

“OF THE MEANING OF PROGRESS”:
DUBOISIAN DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS, PROPAGANDA, AND THE RHETORIC
OF SCIENTIFIC RACISM

By

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We must study, we must investigate, we must attempt to solve; and the utmost that the world can demand is, not lack of human interest and moral conviction, but rather the heart-quality of fairness, and an earnest desire for the truth despite its possible unpleasantness.

--Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899)ⁱ

As attested to by his vast *oeuvre* of work in various media, there can be no denying that W.E.B. Du Bois was relentlessly preoccupied with the “unpleasant consequences” of exposing “the truth.” There also can be no denying that Du Bois understood the value and power of propaganda, or that he was himself engaged in propagandistic practices, willfully if not happily, throughout his long and incomparably interesting career as an activist, sociologist, philosopher, journalist, curator, and writer of fictional and autobiographical works. In his 1926 address at the NAACP's annual conference, Du Bois provides a characteristically provocative rationale:

[A]ll art is propaganda and must ever be, despite the wailing of the purists. I stand in utter shamelessness and say that whatever art I have for writing has been used always for propaganda for gaining the right of black folk to love and enjoy. I do not care a damn for any art that is not propaganda. But I do care when propaganda is confined to one side while the other is stripped and silent. (“Criteria,” 296)

Published later that year in *The Crisis* as “Criteria of Negro Art,” this seminal essay makes clear that Du Bois not only embraced propagandistic practices in his own art-making, but also that he viewed propaganda as a necessary “criteria” for a group of people who had gone “stripped and silent” for far too long. Thus the most prominent

international figure of African American letters makes the unabashed claim that propaganda is a *sui generis* component of the project of Black liberation. Quieting his critics from the outset, Du Bois poses the rhetorical question: “How is it that an organization like [the NAACP], a group of radicals trying to bring new things into the world, a fighting organization which has come up out of the blood and dust of battle, struggling for the right of black men to be ordinary human beings—how is it that an organization of this kind can turn aside to talk about Art? After all, what have we who are slaves and black to do with Art?” (“Criteria,” 295). His answer: “That somehow, somewhere eternal and perfect Beauty sits above Truth and Right I can conceive, but here and now and in the world in which I work they are for me unseparated and inseparable” (“Criteria,” 296). In his response to this hypothetical question, Du Bois denies the existence of a Platonic realm in which abstract qualities such as “Beauty,” “Truth,” and “Right” can be extricated from each other and from the social realities of those who, in creating art, foist upon the world a certain image of themselves. At the time of this lecture, notably at the height of the Harlem Renaissance, that world was still very much enshrouded by a veil of whiteness that, according to Du Bois, posited the project of art-making as “inseparable” from the “[struggle] of the right of black men to be ordinary human beings.”

Building on Du Bois’s articulation of propaganda in “Criteria of Negro Art,” this essay considers the function and purpose of propaganda across three notable moments in Du Bois’s career: his journalistic work for *The Crisis*, his sociological and curatorial work for the 1900 Paris Exposition, and his fictional and autobiographical work in *The Souls of Black Folk*. This paper argues that Du Bois’s international public relations

campaign built for the "new Negro" at the 1900 Paris Exposition, as well as his vision of "progress" articulated in *Souls*, respond to violent and nonsensical rhetorics emerging from the journals and lecterns of prominent Social Darwinists and eugenicists such as Herbert Spencer and Francis Galton. The implications of this project point toward a framing of Du Bois's "double consciousness" as the epistemological foundation of a radical, pro-Black liberation movement in its infancy in the first decades of the 20th century. Moreover, this essay posits that Du Bois's formulation of double consciousness establishes the unsettling existential terrain according to which propagandistic practice may be justified on ethical grounds.

To these ends, I will first unpack and critically assess the language of double consciousness that appears in *The Souls of Black Folk*. Second, I will explore in detail Du Bois's remarks in *The Crisis*, in which he responds in polemical terms to the irrational claims of eugenicists and Social Darwinists. In the work excerpted here, Du Bois focuses attention particularly upon the dubious notion of "racial antagonism" that had come to form the logical foundation of scientific racism. Next, I will turn to Du Bois's remarks prepared for the 1900 Paris Exposition alongside the startling array of photographs he and Thomas Calloway curated for it. These objects attest to Du Bois's vision of the "Talented Tenth" that would come to form, after nearly three decades of propaganda, Alain LeRoy Locke's conception of Negritude. Finally, I will turn to "Of the Coming of John" and "Of the Meaning of Progress," essays in *Souls* that demonstrate a rhetorical shift in Du Bois's vision of progress and attendant interest in the public relations value of sociological and autobiographical data on conditions of life for African Americans living in the global *fin de siècle*.

II. Double Consciousness, Propaganda, and the Ethics of Doubleness

For philosophers of race, Du Bois's formulation of double consciousness has become perhaps the most interesting terminological feature of *The Souls of Black Folk*.ⁱⁱ As I shall demonstrate, double consciousness provides the ethical language that may justify the various projects Du Bois undertakes across media in response to claims of racial superiority by the eugenicists and their supporters. Moreover, double consciousness foregrounds propagandistic practice as a potentially necessary means for African Americans to achieve social and political change in an anti-Black racist culture such as the America in which Du Bois had been living and writing.

To arrive at a useful interpretive stance *vis-à-vis* double consciousness, I shall excerpt from *Souls* two important instantiations of the idea. First, in "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," Du Bois defines the term:

After the Egyptian and sIndian, 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 twoness,—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. (8-9)

In this passage, Du Bois advances double consciousness as a method of perceiving and interpreting the world that permits “no true self-consciousness, but only lets [‘the Negro’] see himself through the revelation of the other world.” That is, double consciousness implies inhabitation of a fractured identity that achieves its sense of self as a direct result of the ways in which others—notably, white others, “[looking] on in amused contempt and pity”—perceive that self. Importantly, the theory posits “sensation” and vision at its very center: for double consciousness is achieved by the somewhat paradoxical “sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others.” In this way, Du Bois seems to regard double consciousness as both a curse and a “gift,” permitting those born “with a veil” a “second-sight” unavailable to those born without such a veil. On this point, it is worth noting that Du Bois presents double consciousness as something one may either be “born” with or without. While it is not clear whether Du Bois regards double consciousness to be a feature of perception that one acquires over time or at some discrete moment in one’s development, one can assume that he does *not* believe individuals are actually “born” with this “second-sight.”ⁱⁱⁱ Finally, it should be noted that Du Bois’s “seventh son” is regarded to be explicitly both “Negro” and “American”; it is in the very schism between these two identity categories that the “peculiar sensation” of “twoness” becomes apparent.

In “Of the Faith of the Fathers,” Du Bois adduces in practical terms the epistemological dilemma facing this “seventh son”:

From the double life every American Negro must live, as a Negro and as an American, as swept on by the current of the nineteenth while yet struggling in the eddies of the fifteenth century,—from this must arise a painful self-

consciousness, an almost morbid sense of personality and a moral hesitancy which is fatal to self-confidence. *The worlds within and without the Veil of Color are changing, and changing rapidly, but not at the same rate, not in the same way*; and this must produce a peculiar wrenching of the soul, a peculiar sense of doubt and bewilderment. Such a double life, with double thoughts, double duties, and double social classes, must give rise to double words and double ideals, and tempt the mind to pretence [sic] or revolt, to hypocrisy or radicalism. (145, my emphasis).

