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NEWSLETTER ON PHILOSOPHY AND THE BLACK EXPERIENCE

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Philosophy and the Black Experience

John McClendon & George Yancy, Co-Editors

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FROM THE EDITORS

In this issue, we begin with Dr. Clanton C. W. Dawson's insightful essay, "A Thing Called Race." Originally presented as a keynote address before the 3rd Annual Conference on Philosophy and Race at Lincoln University (Jefferson City, Missouri) in October 2010, we have published his address in its entirety. Dawson philosophically confronts the matter of how four key concepts of race are crucially operative within the contemporary expressions of racism.

The second essay, John H. McClendon's "The Black Athlete and the White Shadow: The Matter of Philosophy of History and the Problem of the Color Line," is a philosophical exploration into how African American athletic engagement in sports, during and after the era of Jim Crow, is a vital gauge for comprehending the meaning affixed to W. E. B. Du Bois' notion of the "color-line" and questions surrounding philosophy of history. McClendon's essay is a summary glimpse into his forthcoming co-authored text (with Dr. Stephen Ferguson), which is entitled *Beyond the White Shadow: Philosophy, Sports and the African American Experience* (Kendall/Hunt, 2012).

The third essay, by Floyd W. Hayes, III, is entitled "The Paradox of the Ethical Criminal in Richard Wright's Novel *The Outsider*: A Philosophical Investigation." According to Hayes, "Richard Wright's powerful 1953 existential novel of ideas, *The Outsider*, examines the life experience of a self-possessed and intellectually gifted black man, who is caught in the clutches of modern American society, whose culture, according to Wright, is based upon pretense. Although a product of his circumstances, Wright's protagonist is not a victim. Rather, Wright constructs an existential-nihilist anti-hero (a sort of Nietzschean superman) who is a rebel driven to be/become a free spirit. Wright seems to argue that the American legal system, among other social institutions, is a veil of illusion. In his search for freedom, Wright's rebel-nihilist breaks the laws of civil society, but he considers himself innocent. He attempts to establish and live by his own values. Wright identifies this figure only once as an ethical criminal." Within this context, Hayes raises very significant questions. For example, can a black individual actually escape the laws of a decadent social order and create his own values? Also, can an individual transcend formal constraints of good and evil? In this essay, Hayes wrestles with Wright's investigation of the existential paradoxes of black life. Wright's insight that even blacks who commit crimes suffer from a gnawing feeling of innocence raises the question of black existence that lies beyond issues of societal inclusion.

The fourth essay in this issue is Bill Bywater's "Reflections on George Yancy's *Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race*" (Rowman & Littlefield, 2008). Bywater's essay was originally written for a 2009 APA "Author-Meets-

Critics" Session/Conference" on George Yancy's first authored book, *Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race*.

The next essay, which is entitled "Jay-Z, Hip Hop, and Phenomenology," is a phenomenologically exploratory piece by Harry Nethery IV. In his essay, Nethery undertakes a phenomenological inquiry into the "experiential structure of hip-hop"—a structure that hip-hop artist Jay-Z (Shawn Carter) gestures towards in his text *Decoded*. According to Nethery, "Jay-Z argues that hip-hop has a particular power to act as the vehicle for the communication of a specific type of experience, i.e., contradictory experiences, or those which do not seem possible under the principle of non-contradiction. For instance, Tupac Shakur says of his mom that 'even as a crack fiend, mama / You always was a Black Queen, mama.' The way in which hip-hop is a powerful vehicle for this communication lies, according to Jay-Z, in its very structure, which he describes using two sets of terms: rhythm/flow and music/rhyme. Using Jay-Z's general outline, this essay attempts to complete a *phenomenological* analysis of hip-hop, in the effort to (1) isolate the experiential structure of hip-hop and (2) isolate, within this structure, the way in which hip-hop is able to communicate contradictory experiences." In the final analysis, Nethery "isolates the experiential structure of hip-hop and shows how its multiple layers work to draw listeners in and induce them to *experience-with* the artist."

Matthew Bruenig's "Atomistic Individualism and the Hermeneutics of Race Philosophy" is our sixth essay in this issue. Bruenig argues that "racism within the social contract tradition and other Enlightenment philosophy has ignited a dispute among race scholars about how to interpret the racially exclusive works of past philosophers. Scholars like Thomas Hill and Bernard Boxill argue that it is logically possible to separate past theories from their initial racist intentions, and consequently non-problematic to use nominally sanitized versions of them within contemporary prescriptive debates. Other scholars, like Charles Mills and Robert Bernasconi, counter that this kind of separation is inconsistent with typical interpretative methods, and that it does not account for racialized theoretical principles that remain racialized even when applied in universalist ways." Bruenig proposes "that atomistic individualism, an ontological description and methodological approach prevalent in Western ethical and political philosophy, is precisely such a racialized principle: that is, even if the principle of atomistic individualism is nominally non-racialized or is presented in a theory that is non-racialized, the principle remains racialized because it generalizes from a white experience and differentially privileges the justice needs of white people by making group-based justice claims impossible."

