

# TAKING AIM AT LONG RANGE: MARGINALIA ON W. E. B. DU BOIS'S INTELLECTUAL MATURATION AND HIS ROOT EXPANSION OF HUMAN THOUGHT THROUGH THE IDEOLOGY OF PAN-AFRICANISM

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**Abstract:** This essay conducts a diachronic examination of the thought of W. E. B. Du Bois. In so doing, it reveals a corpus that is marked by a tradition of thinking rarely acknowledged by scholars today: Black nationalism. Du Bois's early focus on the relationship between racism and imperialism and ideological conflicts with Booker T. Washington and Marcus Garvey laid the basis for his intellectual maturation around the concept of self-determination. After synthesizing the insights of Du Bois's former ideological rivals, this essay will show that he affected a revolution in Black nationalist (and human) thought by making the common humanity and autonomy of African and African-descended peoples (and all colonized people) thinkable through the ideology of Pan-Africanism: a truly universal idea of freedom that was antagonistic to Westernism (liberal capitalist and Marxist thought).

The black man has the most powerful brain in the universe. So there is no intelligence more powerful than the intelligence of the black man. And because of this the black man can't even create a thought that would destroy him. He is indestructible. You can blow up everything and the black man will still be here. You just can't get away from him, brother. (Malcolm X 1971, 19)

Breaking with the integrationist orientation guiding the study of Black thought by academic philosophers, this essay will clarify the long-range transformation of the notion of the human in the Black nationalist tradition through a diachronic analysis of the works of W. E. B. Du Bois. My examination will reveal an intellectual corpus that is fundamentally antagonistic to liberal democratic thought and Westernism more generally. While Du Bois's early thinking centered on an analysis of the relationship

between racism and imperialism, as he matured, this focus laid the basis for a root expansion in Black and African nationalist thought (and human thought more generally) by making the common humanity, self-determination, and autonomy of African and African-descended peoples thinkable through the ideology of Pan-Africanism, the first truly universal theory of freedom.

This essay will consist of three sections. In the first, I will outline the two reinforcing problems that obscure the actual study of DuBoisian thought by philosophers today: epistemic convergence and racial normativity. Together, these factors comprise a pseudological theoretical milieu wherein the black philosopher is charged with embracing the integrationist ethic as the basis for scholarly endeavors and thus representing Black diasporic theorists and ideas as essentially compatible with Western (American) liberalism. In the second section, I will outline the historical basis of DuBoisian thought in the tradition of Black nationalism. Contrary to popular disciplinary narratives, Du Bois's early work centered on Black nationalism as a conceptual goal and ideal. Building on the insights of Black nationalists before him, Du Bois criticized the Western humanist sciences as ideological subterfuges of the civilizing mission that justified European colonial imperialism and consistently falsified these bodies of knowledge through the pioneering use of historical-sociological methods of inquiry into the Black (human) condition and culture. Said differently, unlike any Black intellectual before him, Du Bois undermined the anthropological claim at the basis of liberal humanism and its civilizing mission: that whites, as the "master race" are the paragon of social, civilizational, and thus biological development.

This early focus endures up to the publication of *Darkwater* (1920). However, the lucid thinking about the relationships among slavery, Western physical anthropology, Jim Crow, and colonial imperialism that Du Bois demonstrated in this work was a prelude to what would later materialize as a full-blown revolution in Black nationalist (and human) thought more generally. Du Bois's anti-colonial maturation leading up to this revolution or root expansion in thought during the four decades following *Darkwater* will be explicated in the third section. Rather than embracing Westernism (liberalism or Marxism) as a universal template for freedom, Du Bois synthesized the ideas of two of his former ideological rivals—Booker T. Washington and Marcus Garvey—around the notion of Black autonomy and self-determination to construct Pan-Africanism as an anticolonial philosophy that understood self-governance and the common humanity of all peoples in ways that were categorically antagonistic to Western epistemology and thought. Importantly then, Du Bois not only pioneered a unique philosophy suited to the needs of African and African-descended peoples, but he also pushed the boundaries of how we conceptualize what it means to be human through a critique of Western ethnology/philosophical anthropology that extended a theoretical discourse indigenous to Black national-

ist thought in North America going back to the nineteenth century (Curry 2021). The assimilationist configuration of Black philosophy in the U.S. academy has thus far occluded a careful study of the long-range tendencies of Black diasporic thought. This essay will remedy this gap in knowledge through an actual investigation into one of the “ever-present undercurrents in the collective Black psyche”: Black nationalism (Allen 1967, 89). That is to say, it will engage Black thought on its *own* terms.

## 1 On Disciplinary Propaganda, the Pseudological Critic, and American Philosophy as a Structural Obstacle to the Study of (Black Diasporic) Thought

One of the main issues in contemporary understandings of race and racism stems from how “little we know about the ideas produced by Black theorists” in modern history (Ajari 2022a, 1). The historical dynamics that laid the basis for the emergence of Black diasporic thought in the United States as a coherent and autonomous tradition that is typified by a “sustained ideological conflict” with Western thought systems (Liberalism and Communism/Marxism-Leninism) since the nineteenth century is pre-conceptually denied by American philosophers (Wynter 1977, 1; Stuurman 2017, 484–493; Pinkney 1976; Franklin 1984; Stuckey 1987; Woodard 2005). Once the extent of the repression of Black thought by American philosophy is properly understood, the wholesale demonization of knowledge grounded in the historical psychical consciousness of African-descended peoples as essentialist, deficient in rigor, and anti-American can be appreciated as “an epistemological and ontological achievement” in its own right (Jaima 2018, 152).

As philosopher Norman Ajari explains, the demonization and “delegitimization of black nationalism, and by extension, the major tenets of African and diasporic political thinking, has become the doxa” in Black studies, American philosophy, and Western liberal disciplinary thinking writ large (Ajari 2022b, 11). The current assimilationist configuration of Black thought in the American academy demands the truncation of Black diasporic thought into liberal humanist disciplinary narratives. As the basis for scholarly endeavors, this edict has functionally severed this tradition from its own historical trajectory.

Demystifying the structural genesis and implications of the integrationist agenda in African-American philosophy on our ability to construct a philosophical genealogy of Black diasporic thought in the United States, philosopher Tommy Curry argues in his work *The Derelictical Crisis of African-American Philosophy* (2011a) that despite the acknowledgment of philosophy as a culturally and historically contingent endeavor by Black thinkers, the established methods of inquiry legitimates Black thought for its continuities with white or European philosophy. In his own words, the most popular works in African-American philosophy that set the standard

of “Black philosophical rigor” and dictate theoretical advancements in the field, are “marred by an unfailing humanist inclination and anti-essentialism seeking to fulfill the unrealizable goals of integration” and a more perfect liberal American order (2011a, 316). The assimilationist pressures placed on Black philosophy as a disciplinary enterprise in the academy contributed to a broader debate “over whether or not African American thought lived up to the standard white questions set as being” traditionally philosophical (2011a, 318). As a result of these pressures, “the first definitions of African American philosophy presented in that famous 1978 edition of the *Philosophical Forum* were in fact overburdened by the need to prove their legitimacy to the white philosophical academy” (2011a, 318).

This problem of legitimacy persists and restricts the “only accepted practice in African American philosophy from its very beginning” to be one wherein “white thinkers provide the anthropology and Black thinkers provide the need for pluralist revision” (Curry 2011a, 319). Said differently, the only legitimate practice of Black philosophy in the academy is subtended by an assimilative dynamic Curry coined as epistemic convergence. Epistemological convergence is “the phenomenon by which Black cultural perspectives are only given the status of knowledge to the extent that they extend or reify currently maintain traditions of thought in European philosophy”—thus, “what counts as knowledge is determined” not to the extent that it accurately describes the relations between entities in the world but to the extent it converges with the superior philosophical anthropology claimed by Western philosophy (2011a, 320).

The problem of epistemological convergence generates a second that is expressed in a normative disposition: racial normativity. Racial normativity refers to the conflation of the study of Black thought with the question of *how* one should study Black thought given the ethical mandates of American society. As a result of this approach, African-descended thinkers are “studied not as they are but as they should be” guided by the decree that liberal humanism is the final end of Black thought in the United States (Curry 2011a, 322). Thus, there is a “decidedly political and ideological temperament to” the study of Black diasporic thought that reflects a “teleological impetus to assimilate Blacks into American society” (2011a, 322). Together, these two mutually reinforcing problems—epistemic convergence and racial normativity—have led to a derelict crisis in African-American philosophy which not only reveals “the ideological agenda of whites in philosophy who attack any hints of a ‘Black’ historical consciousness with charges of essentialism but also inculcates passivity, indifference, and intolerance to the idea of Africanisms” in Black thinkers altogether (2011a, 322).