Notably, Du Bois recognizes history and historical change as factors that have shaped, and that may continue to shape, the form of consciousness available to the (specifically African American) individual; for it is precisely the revelation that “the worlds within and without the Veil of Color” are changing, but “not at the same rate, not in the same way,” that produces this “peculiar sensation of doubt and bewilderment.”^{iv} Implicit in such a formulation are the notions that *history affects consciousness*, and that change may be possible; that is, through social and political change, double consciousness may or may not be a perceptual mode this “seventh son” must necessarily bear in future generations. Moreover, in this second instance, Du Bois deploys the notion of “doubleness” to describe an ethical dilemma existentially entailed by living within the “Veil of Color.” This “peculiar sensation” leads them, with “double words and double ideals,” to lives motivated either by “pretence” and “hypocrisy” or “revolt” and “radicalism.” Double consciousness is therefore at least doubly insidious: in addition to producing a mode of perception whereby “the Negro” comes to define his^v sense of self in relation to how he is perceived by white others, it subtends the range of ethical and

existential choices available to him. In other words, this sense of “doubt and bewilderment” presents him with limited, and equally unhappy, options in terms of how he may go about making life decisions. These options are motivated in relation to how one must navigate one’s position within the Veil; one can either hide behind it and lead a life of “pretence” and “hypocrisy” or attempt to destroy or escape from it and lead a life of “revolt” and “radicalism.”^{vi}

Thus, in *The Souls of Black Folk*, double consciousness is understood to signify on at least two significant registers. First, it is defined as a perceptual mode, a way of perceiving and interpreting the world. This perceptual mode accrues over time and may be impacted by historical forces. While “the seventh son” is construed to be born “with a Veil,” double consciousness attains in and through the experience of inhabiting a racist culture. Second, double consciousness may be understood to present an ethical dilemma, for it is a form of consciousness that circumscribes possibilities for self-expression and self-actualization for those born with black skin in an anti-Black racist culture. In this way, it is a form of self-awareness that is foisted upon the individual from without, affecting in turn the ethical and agential possibilities one may formulate from within. As such, double consciousness provides to those born with black skin in a racist culture a sense of “twoness” that gives them a “second-sight,” or an apprehension of the world unavailable to those born in that same culture with white skin.^{vii}

This position of enforced ambiguity foregrounds the means by which Du Bois and other African American thinkers in his time may justifiably engage in propagandistic practices that, on the surface, may appear self-contradictory, “radical,” “pretentious,” or even hypocritical. As Du Bois notes, “hypocrisy” and “revolt” are in fact conceptual

categories that have been imposed upon African American individuals; during the time of Du Bois's writing, there was no possibility from escaping these categories as conditions of one's existence. Therefore, by engaging in propagandistic practices in and across multiple genres and media, Du Bois was merely enacting, in full force, the conceptual dilemma perpetuated by the anti-Black racist culture in which he had been living. To wit: in projects such as *The Crisis*, the 1900 Paris Exposition, and *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois performatively enacts the very position of double consciousness that American society insisted upon his occupying. As I shall demonstrate, Du Bois does not articulate double consciousness merely to identify and exonerate an oppressive perceptual mode. Rather, his discovery of this formulation provides the philosophical material with which he will become emboldened not only to respond to the "double speak" of the racist doctrines of his time, but also to engage in that very form of "double speak" and, in so doing, to eviscerate the arguments of the oppressor. In short, double consciousness becomes Du Bois's ethical and epistemological platform for self-expression in a racist culture that seemingly *demand*s African American intellectuals engage in propagandistic practice as a means of survival.

Importantly, I do not mean to imply that Du Bois was himself "pretentious" or "hypocritical." To the contrary, I have posited that Du Bois takes in his work and "art" a shrewd and at times ludic interpretive stance with regard to the ethical dilemma of double consciousness. In this regard, one might say that he does much more than merely, in Houston Baker's words, "refuse the master's nonsense." Anticipating Sartre and Fanon, Du Bois deploys double consciousness as a tactic of existential awareness and engagement. By performatively exposing double consciousness for both *what it is* and

what it does in and through his works—and by having evaluated the stakes of this stance in essays such as “Criteria”—Du Bois arguably resolves the Sartrean *qua* Fanonian dilemma whereby one with black skin in an anti-Black racist culture becomes reduced to one’s brute “facticity” (what Fanon refers to in *Black Skin, White Masks* [1956] as “The Fact of Blackness”) and thereby stripped of “transcendence,” or one’s interpretive stance with regard to one’s factic attributes. Du Bois’s awareness and adoption of double consciousness is always already a critique of his facticity.^{viii} I do not perceive in this enactment anything approaching the “pretentious” or “hypocritical”; rather, such an enactment is a performative critique of these very categories, even further distinguishing Du Bois’s project from that of an “accommodationalist” such as Booker T. Washington.

III. DuBois on Racial Antagonism and Social Darwinism

There exists to-day a widespread and fatuous belief in the power of environment . . . to alter heredity . . . Such beliefs have done much damage in the past and if allowed to go uncontradicted, may do even more serious damage in the future. Thus the view that the Negro slave was an unfortunate cousin of the white man, deeply tanned by the tropic sun and denied the blessings of Christianity and civilization, played no small part with the sentimentalists of the Civil War period and it has taken us fifty years to learn that speaking English, wearing good clothes and going to school and church does not transform a Negro into a white man.

—Madison Grant, American Eugenics Society (1916)^{ix}

In a surprisingly obscure 1981 essay, Carol M. Taylor combs through volumes of *The Crisis*, the NAACP’s civil rights magazine founded by Du Bois in 1910, to demonstrate his vehement critiques of racist discourses that prevailed in the hard and

social sciences of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Taylor notes that Du Bois, “armed with impeccable credentials and access to a massive audience . . . attacked the scientific underpinnings of racial discrimination” in this periodical over a span of more than 10 years (450). Taylor focuses her consideration on Du Bois’s argumentative style or “rhetoric,” through which he persuasively debunks a range of scientific myths regarding the presumed superiority of white over black Americans in the domains of health, morality, ability, and intelligence. It would be a vast understatement to claim that Du Bois’s work in *The Crisis* responds directly to racist arguments emerging from the Social Darwinist and eugenicist movements of the time. Indeed, the sociological value of Du Bois’s work—and the very discipline of sociology, then in its infancy—may be regarded as an institutionally-sanctioned response to *abuses of fact* perpetuated by racist doctrines emerging from some of the most esteemed academic institutions in the world in the first decades of the twentieth century.

The macroscopic mission of *The Crisis* was most vividly encapsulated in a public debate years after Du Bois left his position at the periodical. In 1929, Du Bois engaged in a charged exchange with Lothrop Stoddard, prominent eugenicist, lawyer, and Professor of History at Harvard University, in response to the question: “Should the Negro Be Encouraged to Cultural Equality?” Stoddard, responding mainly to arguments in Alain LeRoy Locke’s *The New Negro* (1925), claims:

[The] Negro intelligensia rejects the biracial system of the South, inveighs against the color-line, and threatens our social order with their embittered enmity unless White America admits them to full equality, with its logical implication—racial amalgamation . . . For the Negro’s own sake, as well as in the interests of social

peace, he ought to be told,—tolerantly yet unequivocally—that this new hope is delusion, which, if persisted in, will lead to unnecessary disappointments and misfortunes . . . For let there be no mistake: White America will not abolish the color-line, will not admit the Negro to social equality, will not open the door to racial amalgamation. That is the meat of the matter. If this spells trouble, then trouble there must be. But the best way to minimize the trouble is to speak frankly at the start, thus checking the spread of false hopes and limiting the resultant bitterness of disillusion. (511-12)

Responding to the same question, Du Bois argues the affirmative position then attacks the logic of Stoddard's claims:

Some people might assume that this rise of the American Negro from slavery to freedom . . . would bring unstinted applause. Negroes themselves expected this . . . On the contrary, all Negroes know that with all the generous praise given us there has been no phase of the advance that has not been looked on with a strong undercurrent of apprehension. America has feared the coming forward of these black men; it has looked upon it as a sort of threat—and if you should ask *just why that is so*, white Americans would state the thesis which they have stated before but with some modification; they would say that the coming forward of these people does not prove that they can make as great a gift to culture as the white people have made; but whether they can or not, they must not be allowed to come forward because it threatens civilization! (Zuckerman, 39, my emphasis).