We are delighted to publish a review of Arnold L. Farr's authored book, *Critical Theory and Democratic Vision: Herbert Marcuse and Recent Liberation Philosophies* (Lexington Books, 2009). The review is written by Clancy Smith, a philosopher who has written excellent reviews for us in the past.

Lastly, we include a short poem by Felicia Nimue Ackerman about Dorothy Height, who was former president of the National Council of Negro Women and who received the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the Congressional Gold Medal in her lifetime. Ackerman's poem originally appeared in *The Providence Journal* (May 24, 2011).

ARTICLES

A Thing Called Race

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To President Dr. Carolyn Mahoney, Dr. Ann Harris, Dean of the School of Arts and Letters, Dr. Bruce Ballard, Dr. Laurence Rohrer, Dr. Jeffery Freelin, distinguished guest presenters, other members of the faculty and staff, and of course students—good morning. Thank you for the invitation to attend and present the keynote address for this 3rd Annual Philosophy Conference. I am honored that you have given me this opportunity to discuss a central part of my work.

I begin this address by telling a racist joke. It is a joke that sets the context of what I wish to discuss with you. The joke is by Whoopi Goldberg. Question: Do you know why so many black and brown soldiers were killed during the Vietnam War? Answer: Because every time someone would shout, "Get Down!" black and Latino soldiers would bust a move (dance!).

Many people find the joke funny—or do we? Should we laugh given the embedded stereotypes in the joke? A greater question to ask is: What is it about race that causes us to be hesitant, reluctant, or openly defiant when speaking about race? The fact is that we who make up this great democratic experiment are constantly race thinking or talking about race. Therefore, since the focus of this conference is centered on the analysis of race and philosophy, I can think of a new and better way to begin than to ask: What is this thing called race?

Let me be clear: this is not a discussion about racism *per se*. All serious conversation about race will include a discussion of racism, how racism is or is not deeply ingrained in the very institutions and systems that operate in this country, how racism still determines who has access to privilege and power, and who does and does not have access, etc. However, *this presentation wants to examine racism another way. Racism, etymologically, is a body of knowledge concerning the nature of race. This presentation is an evaluation and examination of our epistemological commitments, our thinking, about race. This presentation will explore what mental images and/or paradigms best describe our conceptual framework for race talk and race thought.* Because of the negative baggage associated with the term racism I will instead use racialism(s), which is a term used by Kwame Anthony Appiah (Appiah 1993), although I maintain that what we are really doing is engaging in a conversation about different notions regarding the nature of race.

Today, I suggest that there are four concepts of race operating and clashing in this society. Each one vies for dominance and all of them together create the chaotic state of race talk we experience in contemporary American society. The first concept is the concept of *race as a biological manifestation*. In the early days of racial thought and talk, classical racialism was believed to be the correct way of thinking about race. It suggested that every race had a racial essence and that every

member of the racial group shared the same racial essence. That essence determined three things about the individuals within the racial group: their intellectual ability, their moral capacity, and their physiology. Under the classical racial conceptual framework one could know every important aspect of a person's character if the racial essence was taken into consideration. Take, for example, the "one drop rule." The one drop rule stated one drop of black blood made a person black. Why? Because, they claimed, the racial essence of a racial group was contained in the blood of each member of the group. For example, if a person is Asian, one can predict that the person is good in math; if the individual is Black then she will be great at sports—but not in academics; if the person is Latino, then he carries a knife, etc. We are well versed in the stereotypes perpetuated by classical racialism. What is important here is to notice that for classical racialism one's racial essence determines intellectual ability, moral capacity, and physiology. The U.S. Census Bureau still operates by this principle in that it assumes that all Americans can check their appropriate racial box during a national census. What is important here is to notice that for classical racialism a) everyone has a racial essence; b) a person is aware of her appropriate racial essence and thus her correct racial group; and c) the racial essence of each group determines the intellectual ability, moral capacity, and physiology of every member of the designated group.

The first problem with classical racialism is that if the anthropologists are correct (which I think they are), humanity began in Africa in and around the regions of Kenya. From Africa humans migrated to various parts of the world. You can imagine how disturbing this fact is for the classical racialist. If the first people were African then all of us are descendents of Africa. If we are all descendents of Africa, then all people share the same essence, which makes the establishment of a racial hierarchy invalid. Thus, the hierarchical structures that classical racialism purports are obviously false. The second and perhaps the most important problem with classical racialism is that its history is one full of too many examples that defy racial types classical racialists maintain. George Washington Carver can easily be seen as the Michelangelo of our time. One needs only to watch Oprah Winfrey's attempt to keep time by clapping and the observer will soon realize that all Black people do not have rhythm.

A new form of classical racialism has emerged since the Human Genome Project of 2000. The research, performed primarily by Nei and Roychoudhury, has led some to believe that there exists a significant genetic connection to race. What is clear from the research is that of our genetic make-up as human beings 98.1% of our genetic coding is the same. The research also demonstrates that 1.9% of our genetic make-up is different and the difference seems to follow racial groupings as we know them. As a result of the research race specific drugs have emerged as never before. Let me give three examples.