Furthermore, they have overdetermined the study of Black thought from one of “advancing the self-understanding of African/a peoples” and the construction of a genealogy of ideas in the Black diaspora that allows them to interpret their realities to one of propaganda (Curry 2011b, 143). As

Curry writes, the Black philosopher “is now *propagandist*, an advocate of pseudological criticism which maintains that” it is the duty of the Black thinker to embrace integrationism as an ethical basis for the philosophical endeavor (2011b, 143). Pre-conceptually, the pseudological critic aims not to investigate *actual* Black thought, but to evaluate a given idea to the extent it “reifies, rather than refutes, the racist hierarchies embedded in the Western philosophical tradition” (2011b, 149). Toward this end, Black ideas are reinvented and given a finality directed squarely toward integration on the assumption that white or European philosophical ideas are “self-correcting, and their anthropologies universal by extent” (2011b, 149).

In accordance with this cultivated scholarly predisposition toward pseudological criticism in Black philosophy, one of the most prolific Black nationalist thinkers of the twentieth century—W. E. B. Du Bois—is oft understood today in liberal terms that are contrary to his long-range revolutionary impact on African (Black) nationalism, his eventual rejection of American democracy, the hope that moral suasion will change white racism, and Westernism writ large. Rather than as an extension of Black nationalism, DuBoisian thought is caricatured by Black philosophers as essentially Deweyan, an extension of or compatible with liberal-democratic thought, or as almost maturing into a repudiation of race as a term of difference altogether. That Black philosophers in the American academy have produced a truncated view of Du Bois’s thought is an understatement. Since Kwame Appiah’s *The Uncompleted Argument: Du Bois and the Illusion of Race* (1985), Black philosophers have debated the value of Du Bois’s work, largely by focusing on the metaphysical content of “race” and the negative implications of collective racial identity as a constraint on genuine individual liberty. The literature produced from this approach has a singular focus on Du Bois’s earliest work “The Conservation of Races,” positioning him as the point of reference for disciplinary debates about the nature of social constructionism and individual identity as opposed to nationalist theories of Pan-Africanism or collective self-determination. (Appiah 1985; Outlaw 1995; Gooding-Williams 1996; Lott 1999; Jeffers 2013; Harris, 2019). Others have sought to integrate Duboisian insights into Rawlsian liberal and other rights-based paradigms of justice (Shelby 2002; Harris 2004; Mills 2017; Darby 2020).

Characteristic of the former tendency—that of focusing on the metaphysical content of race—philosopher Lucious Outlaw argues against Appiah’s racial eliminativist position in “*Conserve*” *Races? In Defense of Du Bois* (1996) by defending a cluster conceptual approach to the idea of race that is conditioned by special attention to history and sociology rather than a consideration of races as natural ontological kinds whose “biological characteristics causally determined cultural and moral characteristics” (1996, 27). Outlaw exposes the “amorphous universalism” guiding Appiah’s arguments and clarifies the idiosyncrasies of Du Bois’s thinking

about race in doing so (1996, 21). However, these are done in a broader effort to forge “an understanding of race that is both socially useful and consistent with a revised notion of democratic justice that is appropriately balanced between recognizing and valuing racial and ethnic groupings and preserving the best achievements of modern Enlightenments and the political revolution of Liberalism” (1996 35).

A particularly explicit expression of the latter tendency—the truncation of Du Bois’s insights about race and democracy into liberal paradigms of justice—is found in the work of philosopher Charles Mills. While Mills demonstrates a deep grasp of the racist theoretical foundations of western liberal thought and its symbiotic relationship with European colonial imperialism, the normative argument in his work *Black Rights/White Wrongs* (2017) supports a modified reification of liberalism rather than a genuine alternative to it. For Mills, a logical consequence of liberalism being “the most successful political philosophy of modernity” and its expression through global hegemony (American imperialism) demands its adaption towards the problem of racial injustice despite its racist philosophical anthropology (2017, 203).

Accordingly, Mills endeavors to articulate “a self-consciously anti-racist liberalism” (what he terms “black radical liberalism”) through a synthesis of three theorists: Immanuel Kant; Karl Marx; and W. E. B. Du Bois. Du-Boisian thought is deployed by Mills to initiate a “reconstructive dynamic by which” he can “transform liberalism” to be “responsive to the realities of the black diasporic experience in modernity and the correspondingly necessary reordering of liberal normative priorities” (2017, 203). Thus, Du Bois’s *actual* rejection of Anglo-Western culture and conceptions of existence being the basis for how African and African-descended peoples understand their own consciousness and freedom is set aside for his integration into the very normative vision of a well-ordered society that he sought to refute. Nevertheless, this pseudological philosophical endeavor is rationalized by Mills as necessary to materialize “the liberalism that *should have been*” (2017, 215).

## 2 Portrait of a Young Black Phenom—Black Nationalism in the Early Thinking of Du Bois

Many scholars make the “egregious error” of myopically focusing on the early phases of the career of W. E. B. Du Bois while “not paying due attention to the radical changes that he would undergo” later in his life (Rucker 2002, 38). This has led to paradoxical views of Du Bois in scholarly literature. As historian Walter Rucker explains, Du Bois “has been described variably as an elitist, as Eurocentric, as “pre-Afrocentric,” and even as a European man in black skin” (2002, 38). Despite these mixed presentations, historian Sterling Stuckey makes it clear that Du Bois “early set himself the task of exploring and writing the history of his people,” placing it in a broader context of “the history of the world” and consequently

“his published work as a whole constitutes the most impressive argument to date against the theory and practice of racism” (1987, 307). Indeed, Du Bois’s “thoughts of a Negro self-sufficient culture in America” was a “sustaining force for him at Harvard” and once he got to Fisk “the possibilities of Black nationalism” became cemented as a permanent fixture in his mind (Stuckey 1987, 285; Rucker 2002, 39). As Stuckey writes,

The 1890s was the decade in which Du Bois discovered the tradition of black nationalism, to which he was especially susceptible following his years in the South. But his preference for a self-sufficient Negro culture might not have existed had he not known the richness of the folk heritage. At Harvard his studies of American Negro history, encouraged by [Albert Bushnell] Hart, were encompassing and deep. Through antebellum black writers, he first discovered that Africans played a decisive role in the construction of civilization, which was a main source of his faith in his people. Moreover, he became aware that self-assertion was central to the thought and activity of many antebellum black leaders, and he came to believe that nationalism alone would make possible an effective struggle by blacks. (1987, 296)

In his younger years, Stuckey explains that Du Bois thought of “black people [as] a permanent and distinct group in America with certain non-negotiable values”—Black America constituted “a *nation* stored with wonderful possibilities of culture,” the destiny of which was “not a servile imitation of Anglo-Saxon culture, but a stalwart originality which shall unswervingly follow Negro ideals” (1987, 297). Black nationalists like Martin Delany “almost certainly” influenced his early views of the “spiritual and other values peculiar to his people,” his “view that Africa strongly influenced Afro-American culture and that this influence was worth preserving”—two elements that would later contribute to what eventually would become Du Bois’s “revolution in the development of black nationalist thought” (Stuckey 1987, 307). Though, this would not happen suddenly and was “in fact elaborated throughout much of his life, as were his ideas about how African liberation might be achieved” (1987, 307).

It should be no surprise then that there were Black nationalist projections in Du Bois’s first publication *The Conservation of Races* (1897), wherein his thinking explicitly rejected integration, “was marked by an emphasis on self-help,” and urged Black autonomy in the arts (Stuckey 1987, 298). However, at the turn of the century, Du Bois “began to become much more critical of calls for self-help and self-segregation” (Rucker 2002, 39). As intellectual historian Walter Rucker explains, it “was not that Du Bois felt these ambitions were wrong,” but it was that he felt “compelled to undermine at all costs the program set forth” by Booker T. Washington (2002,

39). Under Washington's leadership, "lynchings and race riots increased, disfranchisement became a fact instead of a process, segregation received Supreme Court sanction, and sharecropping, debt peonage, and tenant farming became more pervasive" (Rucker 2002, 39–40).

In this context, Du Bois called for "full equality and first-class citizenship in America" based on his perception that the white "South would interpret any call for 'self-segregation'" or self-determination as approval of "the ongoing [Jim Crow] movement to erode and deny black civil rights" (Rucker 2002, 40). Yet during this time, as Rucker writes, Du Bois made two "practical re-orientations in" his ideas that would guide his conceptual thinking for the rest of his life—these concerned "resistance against white supremacy at home and resistance to European imperialism abroad" (2002, 40). This re-orientation was combined with Du Bois's view of his scholarly endeavor as one aimed at falsifying the first principles of Western physical anthropology. Europeans' increasing global reach starting in the mid-eighteenth century allowed them "to envisage a truly global ethnography, doing worldwide what Muslim geographers had done for the medieval world system" (Stuurman 2017, 94). As intellectual historian Siep Stuurman writes, the "worldwide reach of European power and knowledge transformed the contours and the meaning of humanity," yet this paradigm shift included the ascendance of racial classifications and a corresponding philosophy of history which held whites to be more evolved, superior and civilized than darker races (2017, 94).