Du Bois makes the case that such arguments stand fallaciously on what he refers to as “the quantitative argument,” whereby “there is only a certain amount of culture in

the world; if you divide it up among all the people you have that much less for other people” (Zuckerman, 39). Here Du Bois implicitly critiques the prevailing doctrine that emerged from eugenicist and Social Darwinist thought: the application of the Darwinian notion of “survival of the fittest” to domains of society and culture. So-called “racial antagonism,” the prevailing logic through which the majority of these racist arguments had been made, was an outgrowth of emerging trends in Social Darwinism that argued for the intrinsic necessity of conflict between races. According to Taylor, one corollary resulting from the argument was that “reformist schemes were futile and dangerous attempts to tamper with the natural and inexorable progress of evolution”; a second corollary was that “social conflict, such as the conflict between the races, was natural and desirable” (451).

The doctrine of racial antagonism received Du Bois’s full attention a full fifteen years before his debate with Stoddard in the September, 1914 issue of *The Crisis*. I quote nearly in full “Does Race Antagonism Serve Any Good Purpose,” in which Du Bois draws attention to the fourfold feature of this myth.

1. [*Racial Antipathy*] is an instinctive repulsion from something harmful and is, therefore, a subtle condition of ultimate survival.

The difficulty with this theory is that it does not square with the facts: race antipathy is not instinctive but a matter of careful education. Black and white children play together gladly and know no prejudice until it is implanted precept upon precept and by strong social pressure; and when it is so implanted it is just as strong in cases where there is no physical difference as it is where physical differences are striking. The racial repulsion in the Balkans among peoples of

practically the same blood is to-day greater than it was between whites and blacks on the Virginia plantation.^x

In this first principle, Du Bois makes the claim, at the time quite radical, that racial antipathy is a learned behavior. In this regard he joins Franz Boas, who in 1911 had proclaimed, largely to deaf ears in his field of expertise, “the old idea of absolute stability of human types must . . . evidently be given up, and with it the belief of the hereditary superiority of certain types over others” (Liss, 103). Julie E. Liss notes the convergence in thought between the two men: “Sharing an antiracist agenda, Boas and Du Bois were struggling to institutionalize their arguments by furthering research to counter scientific racism and by participating in public discussions to promote their ideas,” though “the implications of these findings . . . were ignored at the time as they were revolutionary” (136). Liss notes that these implications spelled out an “anti-deterministic view of difference that, combined with Boas’s own assimilationist leanings, suggested a new basis for coexistence” (136). Du Bois’s views had certainly been shaped by the thought of Boas, and vice versa, as evidenced by the second of Du Bois’s responses to the theory of racial antagonism: that “whether instinctive or not, [racial antagonism] is a reasonable measure of self-defense against undesirable racial traits.” Du Bois elaborates fully:

This second proposition is the one which usually follows careful examination of the first. After all, it is an unimportant fact. Instincts are simply accumulated reasons in the individual or in the race. The reasons for antagonizing inferior races are clear and may be summed up as follows:

Poor health and stamina.

Low ability.

Harmful ideals of life.

We are now on surer ground because we can now appeal to facts. But no sooner do we make this appeal than we are astonished to find that there are surprisingly little data: Is it true that the Negro as a physical specimen is inferior to the white man or is he superior? Is the high death rate of the Indian a proof of his poor physique or is it proof of wretched conditions of life which would long ago have killed off a weaker people? And, again, is spiritual superiority always in direct proportion to physical strength in races any more than in individuals? Connected with this matter of health comes the question of physical beauty, but surely, if beauty were to become a standard of survival how small our world population would be!^{xi}

With regard to the question of “health” and the related issue of “survival,” racist ideology led scholars in the late nineteenth century to conclude that African Americans were dying out. Taylor notes that in 1884, Nathaniel Shaler, dean of the Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard, “suggested . . . that blacks were becoming extinct” (451). Frederick L. Hoffman’s *Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro* suggested the same, warning “that the high incidence of tuberculosis and venereal disease among blacks arose from their inherent immorality, and would eventually destroy them” (Taylor, 451). As Du Bois notes in *The Crisis* and elaborates in his remarks for the 1900 Paris Exposition, this data was flawed and biased, and obviously untrue given “the wonderful reproductive powers of the blacks”^{xii} evidenced in his sociological reports.

Using sound logic and an appeal to fact—along with healthy doses of humor and wit—Du Bois disseminated his message to some 100,000 subscribers to the periodical,

vastly extending the scope of responses to scientific racism. Following this second point, Du Bois continues, discussing the issue of intellect:

It is argued . . . that it may be granted that the physical stamina of all the races is probably approximately the same and that physical comeliness is rather a matter of taste and selection than of absolute racial difference. However, when it comes to intellectual ability the races differ so enormously that superior races must in self-defense repel the inferior sternly, even brutally. Two things, however, must be said in answer to this: First, the prejudice against the Jews, long and world wide, is surely not based on inferior ability . . . Moreover, if we compare the intellectual ability of Teuton and Chinese which is inferior? Or, if we take the Englishman and Bantu, is the difference a difference of native ability or of training and environment? The answer to this is simple: We do not know.^{xiii}

Taylor notes that still-controversial I.Q. testing methodologies arose from concerns related to strategies deployed by eugenicists and Social Darwinists. “In the early 1900’s,” she writes, “scientific racism gained an additional impetus from the psychologists. The I.Q. tests demonstrated that the children of college professors, bank presidents, and the like displayed superior mental ability. The results were considered proof of the value of good heredity . . . [and] provided a powerful weapon for the racists” (453). The response to the case of blacks who possessed exceptional intellect is typified, again, by the remarks of Stoddard:

If, now, the 10,500,000 Negroes in America can produce a few outstanding geniuses in the arts and sciences, this numerically minute elite can settle the question in advance of the patiently plodding millions. The Negro race, having

demonstrated that it can produce some really gifted individuals, thereby conclusively disproves the charge of racial inferiority. The basic reason for the present attitude toward the Negro thus becomes nonsense, and the only thing left for open minded White Americans to do is,— “gracefully capitulate” . . . In answer to which I, to use a legal phrase, demur. Now a demurrer means, in everyday language: *What of it?* and I, being a New England Yankee, exercise my ancestral prerogative by answering with a question, and say: “What of it?” (Stoddard, 512)

In short, Stoddard and those of his ilk do not know how to respond to the apparent paradox of black genius, and thus invoke rhetorical posturing and appeals to “ancestral prerogative” to make a non-existent case. As Taylor notes, intellectuals like Stoddard invoked the notion that black genius might only be explained through the process of miscegenation. “A highly intelligent black,” she writes, “was not an argument against the race’s incurable inferiority. Science had decreed that blacks were not intelligent. Therefore, any intelligent person had some amount of white blood, regardless of how black he or she appeared to be. To be otherwise was logically impossible” (453). Noting the obvious flaws in such reasoning, Taylor concludes that “as long as scientific sanction for racism remained a closed system, a persuasive argument for significant progress of the American black was impossible to construct” (453).

