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Summer 2002

# Du Boisian Double Consciousness: The Unsustainable Argument

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*Ernest Allen, Jr.*

## Du Boisian Double Consciousness: The Unsustainable Argument★

It was in his essay “Strivings of the Negro People,” appearing in *The Atlantic Monthly* in late 1897, that W.E.B. Du Bois first advanced the notion of Afro-American “double consciousness.” Six years later that same essay, slightly modified and rechristened with the title “Of Our Spiritual Strivings,” became the initial chapter of his newly published *Souls of Black Folk*.<sup>1</sup> But then, immediately following that auspicious publishing event, Du Boisian double consciousness was put up for adoption by its creator, sporadically commented upon over the years (mostly by white academicians), and then curiously redeemed by Afro-American scholars in the decades following Du Bois’ departure from this world in 1963.

The present essay is concerned with three main issues: first, what, precisely, was Du Bois’ concept of double consciousness? Secondly, why did he choose to advance that particular notion in 1897 and then subsequently fail to elaborate upon it? And thirdly, if it is true, as I argue in this essay, that Du Bois’ formulation of double consciousness was little more than *double sleight of hand*, what does such a conclusion imply for the actual existence of an Afro-American double consciousness at the turn of the last century—or even today?

### MISREADINGS OF DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS

The first objection to the above characterization will arrive, no doubt, from those who have misconstrued Du Boisian double consciousness as a broad-based Afro-American *cultural* dilemma. That so many contemporary “blackademics” and others have

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shown themselves capable of *misreading* Du Bois' writings in this fashion is, in itself, a topic worthy of further investigation. Subsequently we shall see that a general pattern of misinterpretation extends as far back as the World War I era. A recent example is Gerald Early's edited work, *Lure and Loathing*, wherein many of the essays seem to take for granted Early's assertion that Du Boisian double consciousness refers to a tension between the "nationalist and assimilated collective identity" of Afro-Americans, but where the concept of identity itself is conflated with "culture" drawn in broad, anthropological terms.<sup>2</sup> The problem is that late 19th-century Afro-American intellectuals were already culturally assimilated Americans whose nationalist leanings, when expressed in what we today would call "cultural" terms, mainly took the form of vindicationist histories extolling the accomplishments of peoples of African descent. Undergoing expansion during the New Negro Renaissance period, Afro-American cultural nationalism began to find additional expression through the medium of literature and poetry.<sup>3</sup> But a broad-based cultural nationalism anchored in the anthropological concept of an Afro-American "way of life"—anticipated, to be sure, in the writings of Zora Neale Hurston and Paul Robeson during the 1930s—would have to await the outpourings of culturally assimilated Afro-American anti-assimilationists of the 1960s.<sup>4</sup> Although it is possible to conceive of an African American double consciousness in a broad anthropological sense—many have done so over the past several decades, and, stripped of its historical context, Du Bois' work can certainly be *read* in such a manner today—that is emphatically *not* how Du Bois himself viewed the matter. Rather, his concerns appear far narrower, focusing instead on what he considered as conflicts engendered by (unspecified) double thoughts, (equally unspecified) double strivings, (vaguely defined) double aims, and (comparatively well articulated) double ideals, a subject to which we shall return. In late 19th Century America, however, there existed no concept to express the kind of cultural conflict that many of today's academics have tried to impose upon Du Bois' earlier views of the world. In the English language, for example, the

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term “culture” at the turn of the last century was overwhelmingly synonymous with two concepts: what we would today call the arts, and with the notion of individual “cultivation” of behavior, dress, and aesthetic taste—hallmarks of civilization—and associated principally with the behavior of elites.<sup>5</sup> All else was barbarism. And a moment’s reflection upon the overall value orientation of the educated black elite at the turn of the last century will serve to disabuse oneself of any idea that this class was burdened with a divided cultural consciousness framed by either of these narrow meanings. Sensing little “cultural” identification at all with the lives of the mass of black folk, the so-called Talented Tenth accepted as “universal” a set of values which by the 1930s would be ultimately acknowledged by Du Bois, Carter G. Woodson, and others as thoroughly Eurocentric.<sup>6</sup>

Historian Willard B. Gatewood Jr. describes the overriding set of values that governed the behavior of the educated black elite at the turn of the century:

Reared in homes that placed a premium on middle-class values and a Victorian code of behavior, they then often attended schools and colleges in which white New England faculties stressed the same kind of virtues and pieties. The pattern of education found at Oberlin, Fisk, Atlanta University, and Howard also prevailed in numerous other schools, black and white, throughout the nation; the objectives, ideologies, and even faculties were strikingly similar. The curricula devoted virtually no attention to the cultural heritage of Africa, but emphasized Anglo-Saxon or American culture. The educational experience of the black upper class, then, conspired to mold it into a replica of middle- and upper-class white America. Its values, style of living, and patterns of behavior, collectively known as “respectability” and highly prized in the black community, bore a remarkable resemblance to those of “respectable” white Americans. Elite blacks were educated to take a paternalistic view toward blacks less fortunate than themselves, in much the same way as the well-educated, white New England teachers and professors had often manifested toward them.<sup>7</sup>

The devalued status of Afro-American life within the university curriculum was also remarked upon by Booker T. Washington following his conversation with a group of some twenty-five

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black Harvard students:

...I found that through their entire course of training, neither in the public schools, nor in the fitting schools, nor in Harvard, had any of them had an opportunity to study the history of their own race. In regard to the people with which they themselves were most closely identified, they were more ignorant than they were in regard to the history of the Germans, the French, or the English.<sup>8</sup>

Thus any suggestion that members of the tiny, educated elite among Afro-Americans were somehow torn between the values of, on the one hand, upper- or middle-class whites and, on the other, those of black sharecroppers, domestics, and other working people (that is, as one might say today, between a Eurocentric and an Afrocentric cultural orientation) is, quite simply, a proposition unsupported by the evidence.

However, despite the fact that the concept of culture as a “way of life” had not yet entered into the American vocabulary, there did exist at the time a notion of perceived group intrinsicity which eventually came to overlap that of the anthropological construct—and that was the notion of “national character traits.”<sup>9</sup> Western thinkers of the 18th and 19th Centuries commonly assumed that each nationality or race (the terms were commonly interchanged) was enamored of specific traits, generally differing in kind from those of others.<sup>10</sup> Echoing this sentiment, James Weldon Johnson, for example, remarked in 1900 that “the Negro and the white race, although they have the same inherent powers, possess widely different characteristics. There are some things which the white race can do better than the Negro, and there are some things which the Negro can do better than the white race. This is no disparagement to either.”<sup>11</sup> And it is true that Du Bois occasionally drew salient contrasts between what he perceived as African American character traits and those of the dominant American population. But he held such differences to be *complementary* rather than incompatible in nature, specifically rejecting the thought that any kind of warring incongruities existed between them. In “Strivings,” for example, Du Bois spoke of:

the ideal of fostering and developing the traits and talents of the

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Negro, not in opposition to, but in conformity with, the greater ideals of the American Republic, in order that some day, on American soil, two world races may give to each other those characteristics which both so sadly lack.<sup>12</sup>

Thus when in 1924 he declared himself in favor of what he termed a “sensuous, tropical love of life” manifested by blacks, and then contrasted that quality to the emotional distancing of a “cool and cautious New England reason,”<sup>13</sup> such juxtaposing should not be “ventriloquisted” to say that he considered sensuality to be a constituent element of some warring ideal-pair. Rather—and whatever one may think of such characterizations today—Du Bois treated the contrasting attributes of “black sensuality” and “white reason” as reciprocal qualities. Each group possessed what the other lacked: the Negro “would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world.”<sup>14</sup> A bridging of the gulf which separated such traits would eventually yield a complex unity of opposites. And since Du Bois failed to view the relationship between such opposing qualities in an antagonistic light, it is difficult to make the case that he envisioned “black sensuality” and “white reason” locked in some kind of life and death struggle inside the brain-pan of the suffering Negro.

Based on such examples of comparative “character traits” that Du Bois detailed some thirty years after the publication of “Strivings,” however, political scientist Adolph L. Reed Jr. recently concluded that Du Bois’ concept of double consciousness was “an expression of his antinomical commitment to what he perceived to be the Dionysian attractions of black culture and the Apollonian virtues of European civilization.”<sup>15</sup> While there can be no disagreement with the fact that the Talented Tenth embraced “Apollonian virtues” as a product of their upper-level schooling, that very process of socialization, as historian Willard B. Gatewood Jr. indicates, tended to dispel whatever “Dionysian attractions” such ascribed black character traits may have held for them. But given this lopsided Apollonian victory, how was it possible for the talented ones to experience “two souls dwelling

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in one?" So much for the cultural interpretations ascribed Du Boisian double consciousness, whether viewed through the optic of dissimilar ways of life, discordant character traits, or differences in artistic production.

**DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS: LITERARY AND MEDICAL EXPRESSIONS**

The concept of double consciousness, of course, was hardly unique to Du Bois. So many scholarly inquiries regarding the topic of "doubling" and the "divided self" have been carried out in this area as of recent, that a brief summary is all that is needed here.<sup>16</sup> One scholar who has helped to place Du Bois in his Nineteenth Century context is Dickson D. Bruce Jr. Bruce, too, essentially replicates the error of Reed and others when he characterizes Du Boisian double consciousness as an "internal conflict in the African American individual, between what was 'African' and what was 'American,'"<sup>17</sup> But his identifying of the two main schools of thought for the concept itself, and of their overarching influence upon Du Bois' own unique concept continues to provide a useful introduction to the topic. In short, Bruce locates one of those sources in the literary traditions of European Romanticism and American Transcendentalism; the other in the psychological research of the period.

Whether literary or clinical in expression, the growing fascination with the subject of the double and the divided self in Western Europe and the United States throughout the Nineteenth Century had mostly to do with formidable physical and spiritual dislocations experienced by individuals at the hands of modernity: industrialization, urbanization, and corresponding cultural changes befitting new modes of social organization. Often drawing upon oppositional constructs inherited from early Christianity, such expressions might assume, as with Paul or St. Augustine, a tension between the flesh and the sacred, or between nature and spirit, respectively.<sup>18</sup> Or perhaps a theme rather common to Romanticism: a counterposing of the quotidian to the ethereal, of everyday life to thoughts of the sublime. Such were the complaints, for example, of Goethe's Faust, wherein lie

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tantalizing suspicions of a possible forbearer of the Du Boisian version:

Two souls, alas, reside within my breast, and each is eager for a separation: in throes of coarse desire, one grips the earth with all its senses; the other struggles from the dust to rise to high ancestral spheres. If there are spirits in the air who hold domain between this world and heaven—out of your golden haze descend, transport me to a new and brighter life!<sup>19</sup>

Such *Angst* was comparable to the phenomenon of religious melancholy noted by William James in his 1902 lecture on “The Divided Self:” “man’s interior is a battle-ground for what he feels to be two deadly hostile selves,” wrote James, “one actual, the other ideal.”<sup>20</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson employed “double consciousness” in a multitude of ways: to signify a felt tension between the individual and society as well as between the oppositional pulls of fate and liberty (or necessity and freedom), and, in a more elevated sense, to signify the division between the mortal and immortal selves of the individual. More descriptively, he also spoke of the “double consciousness” of dreams, as well as instances when “the man and the poet show like a double consciousness.”<sup>21</sup>

Widely differing concepts of double consciousness, antagonistic ideals, and psychic despair were all, so to speak, “in the air” at the turn of the Nineteenth Century, thereby providing a number of overlapping and sometimes mutually incompatible paradigms for Du Bois to draw upon while executing his own unique take on them. Not only Goethe, but Emerson, James, Henry David Thoreau, Robert Louis Stevenson, George Eliot, and scores of other Nineteenth Century literary figures engaged the drama of the divided self through literature or psychological discourse. Apart from Goethe’s *Faust*, one also finds in Du Boisian two-ness, for example, echoes of the internally competing psychic states in the medical model of double consciousness elaborated by James and others, where one’s social selves became separated from one another.<sup>22</sup> But we also should emphasize that in no ways might Du Boisian double consciousness be reduced to the content of any of its predecessors.

**ALTERNATE SOURCE OF ANGUISH: THE AGONY OF MIS-  
RECOGNITION**

However formulated, what all of these diverse expressions of double consciousness—including that of Du Bois—held in common was a sense of unresolved *angst*. Whether African Americans actually suffered a strain of double consciousness is a matter yet to be determined here. But it is essential to point out that an altogether different and powerful source of psychic distress in the souls of black folk could be found in a process of *misrecognition*, or disrespect encountered on a daily basis—that is, in the general refusal on the part of whites to acknowledge the humanity of blacks. Some of the external prejudices against poor, impoverished Black Americans might even be justified, a conservative-minded Du Bois acknowledged, but the systematic humiliation black people faced on a daily basis was something else again:

But before that nameless prejudice that leaps beyond all this he stands helpless, dismayed, and well-nigh speechless; before that personal disrespect and mockery, the ridicule and systematic humiliation, the distortion of fact and wanton license of fancy, the cynical ignoring of the better and boisterous welcoming of the worse, the all-pervading desire to inculcate disdain for everything black, from Toussaint to the devil,—before this there rises a sickening despair that would disarm and discourage any nation save that black host to whom “discouragement” is an unwritten word.<sup>23</sup>

This despair was an expression of the anguish experienced by African Americans who could not help but have internalized at least some of the negative sentiments that white society held towards them. The perils of such distorted self-consciousness among blacks did not pass unrecognized by other educated Afro-Americans at the turn of the last century. E.A. Johnson, for example, remarked upon “the danger in teaching a race or an individual to accept the estimate others may put on them.” He noted that the “American system of treating Negroes has made the Negro in many places think he was a good-for-nothing, and he has accepted that classification of himself and seeks in many instances to appear good-for-nothing.”<sup>24</sup> Anticipating Carter G.

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Woodson's "miseducation of the Negro" thesis by more than a generation, Nathan B. Young singled out for criticism the scholastic training of black youth:

From a tutelage whose spirit, wittingly or unwittingly is anti-Negro, many Negro youths return from college and seminary with despair settled down upon their soul—a despair brooded in a partial, and oftentimes, prejudicial reading and interpretation of philosophical formula and historical data. Their minds are stored with half truths, more mischievous and misleading than bold error. With these as premises, they proceed to argue themselves into the belief that theirs is an impotent race, so conditioned and prescribed by a civilization to which it has made no contribution, that it is impossible to form or to pursue any distinctive race ideal.<sup>25</sup>

Responding to Young's analysis, Edward W. Blyden characterized the problem as one of "false consciousness."<sup>26</sup> The agony and despair often resulting from such negative conceptions of self bore a rough resemblance to the clinical version of double consciousness as well. But only Du Bois chose to characterize African American mental distress as consciousness divided.

#### **THE AGONY OF THE DIVIDED SELF: THREE ARGUMENTS**

The question before us is how Du Bois himself defined double consciousness. But quickly we discover that our quest for answers tends to be frustrated by enigmatic references, seductive prose largely lacking in analytical fortitude, as well as inadequate examples. Contributing to this evasive quality as well were the multiple expressions of Afro-American duality given attention in his work. Between 1897 and 1900 Du Bois elaborated three altogether different scenarios—two of which were ultimately incorporated into *Souls*—where black folk were described as being irreparably torn between their Negro-ness and their American-ness. Take Du Bois' "Conservation" essay, for example:

Am I an American or am I a Negro? Can I be both? Or is it my duty to cease to be a Negro as soon as possible and be an American? If I strive as a Negro, am I not perpetuating that very cleft that threatens and separates Black and White America? Is not my only possible practical aim the subduction of all that is Negro in me to the American? Does my black blood place upon me any more obligation to assert my nationality than German, or Irish or Italian blood

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would?<sup>27</sup>

Here Du Bois seems to indicate a fundamental discord between a simultaneously held American national-civic identity and a Negro group identity—hinting, without benefit of example, at the existence of fundamental *political* differences at the heart of the issue. Keep this example in mind, for it is one to which we shall return at the end of this paper.

A second configuration was to be found in the later reworked and renamed journal article, “The Religion of the American Negro,” which subsequently became “Of the Faith of Our Fathers” in the tenth chapter of *Souls*:

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 presence or revolt, to hypocrisy or radicalism.<sup>28</sup>

Manifesting a pattern characteristic of our next example as well, Du Bois superimposes one type of agony—that of double consciousness—upon yet another: anguished feelings of inadequacy generated during times of social upheaval. While the overall description is close to that of the preceding example, the seed of discord in this instance is linked to rapid changes in late Nineteenth Century American life.<sup>29</sup> According to Du Bois, such transformations severely undermined the aims and ideals of Afro-Americans, if not their very sense of collective identity, but an identity already assumed to be troubled by duality. Describing Black Americans as being preoccupied with the issues of their inner community life, yet broadly influenced by the “religious and ethical forces” of the country as a whole, Du Bois comes closest here to advancing the proposition that black folk were experiencing what we might denote today as “cultural conflict.”

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But although no concrete illustrations accompanied this depiction of competing aims, it is likely that by “religious and ethical forces” Du Bois was simply referring to his earlier invoked ethical ideals.

The best known of the three examples, of course, came originally from that marvelously enigmatic passage of “Strivings”:

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.<sup>30</sup>

And because the “Strivings” essay contained the only scenario actually graced by Du Bois with the label “double consciousness,” we shall be directing our primary attention here.

The passage in “Strivings” cited above contains a juxtaposition of two modes of purported psychic turmoil which Du Bois insisted on treating as a single phenomenon—two agonies dwelling in one, as it were. Here the source of internal conflict is unclear: does the disturbance in black folks’ psyches reside in the *internalization of contemptuous ideas* which the world has of them? or is it rather to be located in sets of *conflicting thoughts, strivings, and ideals* which they simultaneously hold? Let us return to the first line of that passage:

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.