Endeavoring to falsify these theoretical axioms and conceptualize human equality beyond Western liberal humanism, Du Bois argued that the humanist (social) sciences functioned as ideological subterfuges that justify Jim Crow in the United States and the "spellbinding paradigm of the civilizing mission" by white empires around the world (Stuurman 2017, 43). Rather than reifying the provincialism of Western humanism, Du Bois consistently exceeded the boundaries of the Liberal concept of humanity and created a new truly universal "language of equality" and idea of the human informed by the Black experience of Jim Crow and internal colonialism in the United States (Stuurman 2017, 146). It is true that Du Bois was among a cohort of colonized intellectuals of Africa and Asia who responded to the Janus-faced accomplishment of Western Liberal humanism by radicalizing themes and ideas from the European Enlightenment and reconstructing them to assert autonomy in a world dominated by white empires after World War II. Yet it also is not an understatement to say that unlike any Black intellectual before him, Du Bois undermined the white racial anthropological claim to superiority at the basis of liberal humanism and the civilizing mission—that whites, as the 'master race' are the paragon of social, civilizational, and thus biological development—through an empirical study of his people guided by their cultural ethic of Black self-determination. As historian V. P. Franklin writes, his scholarship "energetically attacked the stereotypes of black life and behavior that were disseminated



in scholarly and popular publications by whites *and* blacks, and he contributed bold ideas and profound insights into what he considered the ‘new racial consciousness’ emerging among black folk” (1984, 13).

Two of his early works, *The Souls of Black Folk* ([1903] 1996) and *The Negro* (1915) are emblematic of this theoretical tendency. In *Souls*, Du Bois cemented himself as the first Black intellectual to trace out the core values of African-descended peoples in the United States (most notably “the desire for freedom, the ideal of education and ‘book-learning,’ as well as self-development and self-realization or ‘black self-determination’”) and in doing so he identified the emergence of a biologized liberal, Western idealization of the human subject which negated Black and other nonwhite races as ontologically inferior kinds or races of men (Franklin 1984, 15). The refusal of common humanity between Europeans or white Americans and Black people on the basis of race, Du Bois argues, instantiates a hierarchy composed of “two worlds within and without the Veil” which functions to inhibit the actualization of the ideal of Black autonomy and a genuine Black self-consciousness (Franklin 1984, 15). In his own words, the Veil “obscures from the view of the larger society the true existence and spirit of the Afro-American” (Du Bois [1903] 1996, 3).

Western humanism and its ideas of racial difference spawned fields of study like ethnology and physical anthropology that were the basis for the rationalization of a division between the Black and white worlds that Du Bois dubbed “the color-line,—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea” ([1903] 1996, 10). Extending a critique of physical anthropology and its assumptions of “immutable and vast differences” between the white and black races he inherited from thinkers like David Walker and Frederick Douglass, Du Bois used *Souls* to reveal an alternative model of human cultural existence: that of the Black diasporic population in the United States whose central cultural ethic he took to be its idealization of self-realization or self-determination through a “faith in the collective ability of the emerging Afro-American nation to triumph over oppression and exploitation in order to deliver its particular ‘message to the world’” (Franklin 1984, 24; cf. Tomisawa 2003; Curry 2021; Stuurman 2017).

V. P. Franklin explains that Du Bois also extended the intellectual legacy of Douglass in his recognition of and subscription to dominant Black cultural “values of survival with dignity, resistance against oppression,” and education despite his struggle “to appreciate the self-determinist values developing among the masses of Afro-Americans” in his younger years (1984, 195). Yet Franklin avers that these values did influence Du Bois’s early arguments for a talented tenth which signified an early faith in the “the Afro-American masses” who, according to him, would “ultimately determine the ebb and flow of Afro-American social and cultural history” (1984, 25). For Du Bois, the masses exercised agency through “their ability to reject or ignore leaders whose programs and strategies that do not ap-

pear to be in the interest of ‘the race’” (Franklin 1984, 25). Even his use of the rhetorical device of ‘the Veil’ in *Souls* reflects a preoccupation with the folk cultural values of the Black masses. Specifically, the “generally held belief that a child born with a veil (or a thin covering of skin) over his or her face and eyes has special psychic powers” (Franklin 1984, 15).

Over the span of his life, Du Bois would continue to “develop various components” of what historian Sterling Stuckey describes as “an unusual grasp of the spiritual life of Africans” in America which allowed him to not only use “black folklore as an important index to their spiritual condition” but also transmit the idealization of Black autonomy and the attainment of Black self-determination or a positive Black self-consciousness “that had been preserved by generations of free blacks, extending from [David] Walker’s generations to that of [Henry Highland] Garnet and beyond” (Stuckey 1987, 308; Tomisawa 2003). Autonomy or self-determination was a means of actualizing Du Bois’s early “concept of nationalism,” would emerge at the core of the intellectual revolution in Black nationalist and human thinking about freedom conducted by him later in his life, and also was an idea he deployed throughout his intellectual corpus toward the goal “of providing his people with a better sense of what they could become” through an appreciation of the peculiar register of human existence they embodied (Stuckey 1987, 308). Accordingly, much of his thought is marked by a Pan-African orientation that emphasizes “the belief that people of African ancestry have spiritual, artistic, and psychological qualities that distinguish them from Europeans” (Stuckey 1987, 307).

Hence, Du Bois uses *Souls* to posit a positive Black consciousness as an alternative to (rather than a mere extension of) Western liberal humanism or modes of being human and its racialized hierarchy. Said differently, Du Bois argues that the latter (Western humanism) is an obstacle to the attainment of the former (a positive Black self-consciousness), and this dehumanizing imposition by the white world is expressed by a “peculiar sensation” of “double-consciousness” in the Black psyche ([1903] 1996, 5). This psycho-existential condition materializes as an inferiority complex which inhibits the re-emergence of the Black “self into a better and truer self,” reflecting a self-division or double-sight by which Black people are socialized to see themselves “through the eyes of others” and measure “one’s soul by the tape of a [white] world that look[s] on in amused contempt and pity” ([1903] 1996, 5). Given this denial of his humanity, the Black man “ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body” ([1903] 1996, 5).

Emphasizing the extent to which whites understood Black people to be lesser instantiations of human life, Du Bois explains that in the recesses of the public consciousness of white America, there is “the sincere and passionate belief that somewhere between men and cattle, God created a *tertium quid*, and called it a Negro” ([1903] 1996, 47). These beasts of

burden, the white mind reasons further, may one day develop and “become men, but in sheer self-defence we dare not let them” ([1903] 1996, 47). Consequently, behind this follows a “third and darker thought” in the mind of the race subject to this dehumanization and social predation: that they are not *truly human* ([1903] 1996, 47). Du Bois combined this critique of Western anthropology and psycho-existential analysis with a pioneering economic and sociological-historical one as well. As he shows, the postbellum political economy of the South was qualitatively different than chattel slavery. Nevertheless, they had the same outcome: the intense exploitation of Black laborers by white industrialists alongside a general terror and frenzied hatred of them among the white lower classes. In his own words, the Black masses suffered not just race prejudice but also a “wretched economic heritage” because of slavery ([1903] 1996, 87).

Said differently, the idealization of the plantation as the basic structure of the republic left a deep imprint on the social structure of the United States and the South in particular. Under the postbellum regime, Du Bois explains that the white “workingmen and those of the educated who fear the Negro, have united to disfranchise him, and some have urged his deportation; while passions of the ignorant are easily aroused to lynch and abuse any Black man” ([1903] 1996, 31). To resolve the psycho-existential and material contradictions that inhibit the accomplishment of a genuine Black self-consciousness, Du Bois never argues for integration. Rather, he argues for intelligent race leadership and Black self-determination. As Siep Stuurman explains, for Du Bois “true equality did not denote sameness” with whites “but *black autonomy*” (2017, 156).

In this way, Du Bois’s *Souls* spearheaded the creation of “a language of equality that was suffused with a new cultural sensitivity, informed by his experiences of being black in the world of the color line” (Stuurman 2017, 146). The negative impact of slavery and Jim Crow on the condition of the race, reasoned a young Du Bois, demanded intelligent race men who would uplift, civilize, and develop the genius of the Black masses through education. Rather than an industrial-style model, Du Bois called for a humanistic education whose final product will help to accomplish Black ethnological manhood and produce a self-determined race who will “have ideals, broad, pure, and inspiring ends of living” as opposed to “sordid money-getting” or “apples of gold” ([1903] 1996, 45). Only with a proper education and an economic system freed from the control of white industrialists could the race accomplish a truer self-consciousness and the “ideal of human brotherhood” ([1903] 1996, 9).