The double-paradox of this argument is that if such “genius” might only arise from the “intermingling” of races, there ought be no need to argue against “intermingling” on the basis of racial antagonism; according to this dubious logic, miscegenation obviously had done the world evolutionary good, in the example of

exceptional intellect, for all parties involved. Du Bois deploys similar deconstructive reasoning in his third and fourth tenets against racial antagonism, which I quote nearly in full.

3. Racial antipathy is a method of Race Development.

. . . Is not racial antipathy a method of maintaining the European level of culture? But is it necessary for the runner to hate and despise the man he is out-distancing? Can we only maintain culture in one race by increasing barbarism in others? Does it enhance the ‘superiority’ of white men to allow them to steal from yellow men and enslave black men and reduce colored women to concubinage and prostitution? Surely not. Admitting that in the world’s history again and again this or that race has out-stripped another in culture, it is impossible to prove that inherent racial superiority was the cause or that the level of culture has been permanently raised in one race by keeping other races down.

4. Race Antipathy is a method of group specialization.

. . . admits the essential equality of races but insists on the difference in gifts and argues that antipathy between races allows each to develop its own peculiar gifts and aptitudes. Does it? That depends on the “antipathy.” If antipathy means the enslaving of the African, the exploitation of the Chinese, the peonage of Mexicans and the denial of schools to American Negroes then it is hard to see where the “encouragement” comes in. If it means that the generous encouragement of all men according to their fits and ability then why speak of race “antipathy” or encourage it? Let us call it Human Uplift and Universal Brotherhood and be done with it.^{xiv}

Summarizing, Du Bois notes:

Such are the arguments. Most persons use all four at once and skillfully skip from one to the other. Each argument has in other days been applied to individuals and social classes, but we have outgrown that. We apply it to-day to “races” because race is a vague, unknown term which may be made to cover a multitude of sins. After all, what is a “Race?” and how many races are there? Von Luschan, one of the greatest of modern anthropologists, says: “The question of the number of human races has quite lost its *raison d’être*, and has become a subject rather of philosophic speculation than of scientific research.” What we have on earth is men. Shall we help them or hinder them? Shall we hate and kill them or love and preserve and uplift them? Which method will do us most good? This is the real question of “Race” antipathy.^{xv}

In moving between and across genres and medias, Du Bois exposes racial antagonism as a volatile mode of rhetorical posturing that is at once absurd and absurdly efficient in its power to incite barbaric acts in the name of science, “civilization,” and “fact.” As typified by these remarks, Du Bois enacts public relations as a mode of survival; as a mode of “social uplift”; and ultimately, as a striving for accuracy against the outright fudging or misrepresentation of fact that enabled and emboldened racist scientific dogma to spread throughout his time. Du Bois’s search for truth, “despite its possible unpleasantness,”^{xvi} led him several years earlier to organize an exhibit on the “American Negro” at the 1900 Paris Exposition, where his properly sociological work—equally concerned with the notion of dispelling the myth of racial antagonism—receives public recognition on an international stage.

IV. Curating Progress: Du Bois and the 1900 Paris Exposition

Du Bois believed that the study of the “Negro” (he insisted on this term, and on its capitalization^{xvii}) in America provided an intellectual paradigm for research in the emerging discipline of sociology. In the November, 1900 edition of *The American Monthly Review of Reviews*, Du Bois writes, “I think it may safely be asserted that never in the history of the modern world has there been presented to men of a great nation so rare an opportunity to observe and measure and study the evolution of a great branch of the human race as is given to Americans in the study of the American Negro. Here is a crucial test on a scale that is astounding and under circumstances peculiarly fortunate.”^{xviii} Prepared for the 1900 Paris Exposition, these remarks—along with the voluminous collection of photographs he and Thomas Calloway curated for the Exposition—indicate both a direction and a method for sociological research that accounts for “the minute study of limited fields of human action, where observation and accurate measurement are possible and where real illuminating knowledge can be had.”^{xix} Du Bois begins his accompanying notes on the exposition as follows:

On the banks of the Seine, opposite the Rue des Nations, stands a large, plain white building, where the promoters of the Paris Exposition have housed the world's ideas of sociology. The United States section of this building is small, and not, at first glance, particularly striking . . . In the right-hand corner, however, as one enters, is an exhibit which, more than most others in the building, is sociological in the larger sense of the term—that is, is an attempt to give, in as systematic and compact a form as possible, the history and present condition of a large group of human beings. This is the exhibit of American Negroes, planned

and executed by Negroes, and collected and installed under the direction of a Negro special agent, Mr. Thomas J. Calloway.^{xx}

In naming his exhibit “sociological in the larger sense of the term,” Du Bois tacitly critiques the very institution of sociology, still in its infancy, while offering a clear-cut definitional standard by which sociological work ought be judged: as “an attempt to give, in as systematic and compact a form as possible, the history and present condition of a large group of human beings.” The rhetorical gestures in this passage are classically DuBoisian; the description evokes, first of all, contrasts of color and size (note the telling inclusion of words such as “large,” “larger,” “plain,” “white,” and “compact”) to highlight at once the scale and *specificity* of the work assembled. The triple-repetition of the word “Negro” drives home the notion that this is no common exhibit; for the first time in history, Du Bois is surely aware, the “American Negro” will enter the world intellectual stage, and he will do so with and on his own terms. Most tellingly of all, perhaps, is the notably “large, plain, *white* building” in which sits the Exposition’s most interesting exhibit, “planned and executed by Negroes,” for which Du Bois and Calloway won a Gold Medal from the Parisian organizers.

As in *Souls*, in “The American Negro at Paris,” Du Bois consciously enacts the persona of the global thinker, the public intellectual *qua* diplomat, to lyricize through various disciplinary forms and media what had been a partially written history—a history largely without form or “discipline” at all. In doing so, Du Bois seems acutely aware of his position at the vanguard of intellectual production in his particular field and of the tremendous responsibilities entailed and demanded by this position. This may explain, in part, the variety of photographs chosen for inclusion in the exhibit, as well as the

categories under which they were literally contained in albums titled “U.S.A.,” “Types of American Negroes,” “Georgia,” and “Negro Life in Georgia.”^{xxi} According to Du Bois, the exhibit contained

the usual paraphernalia for catching the eye--photographs, models, industrial work, and pictures. But it does not stop here; beneath all this is a carefully thought-out plan, according to which the exhibitors have tried to show:

- (a) The history of the American Negro.
- (b) His present condition.
- (c) His education.
- (d) His literature.^{xxii}

While this may be true, an overwhelming number of photographs selected seem intent not on representing the “present condition of the American Negro,” categorically speaking; such an endeavor would have required, of course, the inclusion of photographs demonstrating the realities of racial violence and segregation in nineteenth century America, especially in the South, where a large number of the photos were taken. By contrast, a great number of photos shown at the Paris Exhibition indicate an *optimism*, reinforced by the language of “progress” contained in Du Bois’s article, that seems to have been recast by the time he publishes *Souls* just a few years later. The sociological data included in the Paris report are surprising and revealing:

