumn 1981): 28-43.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Afro-American Intellectuals and the People's Culture." *Theory and Society* Vol. 13 (1984): 69-90.

Du Bois, W.E.B. "The Study of Negro Problems." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* Vol. 11 (Jan., 1898): 1-23.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Development of a People." *International Journal of Ethics* Vol. 14, No. 3 (Apr., 1904): 292-311.

Gooding-Williams, Robert. "Philosophy of History and Social Critique in *Souls of Black Folk*." *Social Science Information* Vol. 2, No. 1 (1987): 99-114.

Hanchard, Michael. "Afro-Modernity: Temporality, Politics, and the African Diaspora." *Public Culture* Vol. 11, No. 1 (1999): 245-268.

Hancock, Ange-Marie. "W.E.B. Du Bois: Intellectual Forefather of Intersectionality?" *Souls* Vol. 7, No. 3 (2005): 74-84.

Holt, Thomas C. "The Political Uses of Alienation: W.E.B. Du Bois on Politics, Race, and Culture, 1893-1940." *American Quarterly* Vol. 42, No. 2 (Jun., 1990): 301-323.

Markell, Patchen. "The Recognition of Politics: A Comment on Emcke and Tully." *Constellations* Vol. 7, No. 4 (2000): 496-506.

Moses, Wilson J. "The Poetics of Ethiopianism: W.E.B. Du Bois and Literary Black Nationalism." *American Literature* Vol. 47, No. 3 (1975): 411-426.

Outlaw, Lucius T. "Against the Grain of Modernity: The Politics of Difference and the Conservation of 'Race.'" *Man and World* Vol. 25 (1992): 443-468.

\_\_\_\_\_. "W.E.B. Du Bois on the Study of Social Problems." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* Vol. 568 (Mar., 2000): 281-297.

Schrager, Cynthia. "Both Sides of the Veil: Race, Science, and Mysticism in W.E.B. Du Bois." *American Quarterly* Vol. 48, No. 4 (Dec., 1996): 551-586.