In his work, *The Negro* (1915), Du Bois extends this critique of Western humanist physical anthropology, the dominant Aryan-Anglo (white supremacist) philosophy of history and epistemology by falsifying the first principle of the modern humanist sciences: that Black African and African-descended populations are savages who stand outside of history and thus exist at a lower register of human existence. As he writes, the “Aryan’

theory” of human development assumes “the migration into Europe of one dominant Asiatic race of civilized conquerors, to whose blood and influence all modern culture” is due (1915, 9). But Du Bois explains that evidence suggests that Black Africans are in fact crucial to the development of modern civilization and contrary to modern anthropology, were considered as fellow human beings in the ancient world. Their ontological reduction to slaves occurred only recently with the advent of New World slavery. As he writes, the “origin of modern color prejudice” is not “physical or cultural” but in the historical emergence of “modern Negro slavery and the slave trade” (1915, 53).

Distinguishing between Old and New World slavery, Du Bois explains that slavery in Africa existed universally as a “system whereby captives in war are put to tasks about the homes and in the fields, thus releasing warriors for systematic fighting and the women for leisure” (1915, 55). But the number of slaves “were small and the labors not hard” because slaves were often thought of as “members of the family” and often rose to high position in the clan or society (1915, 55). Against common wisdom that chattel slavery was simply “a local west-coast phenomenon and confined to a few years,” Du Bois writes that it was a “continent wide and centuries long” economic, social, and political “catastrophe probably unparalleled in human history” (1915, 59).

With this absolute status as a slave in the New World, “Africa was to appear before the world, not as the land of gold and ivory, of Mansa Musa and Meroe, but as a bound and captive slave, dumb and degraded” (Du Bois 1915, 59). Du Bois also exhibits more focused thinking around the analytical connections between slavery, colonial imperialism and Pan-Africanism as the normative accomplishment for Black (and human) self-determination in *The Negro*. At this stage in his thought, Du Bois understands the function of disciplinary discourses of white supremacy as a subterfuge to assign “the white race alone the hegemony of the world” while consigning darker “races, and particularly the Negro race,” to “either be content to serve the interests of the whites or die out before their all-conquering march” (1915, 87). Such a view, Du Bois reiterates, is “the child of the African slave trade and of the expansion of Europe during the nineteenth century” (1915, 87).

Just as some enslaved Black people began to be emancipated in the Western Hemisphere during the late nineteenth century, a “new colonial theory” emerged that “transferred the reign of commercial privilege and extraordinary profit from the exploitation of the European working class to the exploitation” of darker races “under the political domination of Europe” (Du Bois 1915, 88). Once complete, Du Bois explains, the colonization of Africa by Europeans “brought revision of the ideas of Negro uplift” and for the sake of white profits a “new slavery or ‘forced’ labor” system was initially instituted and “stoutly defended as a necessary foundation for implanting modern industry in a barbarous land” (1915, 89).

But its likeness to “slavery was too clear,” and this new system seemed to accomplished the same results “by less direct methods” (1915, 89). This consisted of the forced labor of Black populations “in Africa, the West Indies, and America” via “land monopoly, taxation, and little or no education” in support of a broader colonial system whose aim was to create “a docile industrial class working for low wages,” who are “not intelligent enough to unite in labor unions” (1915, 89). Thus, Du Bois argued that an internationalized system of racial hierarchy was generated by chattel slavery and laid the basis for the colonization of Africa. Furthermore, he argued that the colonial endeavor and its corresponding Jim Crow system was animated by a body of knowledge emanating from the white world’s university-educational system which held that “Negroes differ from whites in their inherent genius and state of development” (1915, 89).

This notion allowed Europe to justify imperialism by thinly veiling their “use of the organization, the land, and the people” of Africa for their own economic benefit as an endeavor that encourages “peaceful industry” (Du Bois 1915, 89). Under white rule, “education is seldom encouraged, modern religious ideas are carefully limited, sound political development is sternly frowned upon, and industry is degraded and changed to the demands of European markets” (1915, 89). Indeed, colonial imperialism in Africa allowed a ruthless class of white exploiters free reign in an “attempt to deify white men as such in the eyes of the native and in their own imagination” (1915, 89). Du Bois’s normative resolution of slavery cum colonialism in the Western world order was Pan-Africanism.

Rather than an extension of liberal democratic theory, DuBoisian Pan-Africanism was an ideological adversary to Western thought, its philosophical anthropology and epistemology which dehumanized darker races around the world as biologically inferior and incapable of self-governance. In his own words, Pan-Africanism was not simply “narrow racial propaganda” but the basis for a truly universal notion of human equality and freedom: “a unity of the working classes everywhere, a unity of the colored races, a new unity of men” tied to a new egalitarian global economic order (Du Bois 1915, 90–91). Indeed, for Du Bois Pan-Africanism was an attempt to understand the idea of humanity beyond the racial-white supremacist schemas of Liberal humanism and challenged the premise that whites were the apotheosis of human development by positing that a “belief in humanity means a belief in colored men” (1915, 91).

In the following years, Du Bois continued to challenge the ideas fueling Western humanism which held that whites were biologically superior to and thus more civilized than darker races. Consequently, his lucid pattern of and bold approach to thinking about the notions of Black nationalism (Pan-Africanism), Western physical anthropology, the idea of human equality and the relationship these have to slavery, American Jim Crow Democracy, and European colonial imperialism marks Du Bois’s arguments in *Darkwater* (1920) as well. As a prelude to what later would develop into

a full-blown revolution in Black nationalist thought, *Darkwater* blends fiction and poetic prose with a series of essays that inquire into the social, existential, and economic implications of the division of mankind according to race or the color line. Four aspects of the book exemplify Du Bois's maturation and sharpened analysis of racism and imperialism. The first is his continuing assault on the philosophical anthropology that gives substance to the Western humanist sciences. For instance, in a chapter titled 'Shadow of the Years' Du Bois articulates the expansive potentialities of Black consciousness to falsify the ostensible universal applicability of Western modes of being to the human experience. During his time as a graduate student studying in Europe, Du Bois argues that his Blackness came to signify "a greater, broader sense of humanity and world-fellowship" (1920, 12).

This experience foreshadowed Du Bois's years at Atlanta University—where he systematized the principles of Black sociology—as ones where he experienced "a great spiritual upturning," grew "more broadly human" and "became widely-acquainted with the real condition" of the black masses and "realized the terrific odds which faced them" (1920, 13). Atlanta revealed to him "the race-hatred of the whites" as he "had never dreamed of it before,—naked and unashamed" (1920, 13). Operationalizing the notion of the Veil, Du Bois uses the second chapter, "The Souls of White Folk," to make a scathing analysis of the white human as a culturally specific, biologized, and over-represented conception of mankind instituted by Western epistemology, humanism, and social sciences.

Typical of Black nationalists going back to the nineteenth century, Du Bois begins his de-universalization of white racial claims to knowledge and philosophical anthropology by placing "the discovery of personal whiteness" on the scale of history (1920, 17). He avers that it has no roots in antiquity and is in fact "a very modern thing—a nineteenth and twentieth century matter, indeed" (1920, 17). Despite its novelty, its possessors have been induced into a superiority complex to view white skin as "inherently and obviously better" and thus they assume that to be born white is to be given "ownership of the earth forever and ever" (1920, 17). Du Bois explains further that this dictum of white supremacy is at the basis of a broader claim by whites to knowledge itself that rests on the systematic (mis)education of children that "every great soul was a white man's soul; that every great thought the world ever knew was a white man's thought; that every great deed the world ever did was a white man's deed; that every great dream the world ever sang was a white man's dream" (1920, 17).

Given the extreme violence imposed on Black people and its correspondence in the systematic dehumanization of nonwhite races in Western educational curricula, Du Bois judges the development of European civilization to be a Janus-faced endeavor. On the one hand, its greatness "has lain in the width of the stage on which she has played her part, the strength of the foundations on which she has builded, and a natural, human ability no whit greater (if as great) than that of other days and races" (Du Bois

1920, 19). Said differently, “the deeper reasons for the triumph of European civilization lie quite outside and beyond Europe,—back in the universal struggles of all mankind” and those that came before it: “the iron trade of ancient, black Africa, the religion and empire-building of yellow Asia, the art and science of the ‘dago’ Mediterranean shore, east, south, and west, as well as north” (1920, 19).