If I (as an African American male) have a heart attack the EMS personnel will not give me the usual bi-carbonate injection given to white males. Instead they will give me a solution called BiDil which has a history of being very effective with African American males.

Most women of African decent will never get osteoporosis. The early Bovina commercials use to state at the bottom of the advertisement, "This product is for women of Caucasian and Asian descent."

The National Bone Marrow Transplant Network lists race as the first category of consideration for donor matches—even before allele count! The claim here is that the statistical chances of a successful match increase significantly when the race of the donor and recipient is taken into consideration.

These examples are just a few among many that have some arguing that there is a connection between race and genetics. Many in the intellectual community want to attribute these differences to diet, geography, and other factors. However, it seems that there exists an important link between race and genetic structure; however, the importance of the link is still very much up for debate.

The second concept of race operative in this society is that *race is a social construct and it is a construct with objective status*. This idea of race is dominant in the intellectual community's concept of life. While neither time nor space will allow a thorough examination of social constructionism and its relationship to race, let me suggest that social constructionists make a distinction between natural things like rock and quasars and things that are created by human enterprise (Berger and Luckman 1966, Hacking 2001). The things created by human societies are social constructs. A social construct can be weak (e.g., shaking hands when greeting another) or strong (e.g., money). Social constructs are of two main kinds: real and therefore have objective status (either ontologically or epistemologically) like money, national flags, language; and social constructs that are operative but do not have objective status like the Easter Bunny or the Tooth Fairy. The proponents of race as a social construct with objective status purport that race is a strong social construct and is real. Racial constructs with objective status determine for us how we think about ourselves as racialized populations. In other words, they tell us who we are and what to think, thus having objective status (Mills 1998, Taylor 2004).

Under this conceptual framework race is a) ontologically real and b) epistemologically real. Since the construct directs our thinking and sets the paradigms for identity, race as a social construct with objective status states for us what it means to be a racialized person in the same way the rules of the game determine how one thinks of the game. For example, the game of baseball has a body of rules that determine how the game is to be played. Because baseball is a relatively older game it has a historical perspective that informs our thinking about the game, and a set of established conventions that prescribes how one participates, codes of decorum, etc. By analogy race as a social construct serves our race talk and race thinking in the same like manner: what it means to play/perform in a particular position, team/group identity, proper and improper decorum as a racialized person, etc. The rules and conventions set out by race as a social construct with objective status determine what it means to be black, white, Asian, etc., as well as how I should think about what it means to be a member of said group.

One of the problems of race as a social construct with objective status is the problem of Passing. This is the social phenomenon where individuals of a socially constructed racialized group chose to willfully "pass" as a member of another racial group. African Americans and Latinos are familiar with this term and activity. In some circles it was a way of gaining social benefits otherwise denied to them. Social constructionists will dismiss this action as simply an attempt to gratify a minority person's quest for access to privilege and power. But passing is a much more troubling concept considering the fact that the racial constructionists maintain that the *strong* social constructs of our lives tell us, without exception, "who" we are and "what" to think. Given that race is a strong social construct with objective status it would seem to be impossible for the passing phenomenon to exist given the power of the racial construct. After all, what lies outside of a social construct by which one could create an alternative identity? The answer is clear—nothing! Either we have to say that passing does not occur, which is blatantly false; or that considering race as a

social construct with objective status is an insufficient model for telling us what race is or is not. I suggest that the passing problem causes major problems for race as a social construct with objective status.

The third concept of race which we should consider is the belief that *race is a social construct without objective status*, or as some thinkers in the field call it "racial eliminativism" (Mallon 2010). The defenders of this position believe that to think that race is real is to have a naïve and unsophisticated belief like believing in the Easter Bunny or that the world is flat. The racial eliminativists maintain that once one matures and gains a sophisticated epistemic framework, one realizes that the Easter Bunny does not exist, the world is not flat, and there is no such thing as race (Appiah 1993, Zack 2004). There is only one race and it is the human race.

They further claim that by thinking of race as real like rocks, quasars, and/or chipmunks is an absurd activity. Eliminativists point to the majority opinion within the biomedical community that points to the fact that all humans are 98.1% genetically the same. The very thinking about the human community in this fashion—as racialized groups—divides the human race against itself, disseminates the antiquated and erroneous thinking of the past, and perpetuates the historical horrors of racism. If we quit thinking about race in this manner humanity can get on with the business of being "human."

There is something worth noting with the eliminativist position. The first part of their position is ontological in character. Isn't it a fact that there is more that we, as human beings, have in common as complex neuro-physiological organisms than we have dissimilarly? Again the Human Genome Project seems to say yes. In fact, if pure physiology is the only criteria we employ in our racial categorizations, twenty-first century citizens must acknowledge that many individuals are, strictly DNA speaking, "White- looking Black people," and "Black-looking White people," and every other combination one can think of in this context. Particularly with the presence of bi-racials, human beings have multiple classic racial characteristics. My physician, for example, refuses to call me an "African-American" because he states that I may have as much "white" blood in me than the white-looking person in the lobby. Of course, I remind him of the racial dissimilarities in things like osteoporosis, for example, and then he wants to change the subject. But I get his point: since we as human beings share so much in common why talk and think in racial terms at all?