At a glance one can see the successive steps by which the 220,000 Negroes of 1750 [in Georgia] had increased to 7,500,000 in 1890; their distribution throughout the different States; a comparison of the size of the Negro population with European countries bringing out the striking fact that there are nearly half as

many Negroes in the United States as Spaniards in Spain. The striking movement by which the 4 1/5 percent of Negroes living in the cities in 1860 has increased to 12 percent in 1890 is shown, as is also the fact that recognized mulattoes have increased 50 percent in 30 years, even in the defective census returns. Twenty percent of the Negroes are shown to be home-owners, 60 percent of their children are in school, and their illiteracy is less than that of Russia, and only equal to that of Hungary. (575)

Du Bois boasts of the martial prowess of African American men, noting the number of “Negro medal-of-honor men in the army and navy”; and he notes anecdotally, “It was a Massachusetts lawyer who replied to the Patent Office inquiry, ‘I never knew a negro to invent anything but lies’; and yet here is a record of 350 patents granted to black men since 1834” (576). These impressive statistics, originally represented in a series of graphs, continue to describe a “typical Southern State,” Georgia:

It would hardly be suggested, in the light of recent history, that conditions in the State of Georgia are such as to give a rose-colored picture of the Negro; and yet Georgia, having the largest Negro population, is an excellent field of study. Here again we have statistics: the increase of the black population in a century from 30,000 to 860,000,^{xxiii} the huddling in the Black Belt for self-protection since the war, and a comparison of the age distribution with France showing the wonderful reproductive powers of the blacks. The school enrollment has increased from 10,000 in 1870 to 180,000 in 1897, and the Negroes are distributed among the occupations as follows:

In agriculture, 62 per cent.; in domestic and personal service, 28 per cent.; in

manufacturing and mechanical industries, 5 per cent.; in trade and transportation, 4 1/2 per cent.; in the professions, 1/2 per cent. They own 1,000,000 acres of land and pay taxes on \$12,000,000 worth of property—not large, but telling figures; and the charts indicate, from year to year, the struggle they have had to accumulate and hold this property. (576)^{xxiv}

That Du Bois explicitly and favorably compares the “Black Belt” of America to developed European nations is not surprising when one sees the photographs. Over 350 in all, the photographs depict a great number of men and women in aristocratic finery; large and beautiful homes, shops, churches, and factories owned and operated by African Americans; and a great number of scenes taken from the laboratories and classrooms of universities such as Atlanta, Howard, Tuskegee, and Fisk. Moreover, the images greatly range in terms of geography, gender representation, and in the complexions of those represented.

Below, I present five broadly representative images.

Recovered from the Library of Congress Website, “5 female Negro officers of Women's League, Newport, R.I.” demonstrates Du Bois’s interest in representing the efficiency and organizational coherence of African American sub-interest groups, in this case presided over by politically engaged women in New England. A sense of uniformity, stability, and civility is reinforced by the poise, fashionable attire, facial expressions, and symmetrical arrangement of figures in the photo; perhaps notably, the darkest-skinned figure is at the photo’s center.



Likewise, “Dentistry at Howard University, Washington, D.C., ca. 1900” features African Americans of varying complexions, ages, and genders performing skilled intellectual labor in a highly stylized, urbane setting which suggests an air of refinement and cosmopolitanism:



In “Composing room of the *Planet* newspaper, Richmond, Virginia,” African American men, likewise dressed in professional attire, work in a printing press.



Du Bois includes several representative images of large, well-manicured, mansion-like homes, demonstrating the wealth and arguably *good taste* of their undoubtedly proud owners; in this case, one Bishop Gaines of Atlanta.



Finally, Du Bois provides images of several successful businesses owned by African-Americans; this is Coleman Manufacturing Company, “a Negro operated cotton mill” in North Carolina.



While one can only speculate as to who took these photos (they are all unattributed) or for what purpose—Du Bois does not elaborate on the details of their procurement, other than by suggesting that Thomas Calloway played some role in securing them—the highly stylized, tableau-like quality of the images suggests that in at least some cases, they may have been taken for the explicit purposes of the Exhibition. Whatever the motivation, the overwhelming impression one receives when looking at these photos, and while reading Du Bois’s accompanying text, is one of un-ironized progress and achievement. It might be argued that while the exhibit achieves, on the one hand, Du Bois’ goal of “[giving], in as systematic and compact a form as possible, the history and present condition of a large group of human beings,” it may likewise and simultaneously be read to serve as a public relations campaign for the face of the “new Negro,” a face hardly recognizable to most Americans themselves, as Du Bois wryly notes: “There are several volumes of photographs of *typical* Negro faces, which hardly square with conventional American ideas” (emphasis added).^{xxv}

While the selected photos cannot begin to represent the diversity of the exhibit—which also includes idyllic, pastoral images of African American workers in fields and in factories—not a single image chosen for the exhibition suggests racial violence, and very few of them even hint at racial inequality. Overwhelmingly, however, the photos indicate that African Americans at the time were living in conditions of institutionally entrenched, if not altogether *uncomfortable*, racial segregation from whites. In short, the images and accompanying textual rhetoric would necessarily suggest to the European nations gathered at the Exposition that life for the “new Negro” was as variegated as life for Americans at large; that African Americans, too, wore fine clothes, owned fine homes

and shops, owned and worked for important businesses, obtained degrees, chaired societies, succeeded intellectually and entrepreneurially; and that measurable progress for African Americans could be demonstrably and overwhelmingly documented, possibly to the calculated surprise of those attending the exhibit.^{xxvi} In these ways, the photos and accompanying data posit African American progress in the form of compelling visual and sociological fact, which stood directly and defiantly in the face of the racist scientific dogma of the time.

As with his later work in *The Crisis*, the Exposition showcases Du Bois's interest in using various media, modes of address, and styles of critique to confront, in the language and guise of science, the biases of scientific enterprises that formed the foundations of American racist ideology. As the concluding section of this essay will demonstrate, Du Bois will temporarily sidestep this tactic in *The Souls of Black Folk* as he embarks on making a fraught case for the "new Negro" in explicitly literary terms.

V. "Progress" and Propaganda in *The Souls of Black Folk*

History is but the record of . . . group-leadership; and yet how infinitely changeful is its type and character! And of all types and kinds, what can be more instructive than the leadership of a group within a group?—that curious double movement where real progress may be negative and actual advance be relative retrogression. All this is the social student's inspiration and despair.

—Du Bois, "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others"^{xxvii}

In *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois articulates a decidedly more nuanced and outright troubling vision of progress, the political and public stakes of which may be best

understood in terms of his vexed relation to Booker T. Washington's vision of progress for African Americans.^{xxviii} In his chapter on Washington, Du Bois notes:

To gain the sympathy and cooperation of the various elements comprising the white South was Mr. Washington's first task; and this, at the time Tuskegee was founded, seemed, for a black man, well-nigh impossible. And yet ten years later it was done in the word spoken at Atlanta: "In all things purely social we can be as separate as the five fingers, and yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." (25)

In stark contrast to Washington's rhetoric of pragmatism, "accommodation," and interest in "mutual progress"—and in relatively stark contrast to the rhetoric of progress suggested in "The American Negro at Paris" and in the pages of *The Crisis*—Du Bois invokes "progress" in *Souls* in order to critique the very meaning and purpose of the term. The term, in noun and verb form, appears twenty-two times in the text and at three noteworthy intersections in the first chapter, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings":

1. The cold statistician wrote down the inches of progress here and there, noted also where here and there a foot had slipped or someone had fallen. (8)

2. But alas! while sociologists gleefully count ["the Negro's"] bastards and his prostitutes, the very soul of the toiling, sweating black man is darkened by the shadow of a vast despair. Men call the shadow prejudice, and learnedly explain it as the natural defense of culture against barbarism, learning against ignorance, purity against crime, the "higher" against the "lower" races. To which the Negro cries Amen! and swears that to so much of this strange prejudice as is founded on just homage to civilization, culture, righteousness, and progress, he humbly bows

and meekly does obeisance. (9)

3. Away with the black man's ballot, by force or fraud,—and behold the suicide of a race! Nevertheless, out of the evil came something of good,—the more careful adjustment of education to real life, the clearer perception of the Negroes' social responsibilities, and the sobering realization of the meaning of progress. (9)

In the first two instances, Du Bois invokes “progress” to demonstrate, primarily, how the term is used by scientists—“statisticians” and “sociologists”—to paint a certain, inaccurate picture of the lives of “American Negroes.” In the third instance, he suggests the term has either lost its “meaning,” that it no longer means what it might once have meant, or that it means something very particular to his subject of study.