This reference to looking at one’s self through the eyes of disdainful others invokes the psychology of William James, one of Du Bois’ Harvard mentors, as well as the phenomenology of Georg W. Hegel: *the realization that each of us derives his or her sense of self through interaction with other human beings, through coming to view our individual selves as others see us, and that the refusal of others to acknowledge our humanity or existence may trigger in us a sense of apprehension or anguish.*<sup>31</sup> However, the “peculiar sensation” to

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which Du Bois refers could not possibly be the outcome of simply “looking at oneself through the eyes of others,” which is normative to the intersubjective process, but presumably arises when such measurement results in a self-questioning of one’s intrinsic worth.

Although *negated* or *distorted* self-consciousness would seem a far more appropriate label, the initial process depicted by Du Bois can be grudgingly regarded as a double consciousness of sorts, in that consciousness of self—negated, distorted, or otherwise—is established through that of another. But whatever the nomenclature, this form of consciousness should *not* be confused with a much different process highlighted in the remaining portion of the above, celebrated passage:

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.

This second section invokes an image of psychic despair comparable to that which consumed Goethe’s Faust. But there exists, as we say, a perilous “disconnect” between the two sections of Du Bois’ text: one the one hand, an anguish resulting from one’s humanity having been systematically denied; on the other, a tortured clash of thoughts, strivings, and ideals in the minds of Negro Americans seeking to affirm both their American and Negro identities. The first stems from the refusal of whites to recognize blacks as human beings; the second, from their refusal to acknowledge blacks as American citizens while at the same time holding them to the responsibilities of citizenship. Although the second disclaimer is assuredly rooted in the first, they are not the same thing. Yet here the resulting, distorted consciousness and *Angst* associated with one type of experience is haphazardly merged with the corresponding anguish of yet another. This creative and indiscriminate mixing of oranges and tangerines allowed Du Bois to transform an acknowledged social problem—that of securing recognition and concomitant self-respect for Afro-Americans in general—into a far more esoteric one involving resolution of the supposed double consciousness of the

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Talented Tenth. Touted on the one hand as a phenomenon experienced by all Afro-Americans, the manner in which this double consciousness became a problem uniquely identified with the educated elite occurred by way of a second maneuver: Du Bois' selection of a narrow set of examples to illustrate his argument.

#### **WARRING THOUGHTS, STRIVINGS, IDEALS: HOW DEFINED?**

The conflicted double consciousness of the Black American was, according to Du Bois, rooted in warring thoughts, aims, strivings, and ideals. But how were such entities defined? However specified, it seems to me, certain conditions would have had to be met: a set of warring thoughts and experiences anchored in the divided experience of being both black and American; their internalization in the minds of Afro-Americans themselves; and, finally, a torturous and eternal agony resulting from their irreconciliation. Only two areas of inquiry show much promise in this regard: the various definitions of Du Boisian ideals which we find scattered throughout *Souls* as well as subsequent publications; and a handful of examples from the first chapter of *Souls* illustrating the practical manifestations of double consciousness.

Du Bois' references to "thoughts" are much too broad to be meaningful to any discussion of double consciousness, as are those of "stirrings." Du Boisian "aims" are also vague, but more likely to appear in the form of concrete examples. On the other hand, Du Bois also frequently invoked the concept of ethical ideals in this regard, which elsewhere in *Souls* he defined as "broad, pure, and inspiring ends of living."<sup>32</sup> In the "Strivings" essay (and delineated more clearly here than in the edited first chapter of *Souls* that it eventually became), Du Bois spoke approvingly of the "ideals of physical freedom, of political power, of school training," of "work, culture, and liberty," and of "race."<sup>33</sup> Expressly written for inclusion in *Souls*, its fifth chapter, "Of the Wings of Atalanta," praised the ideals of Goodness, Beauty, and Truth, of Freedom and Right, of Patience, Humility, Manners, and Taste.<sup>34</sup> There were also ideals incapable of expression under a single motif, such as, for example, "the strife for another and

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juster world, the vague dream of righteousness, the mystery of knowing.” And while lauding the Gospel of Sacrifice, Du Bois also bemoaned the fouling of the Gospel of Work by the Gospel of Pay.<sup>35</sup>

Now, just where are the conflicting ideals? It is apparent from these examples that the highest black ideals envisioned by Du Bois were *identical* to those of educated whites. And Du Bois himself makes this point clear in his 1905 essay, “The Negro Ideals of Life:”

If now once this great ground principle is fixed, that negroes are men,—an indivisible part of that great humanity which works and aspires,—then what are the ideals of life that interest them in common with other men? To ask that question is to answer it. They are the same. They, with all men, strive to know and to do, to organize and to dream, to fight in that great battle of the west in the glow of the setting sun.<sup>36</sup>

But Du Boisian double consciousness was largely predicated on the existence of conflict between ideals associated with being Negro and a different set of ideals associated with being American. If such conflict cannot be demonstrated, if no warring ideals can be produced, what does that fact portend for the existence of double consciousness? Du Bois circumvented this little difficulty by inventing what I have variously termed *lesser* ideals and *compromised* ideals: ideals in name, but lacking the moral authority of his more frequently invoked ethical standards such as Goodness, Beauty, and Truth. What Du Bois was attempting to accomplish by portraying Afro-American double consciousness as rooted in conflicting white and black ideals, it seems, was to infuse the concept with a heightened sense of moral authority. But deep down at the roots, of course, this was not so much a conflict over ideals as a conflicted deliberation concerning the actual ability of black people to hold ideals—that is, a question ultimately turning upon the recognition of black folk as human beings.

**EXAMPLES OF DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS**

Du Bois offered four explicit illustrations of conflicted double

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consciousness: the “double-aimed struggle of the black artisan” to “escape white contempt” directed at the mass of black folk on the one hand, and on the other “to plough and nail and dig for a poverty-stricken horde;” secondly, the dilemma of the “Negro lawyer or doctor... pushed toward quackery and demagogism” on the one side, and on the other “by the criticism of the other world toward an elaborate preparation that overfitted him for his lowly tasks;” thirdly, the conundrum of the “would-be black savant... confronted by the paradox” that although whites possessed the knowledge needed by his people, the knowledge capable of teaching whites (presumably that blacks too were human) was an unknown quantity to him; and, finally, that of the black artist who was altogether incapable of expressing a sense of beauty other than the one revealed through the “soul-beauty” of his own race, “a race which his larger potential audience despised.”<sup>37</sup>

By reducing these examples to schematic forms one can illustrate more clearly the dilemmas posed by (ostensibly) conflicting sets of ideals. Stripped down to their essentials, our four conundrums would look something like the following:

- (1) avoiding white contempt / lending support to an impoverished mass of blacks who regularly attract white contempt
- (2) engaging in acts of quackery and demagoguery which require no preparation at all / under the pressure of white criticism, engaging in elaborate preparation for complex tasks which will never be consummated
- (3) whites possess knowledge needed by blacks / knowledge needed by whites remains an unknown quantity
- (4) as an artist, remaining true to aesthetic standards drawn from one’s own people, the only such standards that one truly knows / seeking recognition from a potential audience which rejects one’s people and one’s aesthetic standards as well

While all of the above scenarios seem to represent plausible, real-life dilemmas, the difficult question is whether they can be adequately portrayed as sets of warring ideals embraced by African American individuals—let alone ideals which credibly bear the mark of a Negro/American dichotomy. Save for the

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final example, on both counts we are led to respond in the negative.

The ideals mentioned in the above examples include not only the universals of Work, Sacrifice, Knowledge, and Beauty but the *lesser* ideal of seeking white recognition or respect (characteristically expressed in negative form: that of avoiding white misrecognition or disrespect) as well as what can only be viewed as a *compromised* ideal: the embrace of quackery or demagoguery. The claim that one is torn between competing ideals suggests the existence of equally attractive alternatives on either side, and the difficulty or impossibility of choosing between them. In Du Bois' first illustration, however, one of the principal goals is to avoid "white contempt," while the other invokes the universal ideals of individual work and sacrifice, and their implementation in the service of the poorest, most contemptuously held strata of African Americans. So where is the Negro/American counterpoint? How can we possibly read this as a struggle between substantive Negro and American ideals? If the task of uplift is determined to be the Negro ideal, how do we categorize the avoidance of reproach by whites?

A similar difficulty hangs over the second example. If Du Bois' prototypical artisan somehow escaped the internalization of white scorn, other abstract representatives of the black professional strata were not so fortunate. The dilemma of the "Negro lawyer or doctor" consisted of adhering to, on the one side, a compromised if not benighted ideal—that of shoddy and unprincipled service—and on the other, in the face of white reproach, of working and sacrificing to acquire skills which would never be put to the test. But if work, sacrifice, or the securing of skills constituted American ideals, did that perforce mean that quackery and demagoguery were their Negro counterparts?<sup>38</sup> (Actually, if and where such negative behaviors actually existed, they likely signified the end-collapse of a debilitating process rather than the representative dynamics which Du Bois sought to describe.)<sup>39</sup>

The third example was an observation rather than the representation of a practical dilemma, a paradox centering on types of knowledge rather than an expression of the clash of white and

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black aims. In a passage which might have been written yesterday, Du Bois averred that the knowledge capable of teaching whites (concerning black humanity) was seemingly inaccessible. But because there are no choices to be made in this example, one is forced to reject it as “inauthentic” relative to the issue of “warring ideals.”