Another point of the eliminativist position is an ethical-historical objection. They suggest that racial thinking and talking is too often accompanied by racist thinking and talking. The very concepts employed in discussing race have been drawn on in the past to legitimate the denigration and subjugation of racialized communities. If we stop talking about each other in racial terms, we will stop thinking racist thoughts which cause certain groups to think they have a right to privilege and power and that other groups do not.

There are two problems for me with this objection. One problem is that racial eliminativism fails to acknowledge how deeply race is embedded in the very fabric of this society. Race determines access to privilege and power regardless of class and/or economic status. If nothing else the phenomenon of President Barack Obama points to the reality of race. During the presidential primaries the media was obsessed with questions of whether Barack Obama was too black or too white. Once President Obama won the election, America has shown its real colors. The establishment of the Tea Party, the failure of the Republicans to work with the president, the onslaught of bumper stickers that proclaim "2012—America like it use to be"; or "Never Again—Returning to the True America," suggests that

race and racism is real. If one speaks about this, one is charged with playing the race card. The point I am trying to make is that race and racism are real in everyday life and only with further open discussions about race can we start to make some sense out of nonsense.

The second problem is that not talking about race will not make racism disappear. There is a kind of wholesome naïveté in racial eliminativism. It is as though if we do not look at the elephant in the room, or talk about the elephant, the elephant will go away. It seems to me that we need more conversation about race and racism if we are ever going to overcome the elephant once and for all. Rational discourse about race can move us toward some clarity of thought which hopefully will move us toward a post-racialized society in reality instead of the one we live in now.

The fourth and final concept of race is the idea that race is an existential choice grounded in “lived” experience (Gordon 1999, 2000). Existentialists who support this conceptual framework maintain that there is no human essence: biological, religious, socially constructed ontological ousia, or of any other imaginative kind. They affirm that there is only existence, and that existence confronts us as both an ontological and ontic reality to which we may either live *en soi*, which is according to the prescribed racial mode; or, *pour soi*—for self. The individual therefore chooses each day what it means to be a black woman, a Latino man, Mung, or whatever one chooses. The emphasis is placed on the creative choice of existence rather than on facticities like skin color, tribal nuances, phenotypes, genotypes, etc.

The claim of racial existentialists further states that for people of color, in particular, attention to existence is paramount given the presence of bad faith experiences and structures of economic and political oppression, systemic racism, sexism, and xenophobia. These manifestations of bad faith constantly confront the individual with the possibility of annihilation and meaninglessness on the ontological level, and dread and anguish (to mention just two phenomena) on the ontic level. It is the individual that must defiantly create and assert her racial existence over and against these threats. Each day is the creating and defining what it means to be (existence)—a process of identity and responsibility—that must precede the social racial prescriptions that attempt to annihilate the right of individual racial identity (essence). Therefore, we create for ourselves what it means to be X. Take Dustin Hoffman in *Little Big Man* as a commercial example. He convinced us of the possibility of creating race. We were moved by his ability to be Native American and by the end of the movie we were convinced that *he was Native American*.

This view of race has definite strengths. It places race at the individual level and maintains the integrity of race within the context of lived experiences. It must be admitted that a significant part of our racial self-reflection is shaped by the experiences of life. Indeed, at some point every individual must make a cognitive choice regarding who and what one is in relationship to the question of race. The problem, however, with the idea of race as purely an act of existential choice is the problem of creative imagination. Suppose one morning I wake up and due to positive relationships with Swedes, or my fascination with Swedish culture, I decide that I am Swedish. In spite of the facticities of being born of African American parents, reared in an African American cultural context, having a biogenetic African American phenotype, have African American offspring, etc., I continue to maintain vigorously that I am Swedish. For me to make a decision of this type would seem obviously ridiculous. Yet according to the concept of race as an existential choice such a leap of faith would be valid. We must

ask: At what point is our self creating an exercise of imagination without substance and when is it a fearlessly active moment of identity creation? Until the rules are clear we are left with the impossible task of distinguishing between the racial knight of faith and the madman.

I am encouraged, however, with the new frontier that is emerging regarding race. The challenge posed by bi-racials urges us to think not in terms of the old paradigms but toward new frontiers in our thinking and talking about race. Perhaps race is the culmination of each, and yet not one. Perhaps the question of race is actually a call for new epistemological and metaphysical categories to adequately address the question. However, that is a discussion for another day. Until then I leave you with a question: What is this thing called race?

Thank you.