To the extent that Europe learned and built on the insights of the civilizations of antiquity, it has pushed forward “greater and more splendid human triumph” (Du Bois 1920, 20). But despite great cultural achievements, Du Bois continues, Europe has failed more than any other through the development of theories of colonialism and subsequent attempts to realize its self-assigned civilizing mission and rule over darker peoples. As Du Bois writes, the colonial “theory is this: It is the duty of white Europe to divide up the darker world and administer it for Europe’s good” (1920, 20). He explains further that

[s]lowly but surely white culture is evolving the theory that “darkies” are born beasts of burden for white folk. It were silly to think otherwise, cries the cultured world, with stronger and shriller accord. The supporting arguments grow and twist themselves in the mouths of merchant, scientist, soldier, traveler, writer, and missionary: Darker peoples are dark in mind as well as in body; of dark, uncertain, and imperfect descent; of frailer, cheaper stuff; they are cowards in the face of mausers and maxims; they have no feelings, aspirations, and loves; they are fools, illogical idiots,—“half-devil and half-child.” (1920, 20)

This idea of how we view the human or philosophical anthropology, Du Bois observes, laid the basis for European theories of colonial imperialism that stereotyped darker peoples as savages or ‘half-men’ who were not seen (nor regarded) as “men in the same way that Europeans are men” to justify their exploitation as subservient laborers for whites around the world (1920, 20). With this, Du Bois articulates an analytical connection between slavery, Jim Crow, colonial imperialism and liberal humanism as an ideological stratagem that served to rationalize the conquest of African and African-descended peoples and darker races globally. In the following chapter, ‘Hands of Ethiopia’ Du Bois urges the Black intellectual class to organize the Black “world for war against Europe” and secure a decolonized Africa (1920, 25).

Tracing the roots of the modern industrial capitalist system to chattel slavery, Du Bois provides readers with yet another early account of his ‘empire-as-slavery’ thesis that would later lay the basis for a reinvention of the notion of self-determination by anti-colonial nationalists in the 1950s and 1960s (Getachew 2020). As Du Bois explains, in the nineteenth cen-

ture, colonized workers (like Black workers in Jim Crow United States) were reduced to “beasts of burden” on the notion that “of the slave cannot be taken from Africa, slavery can be taken to Africa” (1920, 26). Beyond the conceptual milieu of the dominant liberal League of Nations world order and its corresponding knowledge system, which held that Black people did not have the capacity for self-governance, Du Bois posits a model to materialize a self-determined African World State. The primary basis of a free Africa, he argues, is the expansion of the modern notion of common humanity and the recognition of “Black men as human” (1920, 27).

At this stage in his thinking, Du Bois does not call for “this new state to be independent and self-governing” immediately (1920, 27). But this is the telos of his prescriptions. To maintain proper governance, Du Bois argues for a special commission to form the basis for a new global labor movement that understands that “there can be no permanent uplift of American or European labor as long as African laborers are slaves” (1920, 28). Du Bois also argues that this plan for a self-determined Africa does not include the mass transplantation of Blacks from around the world into Africa. Though, he thinks Black Americans can help to furnish “technical experts, leaders of thought, and missionaries of culture” from time to time (1920, 28).

With these two principles of governance—a labor movement and the empowering of Africans for self-rule—Du Bois argues for a modernized educational system “built upon the present government, religion, and customary law of the natives” (1920, 28). The ideal of African sovereignty must be treated as a legitimate possibility being that it has deep historical roots and the modern notion that Blacks have no capacity for self-government “rests upon no scientific foundation” (1920, 29). DuBoisian Pan-African sovereignty and the destruction of the colonial system is thus an attempt at transforming the idea of humanity from a one that reified white supremacy to one that is truly universal and can represent all of the world’s people—especially African and African-descended peoples. As Du Bois writes, the last “great crusade for humanity” lies in freedom for Africa and the “main mass of the Negro race” (1920, 32).

Throughout the rest of the text, Du Bois argues for a democratic socialist approach to governance centered on popular education as the basis for genuine political control by the people. He elaborates on themes related to this in chapters titled, “Of Work and Wealth,” “Servant of the House,” “The Damnation of Women,” and “Of the Ruling of Men.” With an acute sensitivity to the brutal treatment of Blacks in the United States, Du Bois argues that Black workers around the world must “either share in the future of industrial democracy or overturn” it given the visceral hatred of them by whites (1920, 37). For Du Bois, society ought to be structured in a way that “ministers to the wants of the many and not the few,” with the colonized darker races “among the many as well as Germans, Frenchman, and Englishmen” (1920, 37). Furthermore, universal suffrage should be



part of a broader milieu wherein the political economy itself is reconfigured away from the profits of employers and the dissolution of “economic classes” among all peoples as opposed to only among whites (1920, 37).

On the basis of this genuine humanism and the recognition of the “common humanity” of all peoples, Du Bois diagnoses white capitalist American democracy as a species of racial monarchy and argues for the development of democratic autonomy for all groups premised on a socialist international economic model (1920, 50). Intellectual historian Siep Stuurman argues that together, the works *Souls* and *Darkwater* signify an evolution in Du Bois’s understanding of common humanity and equality which was antagonistic to the scientific racism that animated Western liberal humanism and its characteristic polarity between “the white Europeans, always placed at the summit of the racial hierarchy, and the black Africans, usually situated at the bottom” (2017, 106). In Stuurman’s words, these works signified that double consciousness was “transformed into a double perspective on world history that allowed Du Bois to adopt the language of modern equality to argue for the full political rights for African Americans, the abolition of segregation, and the uncompromising rejection of scientific racism” at the core of Western physical anthropology (2017, 159).

Besides political and legal grounds, Du Bois’s view of human equality confronted “the psychological wellsprings of racism” and entailed an alternative model of being which did not advocate that African Americans’ quest for human dignity proceed by “imitating the lifestyle and mentality of white Americans” (Stuurman 2017, 159). Rather, Stuurman writes, DuBoisian “equality and mutual respect are inconceivable without the acceptance of cultural difference” in Black Americans who, he argued, ought to be “enabled to become full members of the American nation without giving up their own histories, memories, and gut feelings” (2017, 159).

This egalitarian idea of the human or humanism modeled on the self-determination and cultural idiosyncrasies of Black Americans reflects an aspiration held by Du Bois’s and other colonized intellectuals of his era: to “recenter the world on Asia and Africa” as opposed to white American and European peoples and use the darker races as the foundation of a new truly universal vision of human equality (Stuurman 2017, 160). As Stuurman explains, despite the origination of the “language of human rights” in Europe, the modern notion of human equality and human rights enshrined at the “founding assembly of the United Nations” cannot be “reduced to a simple ‘adoption’ of the political language of the European enlightenment” by Black intellectuals (2017, 171). Rather, it is a product of non-European and colonized intellectuals (like Du Bois) who “reworked and universalized Enlightenment concepts in their struggle for autonomy” and self-determination (Stuurman 2017, 171).

Overall, *Darkwater* features argumentative essays that aspire to examine the issues of race, imperialism and the broader impacts of these on the organization of modern society. Despite idiosyncrasies and its pronounced

orientation towards socialism, *Darkwater* is like other works by Du Bois in that it contains a considerable amount of fiction and creative writing and poetry. The most notable portions of *Darkwater* with these traits are the chapters “Of Beauty and Death” and “The Comet.” In the former, Du Bois argues a view of death as beautiful and emblematic of finality (of things being fulfilled). In vivid language, Death is posited as the “sweet silence of perfection, the calm and balance of utter music” (1920, 77).

Contemporary Black thinkers expressed a dissatisfaction with what they took to be a lack of analyticity of the essays in *Darkwater* compared with the vividness of its literary pieces. Taking such a position in his review of *Darkwater*, Hubert Harrison—as a Black militant, socialist and editor of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) Newspaper, *Negro World*—regarded *Darkwater* as a work that even in its best portions “failed to bite with acid brutality into the essential iron of the white man’s soul” ([1920] 2001, 322). Harrison’s review of *Darkwater* indicates just how significant Du Bois’s subsequent ideological shift towards Black nationalism and anti-colonialism over the next several decades was to be. Indeed, it was his noted ideological rivals (Booker T. Washington and Marcus Garvey), not Westernism or liberal theories of democracy or Marxism-Leninism, that inspired his theorizing of a truly universal philosophy of freedom—Pan-Africanism—grounded in the aspiration of Black autonomy and self-determination and the recognition of the common humanity of all peoples without regard to race.

### 3 Du Bois’s Revolution of Black Nationalist Thought and Pioneering of Pan-Africanism into a Truly Universal Ideology of Freedom

Between the years 1919 and 1947, insights from Washington and Garvey about Black autonomy and economic development crystallized Du Bois’s thinking and laid the basis for his development of Pan-Africanism as an ideology of anti-colonial nationalism outside the epistemology of liberal-rational or Marxist-Leninist Western world thought systems and their characteristic conceptions of the human, freedom, and self-determination over the course of five Pan-African congresses. Recall that despite their ideological dispute, Du Bois “saw some value in Washington’s emphasis on industry, vocational training, and economic development” (Rucker 2002, 41). This emphasis on economics “led him to his resignation as the editor of *The Crisis* and his first resignation from the NAACP on 26 June 1934” and his advocacy of “the need for independence from the white community and reliance on black institutions and organizations” (Rucker 2002, 41).