Finally, there was the artist whose agony stemmed from a need to remain aesthetically true to the subject matter which he intimately knew, while surviving in a broad marketplace hostile to the artistic values embodied in his work—not to mention antipathy directed toward the real-life subjects he portrayed. The Negro artist’s ideal expressed itself in the form of a commitment to the “soul-beauty” of his people, while his American ideal—the first of Du Bois’ examples where such a label explicitly corresponded to its content—had to do with securing the broadest possible audience for his art.<sup>40</sup>

What can we conclude about Du Boisian double consciousness from the above four examples? In the first two, not only is it impossible to sort out which is the “Negro” and which the “American” ideal, but Du Bois also has attempted to counterpose his higher ideals to what I term his “lesser” or “compromised” ones, resulting in a diminishing of the exalted status assigned their alleged conflict. Since the third example failed altogether to express competing aims, it can be safely dismissed from consideration. Only the fourth, that of the artist, bears any mark of authenticity. But the dilemma of the artist cannot be permitted to stand as representative of the dilemma of all Black Americans. Given such inadequate examples, not to mention the altogether slippery quality of critical definitions, one is led to conclude that Du Boisian double consciousness was not so much a usable concept as an exquisitely crafted metaphor. To appreciate that fact, one has only to contrast Du Bois’ overheated examples to more straightforward descriptions offered by other Afro-Americans regarding the plight of black physicians in the South. Hemmed in by medical examiners, beset by drug stores which refused to fill prescriptions for “nigger” doctors, regarded as “root doctors” by members of their own race—little wonder, mused J.

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G. Robinson, that a number of black physicians had decided to lay aside their profession and go into preaching! Claiming to speak “for the hundreds of colored physicians throughout this South-land,” an Afro-American medical doctor, T. A. Walker, noted that there was “a too general belief on the part of a great many of our people, regardless of the fact that the Negro has made such marvelous progress in the sciences akin to that of medicine, that the high, dignified scientific calling of medicine is too intricate for a colored man to master.”<sup>41</sup> If black physicians were beset by existential agony in the late Nineteenth Century, perhaps its source might more readily be found in the respect or esteem denied them by the dominant population as well as by their own people (the latter manifestation constituting a form of internalized white supremacy) rather than a divided consciousness on their own part. In any case, our inquiry now shifts to the reasons why Du Bois may have introduced this “doubling” notion in the first place.

#### **A TACTICAL CHOICE IN THE BATTLE FOR RESPECT**

My sense is that it was for tactical, political reasons that Du Bois introduced the concept of double consciousness into the African American freedom struggle in 1897. In the face of a violent suppression of Afro-American civil and political rights and the imposition of segregation in all avenues of Southern life during the last quarter of the Nineteenth Century, black folk were in the process of being stripped of fundamental vestiges of respect as human beings. Confronted with a sinister engineering of signs and mores designed to fix the social and political inferiority of Afro-Americans in perpetuity, black self-respect was severely put to the test, with seeds of despair and self-doubt finding extremely fertile ground.

Acknowledging some of the deficiencies of the Afro-American mass, Du Bois’ envisioned solution was to place a small-but-growing educated black elite in overall charge of the situation. “The Talented Tenth of the Negro race must be made leaders of thought and missionaries of culture among their people. No others can do this work and Negro colleges must train

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men for it,” he affirmed in 1903. “But if such men are to be effective,” he had written two years earlier, “they must have some power—they must be backed by the best public opinion of these communities, and able to wield for their objects and aims such weapons as the experience of the world has taught are indispensable to human progress.”<sup>42</sup> In the face of widely propagated and disingenuous arguments proclaiming the diminished moral capacity and intelligence of Africa’s descendants, however, the Talented Tenth itself was in danger of succumbing to a self-fulfilling prophecy.<sup>43</sup>

Hence the conundrum: in the face of implacable resistance, how was it possible for Du Bois’ designated leadership class to achieve desired recognition as human beings as a matter of course, without confrontation or begging? Indeed, if, in the eyes of others, one’s humanity lacks self-evidential qualities, how does one go about marshaling evidence of its existence? Self-assertion held intrinsic benefits, to be sure, but at the risk of perceived insubordination to whites. To openly plead for respect, on the other hand, would be to effectively forfeit one’s self-respect in the process. But if my reading of the situation is correct, Du Bois’ solution in the matter was to tactically reconceptualize the problem of black *Angst*—at base a despair associated with an assault on the self-respect of *all* Black Americans—as one *specific* to the Afro-American Talented Tenth. The key reposed in his discovery of an ethereal but compelling malady suffered by educated blacks which went by the name of double consciousness, expressing on the highest moral plane the mind-wrenching clash of ascendant ideals. The antidote to this existential malaise was white upper-class recognition and material support for the efforts and accomplishments of this black educated strata. Hence if Du Bois’ intervention proved successful, the talented ones might be released from their putative psychic twoness, allowing them not only to oversee the offerings of ever more Afro-American “gifts” to civilization but, with the assistance of white patronage, to eventually complete the task of uplifting the remaining nine-tenths of the race.

The eliciting of respect from educated and influential whites

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remained at the core of Du Bois' overall strategy for Afro-American uplift until 1934, when negative reactions to his proposal for a new program of black economic self-sufficiency led him to abruptly depart the NAACP. This search for respect had two aims: by gaining recognition in the eyes of influential white Americans, the Talented Tenth, thereby seeing its own self-respect amplified, would be empowered to carry out the task of uplifting the masses with a greater determination and efficiency; what is more, the consideration of Afro-Americans in a more positive light was bound to have a positive effect on social policies affecting them in general as well as greater material resources being made available to its educated black leadership. On the other hand, because double consciousness was already widely acknowledged as a psychological malady among the learned, the tactical embrace of the concept by Du Bois also seems calculated to elicit *sympathy* from educated whites, in lieu of an appeal to their sense of justice.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the tactic held out an additional enticement in that such whites could be called upon to support the Talented Tenth without having to admit their own culpability in perpetuating or tolerating a harsh racial climate: who could be blamed for black folks' having come down with a case of the double consciousness? Lastly, since the Du Boisian version was also wrapped in the mantra of ethical ideals, a request for assistance from educated whites under such conditions might be capable of raising the bar of respect even higher for the unfortunate black victims whose consciousness had been subjected to a debilitating doubling—here was a malady to which only cultivated souls were susceptible. Appropriating 19th-Century themes with which his white, educated readers would have been thoroughly familiar, Du Bois wove them into a narrative that established an ethical basis for black intellectual leadership.

#### **WHY WAS THE CONCEPT DROPPED?**

If Du Boisian double consciousness had all these wonderful things going for it, why did Du Bois effectively jettison the concept after 1903? First of all, the jerry-built form in which it

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appeared in “Strivings” was hardly conducive to long-term occupancy. To expand upon the concept of “warring ideals” without serious foundational reconstruction, would have been to invite visible collapse. This in itself would have provided good reason to drop the concept, especially given the apparent fact that no one but Du Bois seems to have experienced “double consciousness” in quite the way he described the phenomenon, or even employed the term. Secondly, educated whites unlikely to be moved by accounts of demoralized black domestics or sharecroppers were being asked to find empathy with the psychological traumas endured by black people of proven intellectual ability.<sup>45</sup> As Du Bois himself lamented years later: “white people on the whole are just as much opposed to Negroes of education and culture, as to any other kind, and perhaps more so.”<sup>46</sup> The hope of soliciting white acknowledgment of black humanity in the cause of racial reform appeared to be a lost cause. Third, there came to Du Bois the eventual discovery that, rather than continue expending energies to compel the recognition of white Americans—at least for the purpose of healing the psychological scars incurred by racism—their disrespect might be partially circumvented in other ways.

One revelation gained was that *protest* against unjust conditions itself, whatever the actual political outcome, tended to promote a healthy sense of self-respect among its practitioners. This connection was perhaps best expressed by Du Bois in a 1913 editorial.<sup>47</sup> From the formation of the Niagara Movement in 1905 onward, of course, Du Bois’ own protest activities were set in motion for the long term. Another revelation for Du Bois and other middle-class Black Americans in general, was that in after being forced into segregated communities during the last quarter of the Nineteenth Century, they discovered recognition in and of themselves: a renewed sense of mutual self-respect, collective self-esteem, and black-on-black solidarity cutting across class lines.<sup>48</sup> Although neither outward protest nor the rise of inner group-based mutual esteem were able to change the dominant character of Nineteenth Century social relations or material conditions, they contributed nonetheless in many ways to

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the overall mental health of the race. Most importantly, in the process of mutual recognition so necessary to identity formation, African Americans were not unilaterally dependent on whites for their individual as well as collective sense of self. And finally, at no time was the Afro-American struggle for social justice in need of double consciousness arguments to make its case. Direct appeals for justice worked just as effectively—or ineffectively—as calls for ameliorating the claims of double consciousness. If the above reasoning is correct, in the wake of *Souls*' publication, then, there was little incentive for Du Bois to prolong the life of the concept.

**DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS: MINI-HISTORY OF A MISCONCEPTION**

A loose end waiting to be snagged here concerns the origins of the pairing of the concept of double consciousness with that of culture as a “way of life.” As noted earlier, it would have been highly unlikely for the juxtaposition of these two concepts to have taken place either in 1897 or 1903 due to the fact that anthropological concepts of culture had not yet bored their way into the disciplines of sociology and history, let alone popular acceptance. What was possibly the earliest reference to Du Boisian double consciousness in the social sciences arrived in 1914 in the context of a discussion concerning the purportedly divided mind of the mulatto. “The unique position and hence the peculiar influence of the mulatto on all racial questions,” wrote sociologist John Moffatt Mecklin,

...is due to the fact that the blood of both races courses in his veins. Biologically he belongs to both and yet to neither, and corresponding to the anomaly of his physical traits is his social status. He is a Zwischending [in-between thing] ethnologically and socially.<sup>49</sup>

To illustrate this unfortunate “dualism of soul” characteristic of the mulatto, Mecklin served up the hypnotic lines with which we are presently all too familiar: “It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness. . . .”<sup>50</sup> Unlike later researchers, but consistent with popular misconceptions of race at the time, Mecklin attributed double consciousness to biological causes—a byprod-

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uct of miscegenation. Almost a decade later sociologist Robert E. Park would invoke that same, later-to-be celebrated passage of Du Bois, but in the context of “Negro race consciousness as reflected in race literature.” However, most of Park’s literary examples—taken from the lyrics of the spirituals but mainly from black poetry of the era—failed to manifest any stamp of Afro-American duality. And unlike Mecklin, Park accepted double consciousness as “an experience that comes sometime in life” to *every* Negro.<sup>51</sup> Absent from this formulation were references to the mulatto, to biological determination, or to any conceptual context invoking the ideas of ethnologists or cultural anthropologists. Park’s emphasis in this instance lay in utilizing artistic culture as a window through which social phenomena might be better understood. But in a shift of perspective toward the end of the 1920s, Park developed the concept of the “marginal man,” based upon the Jewish experience, whose “spiritual distress” was to be found in his cultural duality:

a cultural hybrid, a man living and sharing intimately in the cultural life and traditions of two distinct peoples; never quite willing to break, even if he were permitted to do so, with his past and his traditions, and not quite accepted, because of racial prejudice, in the new society in which he now sought to find a place. He was a man on the margin of two cultures and two societies, which were never interpenetrated and fused.<sup>52</sup>

Around the same time, sociologist Edward Byron Reuter weighed in with a similar treatment of “mixed bloods” and their ostensibly disjunct minds, hedging the question as to the role allegedly played by biology. And Park himself returned to the theme a few years later with his “Mentality of Racial Hybrids.”<sup>53</sup> Although far more sophisticated than the biological determinism of Mecklin, Park’s formulation basically substituted the role of a determinant culture for that of Mecklin’s biological forces in the life of the mulatto. But Park’s marginal man, mercifully, was spared the literary verification of Du Boisian double consciousness.

Meanwhile, the “marginal mulatto” thesis as applied to black Americans was given a catastrophic blow by anthropologist

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Melville J. Herskovits, who offered anthropometric evidence that the majority of African Americans were of mixed racial background, as it were, thereby depriving the mulatto of his or her supposedly unique status with respect to the Black American population as a whole—and thus to the white population as well. Whereas the latest census figures had indicated that some twenty percent of all Negroes could be considered mulattos of one sort or another, Herskovits argued that the figure was inverted: only twenty percent of Black Americans might actually claim unmixed background.<sup>54</sup> Misconceptions frequently die hard, however, and the publication of such facts in 1928 would in no way hinder sociologist Everett V. Stonequist seven years later from linking mulattos and anthropological notions of culture to Park's concept of marginality:

The person of mixed blood, by his dual biological and cultural origin, is identified with each group. His awareness of the conflict situation, mild or acute, signifies that in looking at himself from the standpoint of each group he experiences the conflict as a personal problem. Thus his ambitions run counter to his feelings of self-respect: he would prefer recognition by the dominant race, but he resents its arrogance. A sense of superiority to one race is counterbalanced by a sense of inferiority to the other race. Pride and shame, love and hate, and other contradictory sentiments, mingle uneasily in his nature.<sup>55</sup>

We sense where the argument is heading, and are not disappointed: "The gifted mulatto Du Bois," we subsequently learn, "has analyzed the problem in terms of 'double consciousness.'"<sup>56</sup> Even E. Franklin Frazier—who ought to have known better—reiterated and reinterpreted Everett's double consciousness theme in a mean-spirited criticism of Du Bois' call for "self-segregation" during the Great Depression years:

In the *Souls of Black Folk* we have a classic statement of the "marginal man" with his double consciousness: on the one hand slightly sensitive to every slight concerning the Negro, and feeling on the other hand little kinship or real sympathy for the great mass of crude, uncouth black peasants with whom he was identified.<sup>57</sup>

And at least one scholar would continue to echo Everett's flawed approach to mulattoism as late as the 1970s.<sup>58</sup>

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Misconceived and perennially misconstrued, Du Boisian double consciousness had already undergone a number of creative translations by the 1930s. References to the construct seem to have lain fallow until the 1950s, when historian Mary Law Chaffee opined that Du Bois' invoking of that "peculiar sensation" described a generalized "Negro plight." Her observations were followed by those of political scientist Harold R. Isaacs in a similar vein.<sup>59</sup> And in the late 1960s, at a time when literary theorists were exploring the concept of double consciousness in a more generalized context,<sup>60</sup> historian C. Van Woodward surmised that the "reclaimed African heritage" of Afro-Americans in the 1960s might "give a third dimension to the tragically two-dimensional man of the Du Bois metaphor. . . . The recovery of an African past and a third dimension of identity," he believed, "might have a healing effect on the schizoid 'two-ness,' the 'two-soul' cleavage of the Negro mind."<sup>61</sup> Thereafter, under the indomitable pressure of Afro-American cultural nationalism of the 1960s, the levee gave way. Now almost everyone, it seems, was convinced that the Negro had been afflicted with cultural double consciousness since the landing of unfree Africans on Virginia soil in 1619! What was first conceived as a mulatto malady by sociologists and lay persons alike was transformed by the 1950s into a phenomenon that was said to apply to all African Americans. What began as biological disposition and an internal warring of adversative ancestral fluids ended as cultural scission: a frustrated attempt on the part of the Negro to balance two ostensibly different cultural realities.<sup>62</sup>

#### **WAS AN AFRO-AMERICAN DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS POSSIBLE?**

Du Bois' effort to postulate the generalized existence of an African American double consciousness, and to characterize that alleged schism as a clash between Negro and American ideals, not only fails the test of internal logic but that of empirical verification as well. Post-1960s attempts to read Du Bois' formulation in the light of a broadly based cultural schism have fallen on equally barren ground. Having addressed both issues, are we now

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prepared to advance the claim that any discussion of Afro-American double consciousness, whether in the context of Nineteenth Century life or today, is of dubious value? Not quite.

Historically speaking, the social foundation for perhaps the most significant expressions of African American ideological ambivalence is to be found in the institutionalized as well as everyday double consciousness and double dealings of White Americans. On the one side lay the conceptualization and practice of egalitarian ideals which, purportedly without exception, applied to *all* persons born within its borders—a birthright; and, on the other, the simultaneous conceptualization and practice of a *Herrenvolk* nationalism where notions of citizenship and political equality referred to whites only.<sup>63</sup> The consequence was a situation in which many, if not the majority of Afro-Americans, simultaneously felt themselves to be a part, yet not a part of American society, virtual exiles in the land of their birth.<sup>64</sup> Here was an institutionalized encounter which might lend itself readily to a Du Boisian characterization. On the other hand, there was no guarantee that alienation from or ambivalence towards American society would lead to a conflict between one's American and Afro-American identities. All depended on conditions.

An expression of this conflict was outlined by Du Bois himself in an exposition which would have served him far better than the one which he chose as his representative model of double consciousness in "Strivings." That was the passage from "Conservation of the Races" cited earlier, and to which we now return.

"Am I an American or am I a Negro?," inquired Du Bois.

Can I be both? Or is it my duty to cease to be a Negro as soon as possible and be an American? If I strive as a Negro, am I not perpetuating that very cleft that threatens and separates Black and White America? Is not my only possible practical aim the subduction of all that is Negro in me to the American? Does my black blood place upon me any more obligation to assert my nationality than German, or Irish or Italian blood would?