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The Black Athlete and the White Shadow: The Matter of Philosophy of History and the Problem of the Color-line

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In *The Souls of Black Folk* Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois insightfully declares, “HEREIN lie buried manythings which if read with patience may show the strange meaning of being black here in the dawning of the Twentieth Century. This meaning is not without interest to you, Gentle Reader; for the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line.”¹

My essay “The Black Athlete and the White Shadow: The Matter of Philosophy of History and the Problem of the Color-line” is a philosophical exploration into how African Americans in sports are a vital gauge for comprehending the meaning affixed to W. E. B. Du Bois’ notion of the “color-line.” While typically philosophy of sports scholars address concerns about applied ethics, social and political philosophy, and even on occasion issues relating to epistemology, seldom do we find that philosophers of sport address the problems associated with the philosophy of history. A great deal of the history of Black athletic competition is crucially shaped by how the color-line is decisive to our understanding of the Black past and the notion of how the color-line was a deterrent to Black progress in history.²

I contend that Du Bois’ concept of the “color-line” is framed within a historical context that offers to disclose the meaning about the nature of Black identity. What we discover

is that for Du Bois the concept of the color-line itself is part and parcel of our comprehension of history. This comprehension is by means of utilizing interpretive perspectives resulting from the application of philosophies of history to the process of measuring Black historical progress. With the color-line as the backdrop, Du Bois' concept of Black identity (with its attendant philosophy of history) upholds definite notions about Black advancement in history. A number of sports scholars, particularly historians, have been most aware of this legacy of the color-line in sports and have documented its significance for historical interpretation and the evaluation of Black progress in the United States. In 1951, Edwin B. Henderson captured this concept of Black historical progress and the color-line, when he argued,

The story of the Negro athlete parallels the path of progress of the Negro in America towards the goal of complete and unfettered citizenship... A part of the tory (sic) reaction to freedom and Reconstruction was the attempt to eliminate Negroes from competition with Caucasian whites. In the past few years these walls of prejudice have been tumbling down. In professional baseball, basketball, football and boxing, television portrayed hundreds of Negro contestants. Amateur sport bans are also falling fast.³

A mentor to scores of athletes including Drs. Charles R. Drew and Montague Cobb, Washington, D.C., scholar Dr. Edwin B. Henderson pioneered the path to academic research and critical reflection on the history of African American athletics. Henderson's articles appeared in a number of Black periodicals and scholarly journals and, of particular note, Henderson published in Du Bois' NAACP periodical the *Crisis*.⁴

According to Du Bois' suggestion, the meaning of Blackness does not rest on sheer metaphysical formulations. Instead he grounds Black identity in the definitive historical context of the emerging racism of the new century. Du Bois is keenly aware that this new century has in its wake the Plessy Supreme Court doctrine of "Separate but Equal," which legally anchors the reality of the color-line in the twentieth century. Furthermore, this legal action sets into motion not just barriers for entry into a multitude of sectors within the public and private spheres but also the forceful removal of Black folk from various positions already attained through struggle and sacrifice. Many Black workers in the skilled trades were locked out of employment due to Jim Crow restrictions. So, therefore, despite having the qualifications, Black workers lost their place in the better paying sectors of employment.⁵

Of particular import is the fact that in sport professions (such as horse racing when Black jockeys dominated the sport and such events as the Kentucky Derby) ability did not translate into longevity. The plethora of African American jockeys, of which Oliver Lewis and Isaac Murphy were just two of the outstanding examples of winners over white opponents, was pushed out of racing. In major league baseball, which unlike horse racing had only a few African Americans such as Moses Fleetwood Walker or in cycling with the solitary African American world champion in Marshall Major Taylor, we discover that due to the color-line the Black presence all came to an end and Black athletes were denied opportunities in areas where they had proven their merit and capability. Professional football would follow suit and eliminated Joe Lillard and Ray Kemp, who were its two remaining players in 1933. Collegiate sports would also fly the way of Jim Crow.⁶

The color-line regarding collegiate sports was three-fold. First, Black students were not only not allowed to join teams but often campus athletic facilities were segregated

so that intramural and educational activities in athletics was denied. University policies at so-called integrated institutions often allowed for segregated activities and facilities that excluded Black students from social affairs and institutional accommodations. For instance, during his undergraduate student years at the University of Kansas, future Basketball Hall of Fame Coach, John B. McLendon could not compete in basketball for Kansas. The Big Seven (later known as the Big Eight) had a ban on Black athletes competing. Ironically McLendon's younger brother Arthur become one of the first Black athletes to compete in the conference as a member of the University of Kansas track team. Later Earl Woods (the father of Tiger Woods) in 1951 would become the first African American to play baseball in the conference, when he joined the team at Kansas State University.⁷

John B. McLendon was a student of Dr. James Naismith, the inventor of basketball; Naismith came to Kansas to initially coach and then serve on the faculty of physical education. A major in physical education, McLendon was required to pass the swimming course. However, McLendon additionally encountered the problem of having access to the segregated swimming pool and he swam in the pool despite the segregationist policies at Kansas. Through McLendon's valiant and steadfast efforts the pool was eventually desegregated and he completed his course work in physical education along with its swimming requirement.⁸

Second, collegiate sports would not only rebuff individuals from performing on white athletic teams but also under the sanction of various conferences such as the Southeastern Conference and the Atlantic Coast Conference Black institutions and their athletic programs were deprived of the chance to compete against white colleges and universities. Moreover, the NCAA and the NAIA, which were the chief governing bodies for collegiate sports across the country, affirmed the policy of excluding Black colleges and universities by denying them the opportunity to compete in post-season tournaments. Third, the color-line extended to shutting out qualified Black coaches and administrators from leading white athletic programs and this area remains today one of the last bastions of the legacy associated with the color-line.⁹

What does it mean to be a Black athlete pursuing sports at the collegiate and professional level when the color-line is the critical line of demarcation that separates African Americans from their white counterparts? How are we to measure Black athletic achievements and accomplishments when racist exclusion rather than merit is the basis for Black exclusion from white sports competition?