The term is most subtly, powerfully, and pointedly ironized in the chapter “Of the Meaning of Progress,” in which it appears just three times, including the chapter title. Recalling his days as a schoolteacher in rural Tennessee, Du Bois invokes idyllic, sun-soaked language to paint a picture of his early manhood. He begins the chapter,

Once upon a time I taught school in the hills of Tennessee, where the broad dark vale of the Mississippi begins to roll and crumple to greet the Alleghanies. I was a Fisk student then, and all Fisk men thought that Tennessee—beyond the Veil—was theirs alone, and in vacation time they sallied forth in lusty bands to meet the county school-commissioners. Young and happy, I too went, and I shall not soon forget that summer, seventeen years ago. (35)

Given the polemical tone of the preceding and succeeding chapters, that Du Bois begins this one with a well-worn rhetorical cliché—“once upon a time”—immediately

indicates ironic distance between what he is saying and what he is describing. Moreover, the phrase indicates that what he is about to tell us is a *tale*, something that (however autobiographical) might be best understood in allegorical or fanciful terms. Rosy, Dickensian language of this sort dominates the chapter as Du Bois describes in gossipy detail various characters he encounters in the schoolhouse and town, including the Burkes and Dowells; principal among these characters is Josie, a “thin, homely girl of twenty, with a dark-brown face and thick, hard hair” (36). Even when Du Bois references violence, his tone remains whimsical, consistent with the rhetorical tradition of the fairy tale:

The mass of those to whom slavery was a dim recollection of childhood found the world a puzzling thing: it asked little of them, and they answered with little, and yet it ridiculed their offering.

Such a paradox they could not understand, and therefore sank into listless indifference, or shiftlessness, or reckless bravado. There were, however, some—such as Josie, Jim, and Ben—to whom War, Hell, and Slavery were but childhood tales, whose young appetites had been whetted to an edge by school and story and half-awakened thought. Ill could they be content, born without and beyond the World. And their weak wings beat against their barriers,—barriers of caste, of youth, of life; at last, in dangerous moments, against everything that opposed even a whim. (38)

Du Bois sustains the picturesque tone until he reveals, with no foreshadowing, what he discovers upon his return to the land beyond the “broad dark vale of the Mississippi” ten years later: “Josie was dead, and the gray-haired mother said simply,

‘We've had a heap of trouble since you've been away’” followed by the revelation, “My log schoolhouse was gone. In its place stood Progress; and Progress, I understand, is necessarily ugly” (39-40). Possibly recalling the cadence, vocabulary, punctuation, and somber tone of the concluding lines of Coleridge’s *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*,^{xxix} Du Bois concludes his own personal account both softly and fatally:

My journey was done, and behind me lay hill and dale, and Life and Death.
How shall man measure Progress there where the dark-faced Josie lies? How
many heartfuls of sorrow shall balance a bushel of wheat? How hard a thing is life
to the lowly, and yet how human and real! And all this life and love and strife and
failure,—is it the twilight of nightfall or the flush of some faint-dawning day?

Thus sadly musing, I rode to Nashville in the Jim Crow car. (41)

Eschewing the rhetoric of his sociological, journalistic, and polemical work, in “Of the Meaning of Progress,” Du Bois invokes and inverts trite poetic conventions to communicate sorrow in language that must be understood as intentionally stylized and stilted—in Baker’s words, a “voice ceaselessly [invoking] ancestral spirits and ancient formulas that move toward an act of cultural triumph” (121). In this way, the *cultural* and public relations work of “Progress” dovetails with Du Bois’s efforts at the Paris Exposition and anticipates the rhetoric of the *The Crisis*. Even so, at the level of rhetoric, “Progress” departs sharply, with finely controlled irony that guts the sentimental mode in which he performs his intervention, from the nakedly propagandistic agenda of his sociological and journalistic tracts. In short, the ironizing tone of the “sentimental” passages in “Progress” appropriates the schematics of the fairy tale to achieve two things. First, this tone draws attention to the mythologic features of discourses motivated by a

quest for “fact.” Simultaneously, Du Bois demonstrates that such a quest serves mainly to anoint the interests of a mode of “propaganda . . . confined to one side” that made scientific racism so compelling in its day.^{xxx}

While Josie’s tale is rendered such that we are left to guess as to the precise nature of her demise, in “Of the Coming of John,” the fate of the fictional hero of the tale is far more clearly articulated. Having left his rural home town of Altamaha to seek an education in the city, John solemnly attains double consciousness and apprehends the thickness of the Veil for the first time:

He grew slowly to feel almost for the first time the Veil that lay between him and the white world; he first noticed now the oppression that had not seemed oppression before, differences that erstwhile seemed natural, restraints and slights that in his boyhood days had gone unnoticed or been greeted with a laugh. (122)

Having received an education and experienced, however briefly, the “grave and gay” (122) pulse of life in New York, John decides to return home following a surprise encounter with his white “double,” a young man also named John from the same town, in a posh Manhattan theater. When John returns, he secures a position as a teacher from the Judge, “white John’s” father, who issues a warning:

Now I like the colored people, and sympathize with all their reasonable aspirations; but you and I both know, John, that in this country the Negro must remain subordinate, and can never expect to be the equal of white men. In their place, your people can be honest and respectful; and God knows, I'll do what I can to help them. But when they want to reverse nature, and rule white men, and marry white women, and sit in my parlor, then, by God! we'll hold them under if

we have to lynch every Nigger in the land. (126)

John accepts the position but is eventually fired for his subversive lectures, thus finding himself an alien in his own land. Shortly thereafter, he attacks and kills white John, whom he had witnessed molesting his sister. Toward the end of the tale, John stands on the edge of the sea, listening to the rage of a lynch mob approaching him. Unlike Josie, whose death is communicated plainly but not described in detail, John's death is foretold but not documented within the pages of the story. Humming along, notably, to Wagner's "Song of the Bride," John stands his ground as the mob approaches.

Amid the trees in the dim morning twilight he watched their shadows dancing and heard their horses thundering toward him, until at last they came sweeping like a storm, and he saw in front that haggard white-haired man, whose eyes flashed red with fury. Oh, how he pitied him,— pitied him,—and wondered if he had the coiling twisted rope. Then, as the storm burst round him, he rose slowly to his feet and turned his closed eyes toward the Sea.