Not to be confused with some kind of abstract conundrum, this

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manifestation of African American double consciousness assumed the form of a material—a political—one with practical consequences. Facing a violently imposed segregation and suppression of their civil and political rights in the late Nineteenth Century, Afro-Americans had little choice in adopting an inward orientation: fortifying their institutions, applying their energies to community self-help projects, directing their resources towards racial uplift. For most white southerners, at least, such actions posed no immediate threat to the status quo. But complicating the lives of those least in need of additional complication, there arrived, right in the middle of the segregationist crusade, a nativist backlash to the so-called New Immigration from Europe (and some concern even with the old) on the part of Anglocentric white Americans. One of these prophets of nativism and general doom was the Rev. Josiah Strong, author of the best-seller, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis*.<sup>65</sup> Immigration was not the only threat to America's future perceived by Rev. Strong, but it was a central one: "There is among our population of alien birth an unhappy tendency toward aggregation," he complained, "which concentrates the strain upon portions of our social and political fabric. Certain quarters of many of the cities, are, in language, customs and costumes, essentially foreign. Many colonies have bought up lands and so set themselves apart from Americanizing influences." But, according to Strong, even if the United States

were tenfold larger than it is, it would still be too small to embrace with safety to our national future, little Germanies here, little Scandinavias there, and little Irelands yonder... Our safety demands the assimilation of these strange populations, and the process of assimilation will become slower and more difficult as the proportion of foreigners increases.<sup>66</sup>

Such expressions of internal solidarity on the part of ethnic immigrants were similar to those that Afro-Americans were compelled to generate. But while nativist sentiments such as Strong's were not directed toward Afro-Americans per se (indeed, black people were not even a topic of discussion in the good reverend's book), they certainly posed a challenge to those

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of the race who perceived avenues for advancement in the context of a separate group existence. What were black people to do? To be a true American in an Anglo-conformable America meant alerting oneself to the potential threat which little Germanies, little Scandinavias, little Italies—and by implication, little Africas—posed to the proffered homogeneity of the American social fabric. To be a Negro and survive one's social and political condition, on the other hand, meant building upon the only foundation permissible at the time—self-help and internal solidarity—whatever the contribution of such efforts to the further division of American society. Separate developments created *by* European immigrants on U.S. soil were viewed as a menace by the larger society; but since the very presence of African Americans was considered menacing to whites, similar developments mandated by law and otherwise *for* them were viewed as a necessity. Nonetheless, queried Du Bois, if Afro-Americans opted for self-help and solidarity, were they not perpetuating the same type of cleft of which immigrants were being accused? On the other hand, had Afro-Americans any more obligation than the more recently arrived Germans, Irish, or Italians to downplay their sense of group identity and corresponding group aims?

If ever there were an institutional basis for the existence of “two souls dwelling in one,” this was it. However, acknowledging the existence of objective grounds for the formation of a specific form of Afro-American double consciousness at a particular moment in history does not imply that every Afro-American individual felt the pulls of divided loyalties in the same way, or even that he or she experienced *any* such tension at all. Much depended on one's class position, socialization, and perhaps even individual temperament. Ultimately there arose a general consensus among Afro-Americans that, come what may, progress would only arrive from a consolidating of resources internal to black communities. But whether that advancement might arrive by the grace of manual training and success in commercial enterprise as advocated by Booker T. Washington, or following Du Bois' counsels, by cultivating a Talented Tenth to lead

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the race as well as oversee the dispensing of “cultural gifts” to the dominant society, it would assuredly have to materialize someday, they believed—and with it an end to the separation of Afro-Americans from vital centers of American life.<sup>67</sup>

Two souls dwelling in one? Objective conditions frequently offered the possibilities for such sentiments to manifest themselves. Locked in a tortuous, eternal battle between one’s American-ness and one’s Negro-ness? Not necessarily. If by double consciousness one implies a state of irresolution, of being so overwhelmed with shouldering one’s black and American identities that prostration becomes the end result of the decision-making process, there is little in the historical record to support such a scenario among most African Americans up through the 1960s era. Double consciousness expressed in that paralyzing, neurasthenic sense would have been a *luxury* to most, an intellectual indulgence of the worst sort.<sup>68</sup> But if, by the terms, one simply means often being of a divided mind while facing practical choices as a person of African descent, then sufficient examples abound.<sup>69</sup> Responding to the question as to whether he could be both a Negro and an American, Du Bois replied in the affirmative: we are both. Thereupon he voiced his whole-hearted support for “Negro colleges, Negro newspapers, Negro business organizations, a Negro school of literature and art, and an intellectual clearing house, for all these products of the Negro mind, which we may call a Negro academy.”<sup>70</sup> And for all of that support for things Negro, Du Bois felt himself to be no less an American—at least until 1961, arguably. Unlike his depiction of double consciousness in “Strivings of the Negro People,” Du Bois’ account of warring souls in “Conservation of the Races,” while crafted in a language no less equivocal, not only points towards resolution and a striving for higher synthesis but, with a little work on our part, also reveals the concept of Afro-American double consciousness in a much more historically specific light.

#### NOTES

\*Revised version of a speech delivered at the Special Collections and

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Archives Reading Room. W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, on the occasion of the 131st birthday of W. E. B. Du Bois, 23 February 1999. I am indebted to Robert Chrisman, Jules Chametzky, and David Lenson for their critiques of earlier revisions.

<sup>1</sup>W.E.B. Du Bois, "Strivings of the Negro People," *Atlantic Monthly* 80 (August 1897): 194-98; W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Signet Classics, 1969).

<sup>2</sup>Gerald Early, ed., *Lure and Loathing: Essays on Race, Identity, and the Ambivalence of Assimilation* (New York: A. Lane/Penguin Press, 1993). From the 1960s onward, virtually every academic writer who has interpreted the notion of "two souls" as a broad-based cultural dilemma has failed to cite specific passages in Du Bois that support such an interpretation. The fact that segments of his work can be read as such does not mean that Du Bois himself conceived them that way.

<sup>3</sup>Robert E. Park, "Negro Race Consciousness As Reflected in Race Literature," *American Review* 1 (September-October 1923): 505-16.

<sup>4</sup>Zora Neale Hurston, "Characteristics of Negro Expression," in *Negro Anthology, Made by Nancy Cunard, 1931-1933*, ed. Nancy Cunard (London: Published by Nancy Cunard at Wishart & Co., 1934), 39-46; Paul Robeson, "I Want to Be African," in *Paul Robeson Speaks: Writings, Speeches, Interviews, 1918-1974*, ed. Philip S. Foner (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1978), 88-91.

<sup>5</sup>See, for example, Raymond Williams, s.v. "Culture," in *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

<sup>6</sup>Carter G. Woodson, "The Miseducation of the Negro," *Crisis* 40 (August 1931): 266-67; W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Negro College," *Crisis* 40 (August 1933): 175-77; Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (Washington, DC: The Associated Publishers, 1933).

<sup>7</sup>Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., *Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880-1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 270-271. Gatewood adds, however, that "Although upper-class blacks generally looked upon Africa as a benighted land, as did other Americans, this did not mean that they sought to deny either their racial identity or their black heritage."

<sup>8</sup>Booker T. Washington, "The Story of the Negro [Extracts]," *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, eds. Louis R. Harlan, Stuart B. Kaufman, and Raymond W. Smock, 14 vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972-1989), 1:407. Despite a limited curriculum, black students matriculating at Tuskegee and Hampton Institutes during the first several decades of the 20th Century were more likely to gain a greater appreciation of both African art and ways of life as well as African American folktales and spirituals than their counterparts at Negro colleges and universities. See, for example, Alice Mabel Bacon, "Notes and Queries: Proposal for Folk-Lore Research at Hampton, Va.," *Journal of American Folk-Lore* 6 (1893): 305-9; Editors, "Folk-Lore and Ethnology," *Southern Workman* 24 (September 1895): 154-56; "Hampton's African Collection," *Southern Workman* 50 (September 1921): 388-89; William H. Sheppard, "African Handcrafts and Superstitions," *Southern Workman* 50 (September 1921): 401-8; Linda O. McMurry, *Recorder of the Black Experience:*

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*A Biography of Monroe Nathan Work* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 90-96.

<sup>9</sup>Such historical vagaries of language on the one hand allowed Du Bois to assume that the masses of blacks lacked culture—meaning self-cultivation and civilization—yet, in the context of a definition of culture now available to us, permit him to acknowledge something of essential value in their ascribed character traits.

<sup>10</sup>Often revealing strong racial biases, the idea of national character [*esprit national*, *Völkgeist*] received special attention during the European and American Enlightenments. See, for example, the writings of David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and Thomas Jefferson reproduced in Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, ed., *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1997). See also Johann Gottfried Herder, *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man* (1800; rpt. New York: Berman, 1966); Richard Chenevix, *An Essay Upon National Character: Being an Inquiry Into Some of the Principal Causes Which Contribute to Form and Modify the Characters of Nations in the State of Civilisation*, 2 vols. (London: J. Duncan, 1832); Ernest Barker, *National Character and the Factors in Its Formation* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1927).

<sup>11</sup>James Weldon Johnson, "Should the Negro Be Given an Education Different From That Given to the Whites?," in *Twentieth Century Negro Literature; or, A Cyclopaedia of Thought on the Vital Topics Relating to the American Negro, by One Hundred of America's Greatest Negroes*, ed. D.W. Culp, (1902; rpt. Miami, FL: Mnemosyne Pub. Co., 1969), 72-75. See also William Ferris, "Typical Negro Traits," *American Missionary* 62 (April 1908): 99-102; H. T. Kealing, "The Characteristics of the Negro People," in *The Negro Problem; A Series of Articles by Representative American Negroes of To-Day* (New York: J. Pott & Co., 1903), 161-85.