After he left *The Crisis*, Du Bois gave a number of speeches that gave substance to a new view of black “self-segregation” (Rucker 2002, 41). These speeches culminated in a publication titled “A Negro Nation Within the Nation” in June 1935. In the essay, Du Bois’s arguments reflect his full

maturation toward his early ideal of Black autonomy. He begins with the postulation that African America is an internal colony or nation within a nation. Starting with an observation of the worsening material condition of the Black masses, Du Bois writes that Black children are denied an education while “three-fourths of us [black adults] are disfranchised,” and the worldwide decline in agriculture has left the masses of Black farmers and sharecroppers reduced to “landless tenets and peons” ([1935] 1996, 431–432). As he explains, since 1929, Black workers have suffered economic hardship or worse “in larger or smaller degree” than whites; the loss for Black workers has been “greater and more permanent” due to technological displacement that “began before the depression” and accelerated thereafter, while unemployment and falling wages struck black men sooner—dipping to lower levels and lasting longer ([1935] 1996, 431–432).

Black public schools in “the rural South have often disappeared, while southern city schools are crowded to suffocation” (Du Bois [1935] 1996, 432). Federal and state officials “hold out little promise for the Negro,” and local authorities give resources to “the unemployed white man and the starving white child” while ignoring Black people on the notion that they are “subhuman” ([1935] 1996, 432). Given their abysmal state, Black people of America were “coming to face the fact quite calmly that most white Americans do not like them, and are planning neither for their survival, nor for their definite future if it involves free, self-assertive modern [Black] manhood” ([1935] 1996, 432–433). Continuing, Du Bois argues that Black leadership assumed in error that such an attitude stemmed from the fact that “white America did not know of or realize the continuing plight” of the Black race ([1935] 1996, 433). But despite years of Black scholars putting “the essential facts before the American people,” whites now “know the facts”; yet they “remain for the most part indifferent and unmoved” ([1935] 1996, 433).

Rather than a lack of coalitions with white allies, Du Bois argues that the “main weakness of the Negro’s position is that since emancipation” the race has “never had an adequate economic foundation” ([1935] 1996, 433). This precarity was solidified after the Reconstruction failed, leaving them with “no comprehensive economic plan” for Black development until the emergence of Booker T. Washington (Du Bois [1935] 1996, 433). Washington’s vision of building “a new economic foundation for Negroes by incorporating them into white industry” entailed making them skilled workers equipped with an industrial education on the expectation that “small capitalists” would emerge “out their ranks” (Du Bois [1935] 1996, 433). Despite his noble aspirations, Du Bois argued that Washington erroneously assumed that economic development in America during the twentieth century “would resemble that of the” previous century, “with free industrial opportunity, cheap land and unlimited resources under the control of small competitive capitalists” ([1935] 1996, 433). However, Washington would “live to see industry more and more concentrated, land

monopoly extended and industrial technique changed by [the] wide introduction of machinery" ([1935] 1996, 433).

The intellectual class that openly disagreed with Washington's program sought the "direct alliance of the Negro with the labor movement" (Du Bois [1935] 1996, 434). However, Du Bois writes, "the Negro's fight to enter organized industry has made little headway," and Black leaders were forced into a dilemma that left them with no options for development outside of proving their worth to a labor movement that believes "the most worthless white man is better than any colored man" ([1935] 1996, 434). Resolving the dichotomy between Washingtonian industrialism and civic integrationism that plagued him in his earlier years, Du Bois argues for a nationalist program of development centered on Black 'self-segregation' and institutional-national autonomy. Given the endurance of racism and its characteristic "doubt, deep-planted in the American mind, as to the Negro's ability and efficiency as worker, artisan and administrator," Black people can expect opportunities for "position and power" only under "exceptional circumstances" ([1935] 1996, 435). For Du Bois, this mindset "will fade but slowly" ([1935] 1996, 435). Nevertheless, he notes that despite the systematic exploitation of them in the American political economy the Black masses "exist in larger and growing numbers" ([1935] 1996, 435). They have not and cannot be killed via "slavery, prostitution to white men, [nor] theft of their labor and goods" and are "growing in intelligence and dissatisfaction" ([1935] 1996, 435). As to what kind of future the Black masses will have, Du Bois offers a view from a Black humanist "school of thought" that envisions truly universal human equality—that is, "the ultimate uniting of mankind and in a unified American nation, with economic classes and racial barriers leveled" ([1935] 1996, 435).

The "peculiar position of Negroes in America offers an opportunity" to realize such a world (Du Bois [1935] 1996, 435). As a self-determined people, Du Bois argues, Black Americans should not "sit down and await the salvation of a white God" but use "their political power, their power as consumers, and their brainpower" to develop an economic nation within a nation, that can survive through inner cooperation, to "found its own institutions, to educate its genius" while at the same time "cooperate with the mass of the [white] nation" ([1935] 1996, 436). Du Bois also displays a growing frustration with the Black educated elite whom he tasks with uplifting "their own proletariat" and organizing the basis for "a cooperative state within their own group—not out of pity or a "case of ethics" but as a matter "of plain necessity" for the survival of the race and its economic independence ([1935] 1996, 436). This endeavor has "to involve organized and deliberate self-segregation" without regard to whatever backlash may come from whites ([1935] 1996, 437). In his own words, Black America *must* seek economic self-determination "and the social survival of their fellows in the firm belief that this means in a real sense the survival of colored folk in the world and building of a full humanity instead of petty white

tyranny”—despite the fact “most white and colored people” will warn that such a “thing cannot be done without extreme results” ([1935] 1996, 437).

Du Bois surmised that the accomplishment of a viable Black nation within a nation was in fact *partially* complete. As he explains, the Black church, school, and business sectors are basic institutions which due to the fact of Jim Crow have emerged as “self-supporting, economic units, self-governed, self-directed,” but have not been structured according to reasonable standards or to attract the Black educated elite ([1935] 1996, 437). With carefully exercised autonomy or “voluntary and increased segregation,” the race can build an economic basis for a viable nation within the nation which “can no longer be refused fellowship and equality in the United States ([1935] 1996, 437–438). Historian Walter Rucker writes that the key insight expressed in “A Nation Within a Nation”—that the “main weakness” of the Black masses in the American social order is their economic dependency on whites—would “serve as the basis for Du Bois’s 1935 work *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860–1880*” (Rucker 2002, 41). Indeed, in subsequent years Du Bois synthesized his nationalism with socialism, claiming “that the key success of the Bolshevik revolution was the massive land reform effort that fundamentally changed the face of Soviet Russia” and reiterated that the failure to do so “in the American South in the wake of Civil War forced blacks” into a cycle of dependency on whites (Rucker 2002, 41). At this phase, Du Bois’s Black nationalism still envisioned autonomy (not integrationism) as “the only plausible solution” to the problems of the Black masses and even emphasized the “community-control” of Black institutions in ways that foreshadowed early iterations of Black Power thought (Rucker 2002, 41). Furthermore, this same combination of Black nationalism and socialism (via Pan-Africanism) would “become the basis of Nkrumahism” (Rucker 2002, 42).

This assimilation of Washingtonian ideas around Black economic autonomy or self-determination domestically was combined with a synthesis of Marcus Garvey’s ideas “of establishing an independent Africa” (Rucker 2002, 43). As Rucker writes, Garveyism laid the basis for Du Bois’s first explicit normative arguments for “a black African state” and “represented a significant shift in the language and aims of the 1900 Pan African Conference and the First Pan African Congress in 1919” (2002, 43). Rucker explains that “the demands of each successive Congress become less conciliatory to European imperialism and more insistent on the self-determination and autonomy of Africans” (2002, 43). These efforts climaxed in the Pan-African Congress of 1945 in which Du Bois was “universally recognized as the true father of the Pan-Africanist movement” and featured “the first real calls for revolutionary change in Africa” to end European colonialism through the right of self-determination (Rucker 2002, 44). The vision of Pan-African freedom articulated by Du Bois in 1945 exceeded the boundaries of the concepts of self-determination and freedom associated with the Westphalian Treaty found in the liberal political tradition by it being pre-

mised on a genuine universalization of independence and equality among nations. As political scientist Adom Getachew argues, Du Bois's long-range conceptualization of colonial imperialism as a product of chattel slavery being extended beyond the New World—"the global color line"—or what she coins as the 'empire-as-slavery' thesis, laid the basis for self-determination to be reinvented from a mere principle in the United Nations Charter into a *universal* human right.

As she writes, the end of World War II saw the dawn of "calls for a new international organization" that were "couched in the language of universal ideals" (Getachew 2020, 71). For instance, the 1941 Atlantic Charter "looked forward to the restoration of sovereignty to and self-government to all peoples" and the U.N. Charter invoked "human right and the equality of nations" as "founding principles of a new world order" (Getachew 2020, 71). But these proclamations "did not entail the end of colonial rule" and the U.N. charter "extended the League of Nations' hierarchies" between colonized (white) and colonizer (nonwhite) in its principle of self-determination (Getachew 2020, 71). Anticolonial Black nationalists like Du Bois recognized the recapitulation of a white colonial world order in the emergent U.N. international system and argued that it was an extension of the deeply held belief of "white supremacy, keeping Negroes in their place" and functioned to maintain "imperial control of 750 millions of human beings in colonies" in the name of democracy (Getachew 2020, 72).