Just as in other areas of Black life, the specter of Jim Crow has had an impact on the Black sport legacy that challenges us to consider the basic presumptions that ground our evaluations and judgments. If Babe Ruth is granted the status of the greatest home run hitter of his era and even beyond, then how do we locate Josh Gibson's hitting feats in the Negro baseball leagues? As a Negro League superstar, Gibson had more homers than Ruth in the major leagues and this occurred before Hank Aaron, a former Negro Leaguer, broke Ruth's "official" (major league) home run record.¹⁰

Some have designated Gibson as the Black Babe Ruth, yet can this judgment, which assumes that Ruth is the standard bearer for hitting home runs, provide real justice to Gibson's accomplishments? If the presumption is that Ruth is the standard bearer then we must ask: Why must we start with this as our basis? On that presumption, can we gain a true evaluation of Gibson? Is this presumption consistent with how the color-line removed Ruth from open competition with Black players? If meritocracy is the overriding principle and Gibson's

exclusion is based on racism and not merit, then is it correct to assume that it is Ruth's accomplishment which we should call into question rather than Gibson? This takes us to the issue of determining how does one establish the notion of standard bearer? Could it be said that Ruth was the white Josh Gibson of major league baseball? The location of Ruth as standard bearer follows from the assumption that major league baseball was superior to the Negro Leagues and thus the shadow of doubt is on the talents and achievements of African Americans and not white baseball players. Yet in various forms of head to head competition between white major leaguers and the Negro league players, the Negro leaguers won 66 percent of the games.

These questions emerge as a matter of the framework of conceptualizing the color-line, which is attendant to perspectives attached to philosophy of history and the interpretation of historical facts. The fact remains that both Gibson and Aaron hit more homeruns than Ruth but the key factor is that Gibson did it within the context of the Negro baseball leagues, that is to say directly under the restrictions of the color-line. While Hank Aaron exceeded Ruth's homerun record as a major leaguer, Gibson never had the opportunity to play in that arena and in fact Gibson died (at the age of 35 years old) in January 1947 just months before Jackie Robinson entered major league baseball. Furthermore, the shadow of the color-line was cast over Aaron's accomplishments. This was due to the fact that on his way to the homerun record, Aaron received a flood of racist hate mail and death threats against him and his family.¹¹

Before we can investigate how Black sports fit into the broader framework of concepts about Black progress in history, we must begin with the question: What is the philosophy of history? What is its relationship to the academic discipline of "history" and the problem of the color-line? As an academic discipline, history is preeminently an empirical (first order) investigation into earlier periods in time. It attempts to interpret the past by uncovering facts, which in turn give us the basis for explanations and the interpretation of previous events and developments. The academic pursuit of history consequently employs empirical methods for uncovering source materials and references that are open to observational scrutiny and verifiable criteria. Although historical interpretation is ultimately conceptually driven, it is constrained by the boundaries, which we observe that the relevant facts and empirically based reference materials (primary and secondary sources) associated with our inquiry are imposed on us. We cannot just make up any story and call it history, and it is precisely these empirical/factual constraints which demarcate mythology from history.¹²

Historical explanations and interpretations are always open to empirical as well as conceptual critique. If I state that given the historic role of the Emancipation Proclamation, we can conclude that Abraham Lincoln was the Great Emancipator in substance that he freed the slaves, this interpretation (the meaning attached to Great Emancipator) may be challenged on conceptual grounds, which in turn are based on empirical considerations.

What does the meaning affixed to "freeing the slaves" involve? If, for example, what is meant by "freeing the slaves" entails the termination of slavery as an institution in U.S. political economic life then this statement cannot be sustained on empirical (factual) grounds. The Emancipation Proclamation only included slaves that were under the jurisdiction of the Confederate South. Slave (border) states that were not a part of the Confederacy, as a matter of fact, were not required to free their slaves. Hence, the thirteenth amendment to the Constitution was needed to abolish the institution of slavery. Here we have a very important conceptual

distinction surrounding the statements "freeing the slaves" and "termination of institutional slavery."¹³

With Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, we do not address the termination of institutional slavery. Consequently given the presuppositions surrounding the notion of the Great Emancipator, we have compelling qualifications, which must be adjoined to the idea of "emancipation" because not all slaves gained freedom from slavery. Thus these certain undeniable historical facts that surround the necessity for the passage of the thirteenth amendment to the Constitution I think speak directly to the pitfalls of Lincoln as Great Emancipator. The key point about history is that as a discipline, it is a form of empirical inquiry which offers us a tool for interpretation. This tool is grounded on evidence and our considerations relating to empirical matters. In a nutshell, the popular image of Abraham Lincoln as the "Great Emancipator" follows from a particular interpretation of history, which can be challenged on empirical grounds. Therefore, if we assume that the termination of institutional slavery is the intended meaning behind granting Lincoln the status of "Great Emancipator" it will not suffice to say it is only a matter of interpretation, that is to say a matter of opinion, that stands without regard to facts.¹⁴