<sup>12</sup>Du Bois, "Strivings of the Negro People," 197. A slightly different version appears in *Souls*, 52. This sentiment was echoed by James Weldon Johnson shortly thereafter: "And may it not be in the great plan of Providence that the Negro shall supply in the future American race the very elements that it shall lack and require to make it the most perfect race the world shall have ever seen?" Johnson, "Should the Negro Be Given an Education Different From That Given to the Whites?" 74-75.

<sup>13</sup>W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Gift of Black Folk* (Boston: Stratford, 1924), 320.

<sup>14</sup>Du Bois, "Strivings of the Negro People," 195; Du Bois, *Souls*, 45. The term "Africanize" harbored overlapping meanings in the Nineteenth Century, including that of 1) biological amalgamation; 2) the demographic superiority of people of African descent; 3) "to cause to acquire a distinctively African trait"; and 4) "to bring under the influence, control, or cultural or civil supremacy of Africans." Du Bois seems to be using the term in the third sense. See, for example, "Editorial Miscellany," *DeBow's Review* 27 (November 1859): 610; William H. Holcombe, "The Alternative: A Separate Nationality, or the Africanization of the South," *Southern Literary Messenger* 32 (February 1861): 81-88; Henry Gannett, "Are We to Become Africanized?," *Popular*

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*Science Monthly* 27 (June 1885): 145-50.

<sup>15</sup>Adolph L. Reed, Jr., *W.E.B. Du Bois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 73.

<sup>16</sup>See, for example, Dickson D. Bruce, Jr., "W.E.B. Du Bois and the Idea of Double Consciousness," *American Literature* 64 (June 1992): 299-309; John Herdman, *The Double in Nineteenth-Century Fiction: The Shadow Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991); Karl Miller, *Doubles: Studies in Literary History* (Oxford [Oxfordshire]; New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Masao Miyoshi, *The Divided Self; A Perspective on the Literature of the Victorians* (New York: New York University Press, 1969); Joel Porte, "Emerson, Thoreau, and the Double Consciousness," *New England Quarterly* 41 (March 1968): 40-50; Reed, *W.E.B. Du Bois and American Political Thought*; Ralph Tymms, *Doubles in Literary Psychology* (Cambridge [Eng.]: Bowes & Bowes, 1949); Andrew Webber, *The Doppelgänger: Double Visions in German Literature* (Oxford [England]: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). The influence of medical and psychological literature on Du Bois is discussed as well in Tom Lutz, *American Nervousness, 1903: An Anecdotal History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), chpt. 8, and briefly by Arnold Rampersad, *The Art and Imagination of W.E.B. Du Bois* (1976; rpt. New York: Schocken, 1990), 74.

<sup>17</sup>Bruce, "W.E.B. Du Bois and the Idea of Double Consciousness," 301. See Dickson D. Bruce, Jr., *Archibald Grimké: Portrait of a Black Independent* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 204-205, for a slightly different formulation.

<sup>18</sup>John Herdman, *The Double in Nineteenth-Century Fiction: The Shadow Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 4-10.

<sup>19</sup>Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust I & II*, ed. and trans. Stuart Atkins (Cambridge, MA: Suhrkamp/Insel Publishers Boston, 1984), 30.

<sup>20</sup>William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience; A Study in Human Nature; Being the Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion Delivered at Edinburgh in 1901-1902* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1902), 171.

<sup>21</sup>Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Early Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. S. E. Wicher and R. E. Spiller (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966, 1972), 1:161, 3:155; For a discussion of Emerson's penchant for dualisms, see also Philip L. Nicoloff, *Emerson on Race and History; An Examination of English Traits* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 44, 50-53, 59, 134.

<sup>22</sup>There was also James' consideration of multiple selves as mental illness, where a separation had occurred between one's social selves. Although James did not employ the term double consciousness to describe such maladies, others such as psychologist Oswald Kupe did so. James also developed a less draconian psychological model where, on the one hand, he described "a discordant splitting of one's social selves," and, on the other, formulated the existence of social and spiritual selves within individuals in such a way that tensions between these selves might also be envisioned. William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 2 vols. (New York: Henry Holt, 1890), 1: 294, 399; Rampersad, *The Art and Imagination of W.E.B. Du Bois*, 74.

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<sup>23</sup>Du Bois, "Strivings of the Negro People," 127. "Imagine spending your life looking for insults," wrote Du Bois in 1920, "or for hiding places from them—shrinking (instinctively and despite desperate bolsterings of courage) from blows that are not always, but ever; not each day, but each week, each month, each year. W.E.B. Du Bois, "On Being Black," *New Republic* 21 (February 18, 1920): 339

<sup>24</sup>E. A. Johnson, "The White Man's Problem," *AME Church Review* 16 (January 1900): 446-47.

<sup>25</sup>Nathan B. Young, "A Race Without an Ideal," *AME Church Review* 15 (October 1898): 609. Young's essay reiterates a number of points made the previous year by Du Bois. See Du Bois, "Strivings of the Negro People." See also Woodson, *Mis-Education of the Negro*.

<sup>26</sup>Edward W. Blyden, "The Negro in the United States," *AME Church Review* 16 (January 1900): 318.

<sup>27</sup>W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Conservation of Races," in *The Oxford W.E.B. Du Bois Reader*, ed. Eric J. Sundquist (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 43.

<sup>28</sup>W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Religion of the American Negro," *New World* 9 (December 1900): 614-25; Du Bois, *Souls*, 221-222.

<sup>29</sup>Helen Merrell Lynd depicts an internal dissonance resulting from similar circumstances, but without having recourse to the language of duality: "Finding oneself in a position of incongruity, not being accepted as the person one thought one was, not feeling at home in a world one thought one knew, can occur repeatedly throughout life. Sudden awareness of discrepancy may be brought about by changes in the social situation, for example, in a society of great mobility where an individual may unexpectedly find himself in an unfamiliar position, with the things he had taken for granted no longer there; or it may come about through changes in the person which put him out of key with a stable situation; or through changes outside the range of the more visible social structure." Helen Merrell Lynd, *On Shame and the Search for Identity* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1958), 37; see also p. 43.

<sup>30</sup>Du Bois, "Strivings," 194; Du Bois, *Souls*, 45. But was the moral hesitancy of which Du Bois spoke the *result* of failed self-confidence or its cause?

<sup>31</sup>As James once remarked: "A man's Social Self is the recognition he gets from his mates. . . . No more fiendish punishment could be devised, were such a thing physically possible, than that one should be turned loose in society and remain absolutely unnoticed by all the members thereof." William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 2 vols. (New York: Henry Holt, 1890), 1:293. And as Hegel noted in one of his celebrated passages, "Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged." Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 111.

<sup>32</sup>Du Bois, *Souls*, 119.

<sup>33</sup>Du Bois, *Souls*, 197.

<sup>34</sup>Several decades later he again referred to the aesthetic ideals of Beauty, Truth, and Goodness. W.E.B. Du Bois, "Criteria of Negro Art," *Crisis* 32

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(October 1926): 296.

<sup>35</sup>Du Bois, *Souls*, 111-12, 114, 117-18. In *Souls* as well, but without specifically mentioning ideals as such, Du Bois referred to values of “good, the beautiful, and the true,” as well as those of Justice, Mercy, and Truth. In his 1905 article, “The Negro Ideals of Life,” he once again touted the elevated values of Work and Sacrifice. In 1917 he referred to religious ideals, and “to more mundane matters of honor and fairness.” Du Bois, *Souls*, 188, 256; Du Bois, “The Negro Ideals of Life,” *Christian Register* 84 (October 26, 1905): 1199; Du Bois, “Of the Culture of White Folk,” *Journal of Race Development* 7 (April 1917): 435.

<sup>36</sup>Du Bois, “Negro Ideals of Life,” 1198-99. He also made it clear that such ideals were never static, but in a continual state of change. Du Bois, *Souls*, 113.

<sup>37</sup>Du Bois, *Souls*, 195.

<sup>38</sup>In the revised version of this example appearing in *Souls*, the figure of the lawyer was replaced by the minister, and the dilemma faced by minister and doctor was described as a temptation toward debased ideals of “quackery and demagoguery” on the one side, and on the other (due to “the criticism of the other world”) an equal penchant “toward [high] ideals that made him ashamed of his lowly tasks.” Du Bois, *Souls*, 46.

<sup>39</sup>While offering some clarification, the revision failed to constitute a wholly redemptive improvement over the original. The tarnished Negro ideal remained, with the competing American ideal now only implied, save for the negative results which it purportedly induced in the self-esteem of its subscribers. Nonetheless, this example is open to at least another reading. It may have been that Du Bois’ minister and doctor sought to avoid serious work and sacrifice for what they deemed to be a lowly cause (a sentiment which found reinforcement in the attitudes of educated whites), while evincing preference for service much more in keeping with their abilities and training. Rather than constituting antithetical ideals, however, these were complementary aims characterized by a repulsive force at one pole, an attractive one at the other.