In fact, the Fifth Pan-African Congress was organized "in part as a response and rejoinder" to the creation of the United Nations and posited an alternate structure of the global political order based on the *first universalization* of independence and equality among nations (Getachew 2020, 72). For Du Bois and other anticolonial theorists, self-determination was not simply the "realization of the principles underlying the United Nations and the culmination of a Westphalian regime of sovereignty," but the product of "a contested and contingent reinvention" of an Enlightenment concept that "positioned it as a prerequisite to other human rights" which entailed "an immediate end to colonial rule" (Getachew 2020, 74). The DuBoisian 'empire-as-slavery' thesis allowed anticolonial Black nationalists to highlight "the ways in which slavery was a modern form of labor extraction and exploitation" and thus the deep "continuities between New World slavery and colonialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (Getachew 2020, 80).

Put differently, for anticolonial thinkers the "through-line linking New World slavery and the scramble for Africa was a racialized structure of domination and exploitation" (Getachew 2020, 81). This critique reflected a unique synthesis of Liberal and Marxist thought that led "anticolonial nationalists to endorse domestic self-government and international non-domination in the right to self-determination" (Getachew 2020, 81). Thus, the right to anticolonial self-determination functioned as a juridical com-

ponent in a broader vision of an international order “premised on the independence and equality of states, which are to be free from domination,” and not a product of “the Westphalian Treaty or the UN Charter” but an expression of an “anti-imperial project that went beyond inclusion of new states to demand an expansive vision of an egalitarian world order” (Getachew 2020, 74).

For Western liberals, self-determination “was a principle rather than a right” meant to “support the more central aim of maintaining international peace” (Getachew 2020, 88). Said differently, Western Liberal formulas of self-determination articulated in the founding charter of the U.N. “entailed gradualism and left unaddressed the broader questions of international [racial] hierarchy” (Getachew 2020, 88). Thus, the “emergence of a right to self-determination” was not “an inevitable development of postwar [liberal] institutions and ideals and more an effort to break with the racial hierarchy and colonial slavery that continued to structure the international sphere” after World War II by anti-colonial theorists like Du Bois (Getachew 2020, 87). Indeed, this truly universal view of autonomy was “perceived as a threat” by the liberal status quo when “anticolonial nationalists first articulated the right to self-determination outside the halls of the U.N. in contexts like the Fifth Pan-African Congress” (Getachew 2020, 87). Clarifying the extent to which this new view of self-determination exceeded the principles outlined in the U.N. Charter and Western justifications for colonial rule of darker peoples, Getachew explains that resolution 1514 of 1960 “marked an important victory for the Pan-Africanism outlined in 1945” at the Pan-African Congress (Getachew 2020, 73).

As Getachew writes, the resolution concretized “the problem-and-answer pair through which the anticolonial right to self-determination was articulated” as one of slavery cum colonialism or empire-as-slavery (2020, 90). Following the conceptual patterns developed by Du Bois at an early stage, it conceived of colonial imperialism “as a form of slavery in which the colonized were rightless subjects” and sought to resolve this condition through “the recognition of a right to self-determination, now restated as ‘an inalienable right to complete freedom, the exercise of their sovereignty and the integrity of their national territory’” (Getachew 2020, 90). Secondly, it identified the problem of colonialism as an obstacle to world peace. Put differently, it argued that colonization “enabled violence against subject peoples” and “incited imperial competition between states” (Getachew 2020, 90). To counter this international racial hierarchy, anticolonial nationalists attacked the central axiom of the liberal Western world order that darker races had an incapacity for self-rule and through the resolution “called for the immediate transfer of power to peoples in trusteeships and colonies ‘without any conditions or reservations’” (Getachew 2020, 90). Thus, Du Bois’s adoption of significant aspects of the ideas and programs of his two foremost ideological rivals around the ideal of Black self-determination/autonomy—Booker T. Washington and Marcus Garvey—laid

the basis for the next step in his “own intellectual and philosophical evolution” of revolutionary Pan-Africanism into a truly universal philosophico-ideological rival to Westernism and its limited notions of human equality, autonomy, and self-determination (Rucker 2002, 43).

At the dawn of African decolonization, Du Bois articulated the telos of Black Nationalism (Pan-Africanism) as the right to self-determine from colonialism and one bound up with a new normative vision of human civilization that rejects the Western liberal civilizational models of being (anthropology) and freedom. In “Whites in Africa after Negro Autonomy” (1962), he argues that Black autonomy is not reverse-racism but a “desperate effort to envision a humanity bound together in peace” in the aftermath of the spoilation of Africa and African peoples via the transatlantic slave trade and colonial imperialism (1962, 1). Together, the slave trade and colonialism has translated “into the loss of perhaps 100 million African people and an overthrow and retardation of African culture for centuries” that was fueled by “the theory that Negroes were not human and had no rights which white men were bound to respect” (1962, 2). Slavery in America was sustained by this anthropological distinction and went on to become the basis of “the Industrial Revolution in Europe” and of a variety of techniques of repression “which enabled white men to rule the world for two centuries” through colonial counterinsurgency tactics (1962, 2). The treatment of “men with black skins, has embittered them and made them resentful” of white civilization (1962, 3). Voicing the broader rejection of Westernism on this basis, Du Bois writes that “the last thousand years proves” that the white race is “the most selfish of any on earth” who will outright deny any contribution of Black people to the literature, art and science of human civilization (1962, 3).

Against their historical subjugation, the assertion of Black autonomy in Africa is materializing as a “mighty flood rolling toward socialism and to a real communism of mankind” while the white world reinvents neo-colonial methods to extract capital gains and promote conflict on the continent among them (Du Bois 1962, 6). Du Bois argues that such plans “of building white wealth and culture on Negro poverty and exploitation must cease” if Black Africa is to grow “in strength, unity and intelligence” (1962, 9). The accomplishment of Black autonomy in Africa, then, is antecedent to the creation of a new world wherein civilization understands “not individual wealth, but decent living for the masses” to be the “chief end of man” (1962, 10). Signifying his enduring tendency to think of Black America and Africa as having a shared destiny, Du Bois argues that the former has a crucial role in actualizing a new truly just state of affairs by preventing the further spoilation of Africa. As Du Bois writes, the Black masses in the United States must not delude themselves into Americanism based on civil-rights victories and the “progress in American race relations during the last fifty years” (1962, 11). Rather, Black America must refuse the promise of integrationism and the “acquiescence in national policies



which continue to spell ruin for the colored peoples of the world,” defend the humanity of all oppressed people and secure “the freedom of Africa” (1962, 12).

In his rich and detailed work, *Pan-Africanism or Communism?* (1956), George Padmore provides a diachronic intellectual history of Black nationalism and clarifies Du Bois’s role in laying the theoretical basis for the emergence of anti-colonial nationalism (Pan-Africanism) that swept over Africa in the post-World War II period and decolonization era. The main purpose of the work is to place anti-colonial African nationalism in its proper historical context and clarify its roots in DuBoisian Pan-Africanism and Garveyism as opposed to Westernism (liberal democratic capitalism or Stalinism/Marxist-Leninism). Though they emerged around the same time, the twentieth century phase of African nationalism against colonialism cannot be understood without a grasp of its relation to them being that both Garveyism and DuBoisian Pan-Africanism “have much influenced the present generation of [African] nationalists” (Padmore 1956, 16). Padmore writes that Garveyism “was the most militant expression of African nationalism” (1956, 16). In his struggle for Black autonomy, Garvey made “the American Negro conscious of his African origin and created for the first time a feeling of international solidarity among Africans and people of African descent” (Padmore 1956, 16). Despite its start as an “ideology of the masses,” Garveyism devolved into “a peculiar form of Negro “Zionism,” which, instead of fighting American imperialism, advanced the slogan “Back to Africa” (1956, 17). Contrary the claims of Western imperialists though, neither brand of Pan-Africanism (Garveyism or DuBoisian) received any support from Communists. As Padmore writes, “the philosophy and programmes of both movements have been bitterly assailed by Communists” (1956, 16).

Padmore argues that the post-World War II years have shown that “colonial peoples are resentful of the attitude of Europeans, of both Communist and anti-Communist persuasion” who feel that “they alone possess the knowledge and experience necessary to guide the advancement of dependent peoples” (1956, 17). Rather than Westernism (liberalism or communism), Africans and African-descended peoples embraced DuBoisian Pan-Africanism which “rejects the unbridled system of monopoly capitalism of the West no less than the political and cultural totalitarianism of the East” and is “opposed to all forms of oppression and racial chauvinism—white or black—and associates itself with all forces of progress and goodwill, regardless of nationality, race, colour, or creed, working for universal brotherhood, social justice, and peace *for all peoples everywhere*” (1956, 18). Padmore writes further that anti-colonial Black (African) nationalists chose to “build upon the ideological foundations laid by Dr. Du Bois, the ‘father’ of Pan-Africanism,” and on this basis conceived a two-fold vision of self-determination to rival the hegemonic liberal Western modality of self-determination and its Marxist-Leninist counterpart: national libera-

tion *and* international legitimacy through the federation of a United States of Africa (1956, 19).