And the world whistled in his ears. (130)

As in the concluding paragraph of "Progress," the word "twilight" is invoked to indicate a noumenal perceptual space that may suggest, in its paradoxical strangeness, the very dilemma of inhabiting double consciousness. The term may also suggest the ever-present possibility for those who inhabit double consciousness to become "eclipsed" by some unexpected, and thoroughly illogical, calamity. Yet, in suggesting that life-threatening concerns for black Americans would stubbornly persist into the twentieth century, "Of the Coming of John" allegorizes the existential crisis of the "new Negro" more vividly than any essay in *Souls*. In stark contrast to the vision of optimism and

progress depicted in the photos and accompanying captions of the 1900 Paris Exposition, “John,” like “Progress,” paints an ominous—one might even say cynical—picture for the future of Black America.

While Arnold Rampersad notes that the central concern of “John” is “the dilemma of the educated black aspirant to culture, whose strivings are frustrated by injustice” (75), the tale likewise and simultaneously critiques contemporary scientific discourses that had justified the logic of lynching, perhaps the most insidious of all doctrines inspired by the Social Darwinists. In 1914, the same year Du Bois critiques the reason of “racial antagonism” in *The Crisis*, sociologist L. F. Ward argued that lynching was merely a natural byproduct of evolution. According to Ward, the African American man pursued and raped white women as a consequence of the “unheard and imperious voice of nature commanding him at the risk of ‘lynch law’ to raise his race to a little higher level” (369-70). Summarizing Ward’s “rape / lynching” argument—which was not the only of its kind—Taylor notes,

Whites reacted violently because of an equally instinctive determination to protect their race from inferior strains . . . Although Ward demurred from the next logical step, the obvious conclusion was that a high incidence of lynching (not to mention raping) was inevitable and attempts to reduce it unnatural. Perhaps more clearly than any other issue, the rape argument illustrates the circular nature of evolutionary thought in the area of race theory. How do we know that the black man has rapist tendencies? Because he is inferior. How do we know that he inferior? Because he has rapist tendencies. (452)

The paradoxicality and absurdity of this argument, analogized in John’s plight and

murder and suggested, darkly, in the death of Josie, returns us full-circle to Du Bois's response to Stoddard in the 1929 debate. Here Stoddard and the entire enterprise of scientific racism receive Du Bois's most finely tuned and truculent criticism, with a poise and rhetorical fury unmatched in his polemical writings.

. . . [The Nordic] Program is the subjection and rulership of the world for the benefit of the Nordics. They have overrun the earth and brought not simply modern civilization and technique, but with it exploitation, slavery and degradation to the majority of men. They have broken down native family life, desecrated homes of weaker peoples and spread their bastards over every corner of land and sea. They have been responsible for more intermixture of races than any other people, ancient or modern, and they have inflicted this miscegenation on helpless, unwilling slaves by force, fraud and insult; and this is the folk that today has the impudence to turn on the darker races when they demand a share of civilization, and cry: "You shall not marry our daughters!"

The blunt, crude reply is: Who in hell asked to marry your daughters? If this race problem must be reduced to a matter of sex, what we demand is the right to protect the decency of our own daughters. (40)

Twenty-nine years after the publication of *Souls*, Du Bois once again finds himself mired in a battle of rhetorical maneuvering in which rationality is invoked to construct an agenda for social inequity and racialized hatred. In this way, double consciousness reflects, in practice, the multiplicity of modes—from the polemical to the scientific to the literary—in which he would engage in order to expose the unreasonableness of the scientifically-motivated racist doctrines of his time. As in "Of

the Coming of John,” racial antipathy becomes in public discourse the means by which the aspirations of the “new Negro” envisioned in the 1900 Paris Exposition might be quashed by violences rooted in a logic seemingly outside of logic itself. Between and across genres and medias, then, Du Bois deploys and inhabits double consciousness as a rhetorical strategy that responds performatively, at times even *playfully*, to the dire ethical and existential dilemma presented by discourses of scientific racism.

Notes:

ⁱ Du Bois, “Philadelphia,” 1.

ⁱⁱ Du Bois presents several other notable philosophical terms in this work, including his notion of “the color line” and “the Veil.” As I see it, the former term does not bear substantially upon “double consciousness,” while the latter is an at-times implicit and at-times explicit component of this theory. Therefore, I will not discuss “the color line,” and I will treat the “the Veil” as a component feature of “double consciousness.”

ⁱⁱⁱ A charitable reading would grant that Du Bois is engaging in rhetorical posturing in this passage. In several chapters of *Souls*, the sensation of double consciousness and the apprehension of the “veil” come about as revelations to his fictional and autobiographical characters. As my reading of “Of the Coming of John” will indicate, the fictional hero of the tale solemnly attains double consciousness and apprehends the thickness of the “Veil” for the first time as an adult. Whether or not John was “born with a veil,” that is, he notably does not become *aware* of the presence of this veil until he experiences racism as a young man outside of his home town. Therefore, double consciousness is a product of experience in the world, and particularly, experience within a racist world; it is not something one is “born with,” whether or not one is marked as a black subject at birth. On the basis of this and similar passages in “Of the Meaning of Progress,” I shall regard the notion of double consciousness as a socially constructed (i.e., non-innate) sense of perception that manifests, seemingly as in the form of a revelation, through the experience of racism.

^{iv} In *Souls*, Du Bois does not speak of the ways in which his theorization of double consciousness may impact members of the other “races” he identifies. That is, he is

concerned specifically with African American identity. Yet, it can be assumed that the process of historical change that may potentially shift the dilemma of “the Negro” may also be applied to the other races specified; or that these other races, in different (i.e., hypothetical) historical circumstances, may also have been afflicted with the same dilemma.

^v I use the masculine pronoun here merely to retain consistency with Du Bois’s language and his figure of the “seventh son.”

^{vi} In *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*, Houston Baker deploys a powerful conceptual matrix that may have been engendered by or derived from this particular dilemma. In *Modernism*, Baker elucidates the variously accommodationalist and revolutionary strategies adopted by Harlem Renaissance and “proto” / “para”-Harlem Renaissance writers such as Du Bois and Booker T. Washington. Baker’s first key term, “the mastery of form,” designates the process by which figures such as Washington and Charles Chestnut adopted in their writings rhetorics of “minstrelsy” to gain the favor of a white reading audience. Baker notes that Washington’s “adoption of tones and types” was a tactic designed “to keep his audience tuned in” (30); and that “these tones and types . . . are reassuring sounds from the black quarters. Although the narrator [of Washington’s autobiography] may be stunningly capable of standard English phraseology, crafty political analyses, and smooth verbal gymnastics . . . there can be no worry that the Negro is getting ‘out of hand.’ For at all proper turns, there are comforting sounds and figures of a minstrel theater that we know so well” (30-31). Thus, one may read the “pretence” and “hypocrisy” of figures such as Washington as both a symptom of double consciousness and as a decision to retreat “within the Veil.” The corollary term in

Baker's conceptual lexicon is the "deformation of mastery," exemplified by "radicals" such as Du Bois. Baker notes: "The deformation of mastery refuses a master's nonsense. It returns—often transmuting 'standard' syllables—to the common sense of the tribe. Its relationship to masks is radically different from that of the mastery of form. The spirit house occupying the deformer is not minstrelsy, but the sound and space of an African ancestral past" (56). Thus, one may read the "revolt" and "radicalism" of figures such as Du Bois and Paul Lawrence Dunbar as symptoms of double consciousness and as decisions to *tear down* or "escape from" the same veil behind which figures such as Washington may have conducted a "hypocritical" retreat.