<sup>40</sup>To belabor an important point, this artist’s dilemma offers the clearest example why the struggle between two ideals cannot be construed as a struggle between cultures reflected in a single mind. There are two sets of aesthetic values involved, but Du Bois’ artist is not torn between them. That is, he was not torn between American and Negro ideals, but between holding onto and expressing African American aesthetic ideals in his work while at the same time gaining recognition for them from whites. By the 1940s, abstract art offered black artists such as Hale Woodruff, Rose Piper, Romare Bearden, and Norman Lewis “a means of granting the ‘universal’ to abstracted ancestral imagery without succumbing to the racialization of recognizably African or African American images.” Ann Gibson, “Two Worlds: African American Abstraction in New York at Mid-Century,” *The Search for Freedom: African American Abstract Painting 1945-1975* (New York: Kenelkeba Gallery, 1991), 37. I am indebted to Lauren Hazel for this citation.

<sup>41</sup>J. G. Robinson, “Africa and the Educated and Wealthy Negroes of America,” *AME Church Review* 10 (July 1893): 161-62; T. A. Walker, “Race

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Confidence and Race Unity," *AME Church Review* 6 (July 1889): 54.

<sup>42</sup>W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Talented Tenth," in *The Negro Problem; A Series of Articles by Representative American Negroes of To-Day* (New York: J. Pott & Co., 1903), 75; Du Bois, "The Relation of the Negroes to the Whites in the South," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 18 (July 1901): 128. Interestingly, in the latter essay, and unlike his later appeal to double consciousness, Du Bois made requested support from the "better class" in the context of *justice*—in this case, promoting a "fairer economic system" in the South. The term "Talented Tenth" was coined by the Rev. Henry Morehouse in 1896. See Henry L. Morehouse, "The Talented Tenth," *Independent* 48 (April 23, 1896): 1.

<sup>43</sup>For vivid examples of such ideas, see George M. Fredrickson, *Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971); John S. Haller, Jr., *Outcasts From Evolution; Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority, 1859-1900* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971); John G. Menck, *Mulattoes and Race Mixture: American Attitudes and Images, 1865-1918* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1979).

<sup>44</sup>But here was a call for sympathy unencumbered by the erosion of self respect that might otherwise have occurred had Du Bois merely registered a simple plea that blacks be recognized as human beings. (I have in mind the sincere but pitiable inscriptions on Josiah Wedgwood's famous anti-slavery medal: "Am I not a man and a brother?") Respect can be effectively demanded, though not necessarily reciprocated, but to solicit respect under the guise of sympathy is to undermine self-respect.

<sup>45</sup>There is the example of Du Bois' first and failed discussion with a white southerner in the South itself. See William M. Tuttle, Jr., "W.E.B. Du Bois' Confrontation With White Liberalism During the Progressive Era: A Phylon Document," *Phylon* 35 (September 1974): 241-58.

<sup>46</sup>W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Anti-Segregation Campaign," *Crisis* 41 (June 1934): 182.

<sup>47</sup>W.E.B. Du Bois, "A Philosophy for 1913," *Crisis* 5 (January 1913): 127; see also Bernard R. Boxill, "Self-Respect," in *Blacks and Social Justice* (1984; rvsd. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1992), 186-204.

<sup>48</sup>Du Bois himself offered the example of his grandfather's changing attitudes towards socialization with other Afro-Americans. W.E.B. Du Bois, "On Being Ashamed of Oneself: An Essay on Race Pride," *Crisis* 40 (September 1933): 199-200. See also August Meier, *Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915; Racial Ideologies in the Age of Booker T. Washington* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963), *passim*.

<sup>49</sup>John Moffatt Mecklin, *Democracy and Race Friction; A Study in Social Ethics* (New York: Macmillan, 1914), 153.

<sup>50</sup>Mecklin, *Democracy and Race Friction*, 155.

<sup>51</sup>Robert E. Park, "Negro Race Consciousness As Reflected in Race Literature," *American Review* 1 (September-October 1923): 510.

<sup>52</sup>Robert E. Park, "Human Migration and the Marginal Man," *American Journal of Sociology* 33 (May 1928): 892.

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<sup>53</sup>E. B. Reuter, "The Personality of Mixed Bloods," *Papers and Proceedings, 22d Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Society* 22 (1928): 52-59; E. B. Reuter, "The American Mulatto," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 140 (November 1928): 36-43; Robert E. Park, "Mentality of Racial Hybrids," *American Journal of Sociology* 36 (January 1931): 534-51.

<sup>54</sup>Melville J. Herskovits, *The American Negro; A Study in Racial Crossing* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1928), 4-5, 10; James B. McKee, *Sociology and the Race Problem: The Failure of a Perspective* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 84.

<sup>55</sup>Everett V. Stonequist, "The Problem of the Marginal Man," *American Journal of Sociology* 41 (July 1935): 6.

<sup>56</sup>Stonequist, "The Problem of the Marginal Man," 6; see also Everett V. Stonequist, *The Marginal Man; A Study in Personality and Culture Conflict* (New York; Chicago: C. Scribner's Sons, 1937), 25-26.

<sup>57</sup>E. Franklin Frazier, "The Du Bois Program in the Present Crisis," *Race* 1 (Winter 1935-1936): 12.

<sup>58</sup>Mencke, *Mulattoes and Race Mixture*, 160-61.

<sup>59</sup>Mary Law Chaffee, "William E. B. Dubois' Concept of the Racial Problem in the United States: The Early Negro Educational Movement," *Journal of Negro History* 41 (July 1956): 258; Harold R. Isaacs, "The American Negro and Africa: Some Notes," *Phylon* 20 (Fall 1959): 221.

<sup>60</sup>See, for example, Porte, "Emerson, Thoreau, and the Double Consciousness"; Miyoshi, *The Divided Self*.

<sup>61</sup>C. Vann Woodward, "Clio With Soul," *Journal of American History* 56 (June 1969): 14-15.

<sup>62</sup>See Reed, *W.E.B. Du Bois and American Political Thought*, 92-96, for a somewhat broader overview of post-1960s comments by African American scholars on double consciousness.

<sup>63</sup>Pierre L. Van den Berghe, *Race and Racism: A Comparative Perspective*, 2d ed. (New York: Wiley, 1978); Kenneth P. Vickery, "'Herrenvolk' Democracy and Egalitarianism in South Africa and the U.S. South," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16 (June 1974): 309-28.

<sup>64</sup>The dualism of this intersubjective experience has a counterpart in contradictory objective evaluations of American society by Afro-Americans: as an imperfect democracy amenable to social and political reform, or as a national question where insurmountable obstacles to equality necessitate black self-determination in one form or another.

<sup>65</sup>Josiah Strong, *Our Country*, ed. Jurgen Herbst (1891 ed; rpt. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963). First published in 1885, the book sold well over a 100,000 copies in numerous printings prior to World War I. John Higham, *Strangers in the Land; Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1955), 39.

<sup>66</sup>Strong, *Our Country*, 56-57.

<sup>67</sup>At the same time that Du Bois counseled fortification of a separate group existence for Afro-Americans, one of the fruits he envisioned as a result of that inward turning was the creation of a body of Afro-American aesthetic

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culture which could be proffered to white Americans as “gifts” of original *American* art. It was the visiting Czech composer, Antonin Dvorak, who first remarked in 1893 that “the future music of this country must be founded upon what are called the negro melodies. This must be the real foundation of any serious and original school of composition to be developed in the United States.” Seizing upon Dvorak’s prescriptive advice, Du Bois announced in “Conservation of the Races” four years later that blacks had a gift to offer the world, and the final chapter of *Souls* revealed that this offering would be the Negro spirituals—“the sole American music.” Hence, in drawing apart from white America and refocusing its energies inwardly towards the creation of ever more gifts, Black America might pursue a roundabout path eventually leading to the unification of Americans as a whole. See Du Bois, *Souls*, 265.

<sup>68</sup>“Now, fancy Candace, Queen of Ethiopia, or Chephron, the Master of Egypt, being troubled with double consciousness,” wrote an unsympathetic J. E. Casely Hayford in his review of *Souls* in 1911. Referring to the Sphinx, which allegedly bore resemblance to King Chephron, Hayford continued: “Watch that symbolic, reposeful figure yonder, and you can see but one soul, one ideal, one striving, one line of natural progress. . . . African manhood demands that the Ethiopian should seek not his opportunity, or ask for elbow room, from the white man, but that he should create the one or the other for himself.” J. E. Casely Hayford, *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation*, 2d ed. (London: Cass, 1969), 181-82.

<sup>69</sup>To cite yet another, the dual existence alluded to by Du Bois in 1897 assumed yet another dimension the following year when African Americans had to determine whether it was in their best interests to fight on the side of the United States against Spain, and thereby “earn” their right to citizenship one more time; or resist participation in a venture which might—and eventually did—result in the export of segregationist institutions to Cuban soil. See Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., *Black Americans and the White Man’s Burden, 1898-1903* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975).

<sup>70</sup>Du Bois, “The Conservation of Races,” 44.