Providing readers with an intellectual history of Black nationalism that is aprioristically excluded from inquiry under our present academic-integrationist milieu, Padmore explains that Du Bois was “not the first Negro intellectual to have visions of a Pan-African movement,” but nevertheless the “credit must go to him for giving reality to the dream and conserving its ideal until such a time as if found acceptance as the basic ideology of emergent African [anti-colonial] nationalism” (1956, 117). Though, Du Bois did establish himself “as one of the foremost sociologists in America” and as the first Black nationalist-scholar “of his race to have scientifically expose[d] the myth of white supremacy and the economic facts behind European imperialism” in Africa (Padmore 1956, 126). As a response to Western colonial counterinsurgency in Africa and as a reflection of a “fraternal solidarity among Africans and peoples of African descent” going back to (at least) the late eighteenth century, Pan-Africanism came of age as “a philosophy evolved by Negro thinkers which Africans and peoples of African descent could claim and use on their own” to achieve freedom (Padmore 1956, 152).

As a result of Du Bois’s influence, Pan-Africanism was anchored in a vision of “complete self-government for Africans in Africa organized on the basis of socialism and cooperative economy”—leaving “no room for millionaires, black or white” (Padmore 1956, 106). DuBoisian Pan-Africanism consisted of three essential ideological elements: national self-determination, individual liberty, and democratic socialism (Padmore 1956, 106). Du Bois’s synthesis of democratic socialism should not be understood as his mere extension of Marxism toward the problematic of race. Rather, Pan-African autonomy emerged from a “creative and combative relationship” Du Bois had with the basic concepts of Western thought that led him to reinvent these inherited rubrics in a struggle against Jim Crow-colonialism (Getachew 2020, 77). As Padmore explains, Du Bois’s scholarly corpus “combated racial arrogance” at the basis of Western liberal thought through his falsification of “the myth of ‘racial superiority’ expounded by such pseudo-biologists as Count Arthur de Gobineau, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Madison Grant and Lothrop Stoddard,” who were the “ideological fathers of Adolf Hitler and the racialists of America and South Africa” (1956, 107).

Du Bois’s long-range critique of Enlightenment philosophical anthropology and epistemology contributed “in large measure to the awakening militancy of” Black America that Garvey was able to take “full advantage of when he arrived in America in 1916” (Padmore 1956, 108). With a basis in his early conceptual goal of Black nationalism, Du Bois elaborated a new vision of Black/African autonomy than Westernism could allow. As Padmore explains, the Pan-Africanism birthed by Du Bois became part and parcel of an “emergent African nationalism, serving as a beacon of light in

the struggle for self-determination, the prerequisite to regional federations of self-governing African communities which may one day evolve into a Pan-African Federation of United States” (1956, 118). Thus, Du Bois’s pioneering evolution of Pan-Africanism and reinvention of self-determination as a human right offered Africans and African-descended peoples a genuinely universal ideological alternative to the racism, imperialism and provincialism endemic to Westernism and Western philosophical anthropology-epistemology.

Clarifying DuBoisian Pan-Africanism from communism, Padmore argues that Communism functioned as a racist-imperialist Western counterpart to liberal capitalism that the masses of African and African-descended people recognized as such. In his own words, Africa and its diaspora “are keenly aware that they are the most racially oppressed and economically exploited people in the world” (1956, 289). Consequently, they are also “very much alive to the fact” that communists had an interest in them that was “dictated by the everchanging tactics of Soviet foreign policy rather than altruistic motives” (1956, 289). Indeed, Padmore writes that the primary strategy of engagement entailed courting Africans and African-descended peoples “to swell the ‘revolutionary’ ranks against the imperialist enemies of the ‘Soviet Fatherland’” (1956, 289–290). Stemming from “the experience of the Russian Bolsheviks in their struggle for power,” Padmore explains that this attitude of disposability is “fundamentally part and parcel of the communist philosophy relating to racial minorities and dependent peoples” (1956, 290).

Under the influence of DuBoisian Pan-Africanism, anticolonial African nationalists emerged who had “the desire to be mentally free from the dictation of Europeans, regardless of their ideology” (Padmore 1956, 342). As Padmore writes, this assertion by Black leaders “of intellectual independence is resented by most whites,” because few can “envisage a world in which they are not pushing coloured folk around” (1956, 342). In the Western mind, a “society in which all men are equal regardless of their colour or race is” either “utopian” or “treason” (Padmore 1956, 342). Given the long-range tendency for communists to give “the impression that they are more interested in promoting the foreign policies of the Soviet Union than in advancing the national liberation of their own dependent countries” and the “conflict between colonial communists and colonial nationalists” that this led to, Pan-Africanism emerged as a philosophical basis for the decolonization of Africa (Padmore 1956, 371). Put differently, Pan-Africanism functioned in the struggle for Black autonomy and self-governance as “an ideological alternative to Communism on the one side” and capitalist imperialism and Colonialism on the other (Padmore 1956, 379). Outlining its robust humanism and two-fold vision of freedom, Padmore writes of Pan-Africanism that

[i]t stands for racial co-existence on the basis of absolute equality and respect for human personality. Pan-Africanism looks above the narrow confines of class, race, tribe and religion. In other words, it wants equal opportunity for all. Talent to be rewarded on the basis of merit. Its vision stretches beyond the limited frontiers of the nation-state. Its perspective embraces the federation of regional self-governing countries and their ultimate amalgamation into a *United States of Africa*. In such a Commonwealth, all men, regardless of tribe, race, colour or creed, shall be free and equal. And all the national units comprising the regional federations shall be autonomous in all matters regional, yet united in all matters of common interest to the African Union. This is our vision of the Africa of Tomorrow—the goal of Pan-Africanism. (1956, 379)

With this philosophical framework at its basis, the momentum generated by the Fifth (and final) Pan-African Congress impelled young African nationalists to lead liberation movements against colonialism in their homelands. The ethic of self-determination and autonomy of the diaspora returned home and laid the basis for African decolonization. After the establishment of Ghana as an independent republic in 1957 and the organization of the First Conference of Independent African States in April 1958, the Pan-African movement materialized on the continent in a tangible way. Through his organization of five Pan-African congresses “and his various writings, Du Bois pioneered Pan-Africanism, African nationalism, and theoretically presages the Black Power phenomenon of the mid to late 1960s”—laying the basis for demands of “economic empowerment, self-determination, and true liberty” for colonized and neo-colonized populations around the world (Rucker 2002, 45).

Du Bois’s synthesis of socialism, Garveyism, and Black nationalism; his pioneering work in debunking the anthropological-historical dictums of white genetic-eugenic supremacy; and his reinvention of self-determination into a right for African and African-descended (and other colonized) people globally demystifies a fact that is categorically denied under the derelict philosophical status quo in the Anglophone university: that his root expansion of human thought toward a truly universal view of freedom and self-determination was an *extension* of a critique of Western philosophical anthropology and Westernism characteristic of Black thought since the nineteenth century, not a universalization of Westphalian regimes of sovereignty or liberal rights-based paradigms of justice (Stuurman 2017; Getachew 2020).

## 4 Conclusion

Breaking with the scholarly disposition toward pseudological criticism and the propagandistic erasure of Black diasporic epistemologies that fall outside of or are antagonistic to Western thought, this essay has endeavored to give a diachronic exposition of Black nationalist thought through the corpus of Dr. Du Bois. As I show, Black nationalism was cemented as an early conceptual ideal and goal in the thought of W. E. B. Du Bois and metastasized into a root expansion in human thought due to his pioneering role in evolving Pan-Africanism into a universal ideology of freedom and anti-colonialism. As outlined in section 2, Du Bois was heavily influenced by the tradition of Black nationalism as early as the 1890s. Furthermore, he continued to sharpen his ideas around the relationship between slavery, colonialism, and Black nationalism into the early twentieth century—debunking liberal bourgeois humanism, philosophy of history, and the axioms of white supremacy animating the modern humanist sciences. However, after the death of Booker T. Washington and the deportation of Marcus Garvey, Du Bois synthesized their ideas around Black autonomy and self-determination into a new paradigm of anti-colonialism: Pan-Africanism. This ideological evolution was outlined in section three. In conflict with Western world thought systems (liberalism or communism) rather than an extension of them, DuBoisian Pan-Africanism emerged as the philosophical basis for anti-colonial nationalism on the African continent and facilitated a root expansion in human thinking about the substance of equality, freedom, and self-determination.

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