^{vii} Elsewhere, especially in *The Crisis*, Du Bois refers to the ways in which racism and white supremicisism have negatively impacted those of "yellow" and other skin tones. However, in *The Souls of Black Folk*, where double consciousness is defined and deployed, Du Bois focuses specifically on the problem of anti-Black racism in the United States. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain if, according to Du Bois, double consciousness is a perceptual mode or ethical dilemma that may be inhabited by other non-whites living in the United States or elsewhere. Moreover, it is difficult to determine if double consciousness is possible for those with *black* skin living in prior historical periods or in other geographical locations, though one can assume that the dilemma Du Bois presents may also be applied to other anti-Black racist cultures, such as early twentieth century Europe.

^{viii} To be more precise: double consciousness may anticipate not only Fanon's declaration of black existence as being mere "facticity" stripped of "transcendence" (*Black Skin*, 109), but also key aspects of Sartrean existential philosophy to which Fanon is admittedly

indebted. In being rendered as mere object, Fanon describes in “The Fact of Blackness” the process whereby he is reduced to “facticity,” the very “fact of [his] blackness.” This presents an existential dilemma: for it is in and through this process of objectification that one loses access to the key “liberating” component of existential being, “transcendence.”

At this juncture, it is important to define and locate Fanon’s use of these terms. First, “facticity” designates the myriad physical, social, psychological, and historical properties of an individual that one can ascertain through third-person observation; such “facts” may include observations regarding one’s bodily appearance, system of beliefs, intellectual abilities, historical experiences, and so on. While one’s facticity may, on some level, delineate the ways in which the world outside the individual chooses to perceive, define, and categorize that individual, one’s existence ought not, in existential terms, be limited to or defined strictly in relation to one’s factic attributes. The reason for this is that one’s being cannot be properly or wholly relegated to those aspects of one’s identity to which only the outside world, or the third-person observer, has access; this would deny that the individual possesses an irreducibly unique character, something that cannot be “pinned down” or known strictly in factic terms. This would also deny that the individual who possesses these attributes has a stance or attitude *toward* those terms. The position one takes towards one’s facticity is what is regarded as “transcendence,” defined by Taylor Carman as “the free, future-directed, first-person, conscious relation in which I stand to the world, including my own facticity. My facticity provides the setting and context of my transcendence, but my transcendence in turn determines what is important and salient for me in my facticity” (Carman, 236). In terms of racial identity, then, “transcendence” designates the process whereby a racialized subject may escape self-definition strictly in

terms of one's brute facticity, or those somatic (and other) markings that the external world imposes upon non-white individuals.

In both Sartrean and Fanonian existentialism, one who "allows" oneself to be stripped of transcendence may be guilty of what Sartre refers to as "bad faith." One partakes in bad faith when one permits oneself to make decisions and determinations by denying either or both one's facticity or transcendence. In short, one who engages in bad faith may be said to engage in processes whereby one self-identifies and acts solely in terms of one's capacity to transcend while denying one's facticity (as in Sartre's example of the "woman seduced"), or whereby one self-identifies and acts solely in terms of one's facticity while denying one's transcendence (as in Sartre's example of the "garçon de café," invoked by both Fanon and Ian Hacking in his seminal essay, "Making Up People" [1986]). In other words, one engages in bad faith when participating in processes of *self-deception* with regard to one's factic attributes or one's authentic attitude toward those attributes, or when one seeks intentionally to deceive others by denying or exaggerating aspects of either one's facticity or transcendence.

In *Black Skin*, Fanon develops a theory of identity that posits skin color as an essential, and perhaps immutable, component of one's ability to transcend facticity. This inability to transcend facticity, imposed upon the black individual from without, may preclude recognition and interrogation of bad faith. Like Du Bois, Fanon presents a model of racial identity based upon a perceptual mode—rooted also in optics—that creates, in turn, a profound ethical dilemma for the black-skinned individual. However, Fanon does not, in "The Fact of Blackness," trace the precise ethical implications of this dilemma; unlike Du Bois, he does not describe the dilemma as necessarily producing a

subject who must choose between (for example) either “hypocrisy” or “radicalism.” The distinction at this level strikes me as trivial; overwhelmingly, both double consciousness and Fanonian existentialism posit the notion of bad faith as a potentially inescapable condition of existence for black-skinned individuals “overdetermined from without” (Fanon, 115) in a racist culture that would reduce them to brute facticity. In this way, the Sartrean notion of “bad faith” strikes me as being implicit within Du Bois’s model of double consciousness, despite the fact that Du Bois did not use this term and could not have considered himself, in 1903, an “existentialist” per se. See “The Fact of Blackness” in *Black Skin* and Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness*.

^{ix} Grant, 226.

^x All quoted passages in *The Crisis* taken from *The Modernist Journals Project. The Crisis*, Volume 8, No. 14. 1914, pg. 232-33. Web. 232.

^{xi} *Ibid.*, 232.

^{xii} Du Bois, “Paris,” 575.

^{xiii} *Crisis*, 233.

^{xiv} *Ibid.*, 233.

^{xv} *Ibid.*, 233.

^{xvi} Du Bois, “Paris,” 575.

^{xvii} In a section endnote in *The Philadelphia Negro*, Du Bois notes: “I shall throughout this study use the term ‘Negro,’ to designate all persons of Negro descent, although the appellation is to some extent illogical. I shall, moreover, capitalize the word, because I believe that eight million Americans are entitled to a capital letter” (x).

^{xviii} Du Bois, “Paris,” 575.

^{xix} Ibid., 576.

^{xx} Ibid., 575.

^{xxi} Library of Congress. "African American Photographs Assembled for 1900 Paris Exposition." Web. See http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/anedub/Du_Bois.html

^{xxii} Du Bois, "Paris," 576.

^{xxiii} The apparent discrepancy with figures in the earlier block quotation taken from the same paper may be explained thus: in the first instance, Du Bois was referring to the number of blacks in Georgia through 1890; in this instance, he's referring to the "present" number.

^{xxiv} It should be noted that this data appears again in Du Bois's Atlanta University studies in *Dusk of Dawn*.

^{xxv} Ibid., 577.

^{xxvi} According to remarks Du Bois makes in *Souls*, he clearly had strong European sympathies at this time. When he writes in *Souls* of "being a problem," he notes, "being a problem is a strange experience,—peculiar even for one who has never been anything else, save perhaps in babyhood and in Europe" (9).

^{xxvii} Du Bois, *Souls*, 27.

^{xxviii} Interestingly, despite Du Bois's vehement critique of Washington, he seems to have initially supported Washington's Atlanta speech in a brief note written to him in 1895. An excerpt of the official note appended to the image on Library of Congress Website: "Although W.E.B. Du Bois would later publish a pointed challenge to Booker T. Washington's philosophy in his *Souls*, at the time of Washington's Atlanta speech, Du Bois wrote this letter to express his congratulations." See "Du Bois Congratulates

Washington on Atlanta Speech”:

<http://myloc.gov/Exhibitions/naacp/prelude/ExhibitObjects/DuBoisCongratulates.aspx>.

^{xxix} Note these stanzas of Coleridge’s poem (excerpted from Norton), which has in recent years received the attention of trauma theorists:

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell

To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!

He prayeth well, who loveth well

Both man and bird and beast. (610-13)

. . .

He went like one that hath been stunned,

And is of sense forlorn:

A sadder and a wiser man,

He rose the morrow morn. (622-25)

^{xxx} I do not mean to suggest that such arguments are no longer being made or that they no longer carry force in domains of public perception and public policy. An exhausting list of such work might be cited, though Richard Herrnstein’s *The Bell Curve* is one such study in a long and vexing trajectory demonstrating that discourses of scientific racism persist, in largely unmodified form, to the present day.

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