Now if we generalized on the idea that Lincoln freed the slaves and transformed this notion into a broader principle such that "it takes great white men in history to advance the cause of Black freedom" then we have extended beyond interpretation of empirical facts and have embarked into the realm of the philosophy of history. Philosophy of history in its method of inquiry, as a branch of philosophy, is preeminently conceptual rather than empirical. Historical research ostensibly uncovers facts to ground its interpretations, while philosophy of history presumes the truth of certain interpretations for its generalizations about historical events. Given its presumptions about the veracity of certain types of historical interpretation, philosophy of history via speculation establishes general principles about history. Moreover, it is presumed that these general principles have applicability not only with the past but also for present and future use. The wider utility of philosophy of history speaks to more than past events, where we presume that these past events are discrete facts, which stand in a disconnected fashion to the present and future.¹⁵

Thus, philosophy of history is both speculative and practical; as speculative inquiry it seeks to attain the grand sweep and scope of history, and in its practical dimension it makes suggestions as to what is to be done based on considerations about the meaning and lessons of history. The statement "history often repeats itself, the first time as a tragedy and the second as a farce" is an example of how philosophy of history suggests to us they are practical outcomes to speculatively comprehending history.¹⁶

The philosophy of history subsequently is a second order or speculative inquiry into the very meaning of the subject matter of history itself. Philosophy of history poses questions such as: What is the substance and significance of history? Does history have internal mechanisms that govern its direction? That is to say does it possess something tantamount to the laws regulating its movement? In effect does history have its own purpose or ends apart from the intentions of individuals and groups that are actors in history? Is the notion, "the march of history" or "the tide of history" a feasible concept that actually explains the process of history? Is the idea of progress in history a viable way of evaluating the past? Do we have what are lessons to be learned from history?¹⁷

Clearly Du Bois understands the color-line as substantively historical in character. When we return to our opening quote and read "the strange meaning of being black here in the

dawning of the Twentieth Century. This meaning is not without interest to you, Gentle Reader; for the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line,” we find that Du Bois is alerting us that the meaning of Blackness is inseparable from the historical context of the color-line. Consequently, with this dialectical connection between the two, we have both historical and philosophical questions to address.

How do we conceptualize the historic meaning of the color-line? By the use of the phrase “historic meaning” we are venturing more than what is comprised in our previous example of historical interpretation and the Emancipation Proclamation. Historic meaning reaches beyond empirical research and compels us to speculate about how history grounds meaning. At the same time, the question of “historic meaning” points us to how (in conjunction with its speculative dimension) the color-line is no mere abstraction that can rest on ahistorical grounds. In concrete historical terms, how does the contextual dimension of the color-line determine the content of Blackness? Is Blackness, for instance, a correlative category that stands in need of some kind of relationship of whiteness and its corresponding connection to the color-line?

It should be transparent that Du Bois understands that the philosophy of history is an instrument, which we can employ in order to clarify the prospects of being a Black person in the twentieth century, Black existence during the coming age of the color-line. Can we assume the color-line is a new chapter in history? Does it signal a departure away from a stage in history where we have the absence of color-lines? How is this related to slavery? Lastly, how can African Americans in sports assist in answering these questions?

The historical experiences of Black athletes bring to the fore that slavery was the original color-line. Most Black athletic competition for compensation was dictated by white slave-masters that pitted slave against slave. Black males as slaves were sometimes pitted against one another in fights where the winner would be granted freedom, or if not freedom at least granted certain privileges not afforded to most other slaves. The Black athlete often competed in sports as a means to bring entertainment and profits to slaveholders. To the extent that Black slaves garnered a modicum of social advancement it was at an individualized level for prize winnings and sometimes on rare occasions certain slaves gained freedom from slavery. For instance, Tom Molineaux achieved manumission for athletic performance as a boxer. After he purchased his freedom, with his winnings from fighting fellow slaves, Molineaux fought in England for the British title.¹⁸

Seldom do we find African American slaves were allowed to compete against white opponents. The notable exception was horse racing, and Monkey Simon and Abe Hawkins, in the antebellum period, were notable jockeys who successfully won against white opponents. However, as previously noted, the color-line effectively pushed Black jockeys out of professional riding and we observe that from 1921 to 2000 no African American rode in a Triple Crown race.¹⁹

Segregation, the focus of Du Bois’ iconic expression, is the context for not only how Black achievement in the sports arena can be apprehended but also we should note that for many in the African American community, the acquisition of Black sports victories over white opponents constituted explicit (public) measures for all to see how the overall move forward in the Black struggle openly challenged the presuppositions undergirding the color-line. When remarking on the Black athletes in the Olympics, Edwin Henderson notes:

If evidence were needed to convince skeptics or Hitlers that the Negro has the brawn, the brain and the competitive urge to win in contests of skill, speed,

endurance and strength, the record made by colored boys and modern Olympic Games should supply the data desired. Fortunately victory in the track and field is measured in terms of the minutes, seconds, feet and inches. The tape and the watch coupled with simple honesty and measuring eliminates bias or prejudice. The achievement of the Negro in the Olympics helps pave the way for the Negro athlete in many sports where the barrier of color or race has been set against him.²⁰

For many Black people, history demonstrates that increased opportunity to participate in an open society has repeatedly led to the progressive improvement of the race. In 1951 African American historian Albert N. D. Brooks stated, “That sports should remain a wholesome motivating force for our way of life should be of great concern to Negroes. Sports have pioneered in democracy. While the Negro has played a relatively insignificant role in social, economic, political and educational pursuits, he was gradually finding a position of equality in sports. It is reasonable to suppose that this advance in sports motivated the improvement of conditions for Negroes in other areas.”²¹

In this respect, sports were one of the earliest avenues that allowed for challenging the color-line; for whenever a Black athlete defeated a white person in sports, the lie about Black inferiority was challenged and history gained a new meaning as to how Black progress toward freedom was more than a possibility. For the great number of Black people, African American sports victories were living proof that progress to freedom was an obtainable actuality. This is because Black sports victories were public attacks on the very presuppositions of the color-line.²²

Given this level of assault, on the plane of presumptive context, the history of Black athletic achievements served as concrete raw material from developing a philosophy of history that sustained the notion of Black progress. Here Black progress through athletic victories expands some measure of opportunity and aids the advancement to Black liberation.

In contrast, the advocates of the color-line had a different philosophy of history, and this was the basis for a qualitatively different interpretation of United States history and the conception of progress in history with its ancillary notion of freedom. Any measure of Black progress was viewed as a threat to the stability and maintenance of white freedom and power. Thus, the proponents of the color-line were quite aware that Black victories over white athletes were a serious challenge to the presuppositions that served as its ideological grounds, namely, the presupposition that Black people were inferior in every respect including athletic ability. It follows that one of the requirements of the color-line was exclusion from sports competition with whites.

The color-line is usually considered in terms of the institutionalized exclusion of African Americans from full and equal participation in white society. I contend that while Black exclusion is the most apparent manifestation of the color-line it is not the essence that grounds its actual persistence. Du Bois profoundly understood that the “color-line” was more than a matter of Black exclusion and correspondingly offers a critical perspective on the facile idea that the solution to the problem was simply some form of Black inclusion. The grounds for Du Bois’ conception of the “color-line” centers on the power of white supremacy both in terms of the domestic context of the United States and international relations where white power meant the imperialist subordination of African peoples’ interests, rights, and sovereignty.²³

Three years before he wrote the *Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois was a participant at the 1900 Pan-African Congress in London. Du Bois was well aware of how racism was adjoined with imperialism and thus the specter race became a world phenomenon in the twentieth century. In actuality, in Du Bois' estimation, Black inclusion without power was far from the actual removal of the color-line. The specter of race was symptomatic of white supremacy with its attendant forms of racial oppression on a world-wide scale. The scramble for the partition of Africa into European colonial possessions actually preceded the Plessy decision by a little more than a decade. Moreover, given the imperialist nature of the color-line, where we have both colonialism in Africa and segregation in the United States, Du Bois recognized the need for developing Pan-African approaches to this race problem.²⁴

The color-line was international in scope and it was also the material context for the very modes for defining what it means to be Black. For Du Bois to be Black is not an idea divorced from how whiteness is defined and both definitions are rooted in social relations, which are in accord with white hegemonic rule. Blackness as social identity was intrinsically connected to social relations, institutions, and practices of the color-line.

Du Bois' caveat that "if read with patience may show the strange meaning of being black" should not be overlooked or taken lightly. The patient reader will discover that the meaning of Blackness is a contextual question rooted in correctly understanding the nature of the color-line. Any distortion of this context, the context and meaning of the color-line leads to the misunderstanding about the meaning of Blackness.

One specifically important aspect of uncovering the meaning of Blackness is that African Americans developed institutional structures that were forged within the distinctive cultural framework of Black life. Social institutions and organizations within the Black community mandated administrative skill, leadership ability, a process of training and mentoring future leaders and functionaries to carry on the duties and responsibilities requisite with institutional maintenance and development. Thus, when it came athletics, at both the amateur and professional level, Black sports programs, events, organizations, and institutions served to enhance the participation of the Black community in athletic endeavors. Managers, athletic administrators, coaches, trainers, referees, and other sports officials as well as physical education teachers were all a necessary component of this Black institutional framework. As late as 1980, the institutional framework of the HBCU sports conferences was the avenue for African American educator Dr. Bettye J. McClendon to achieve the pioneering role as the first woman to officiate a NCAA (Division Two) men's basketball game.²⁵

The value orientation attendant with a culture that supports such institutions meant that Black cultural institutions nurtured their own body of experts and specialists to govern and direct not only sports activities but generally most of the socially necessary programs of Black community life. When Edwin Henderson carried out his history of sports research, it was Dr. Carter G. Woodson's Associated Press that published his seminal text in sports. In turn, Henderson was not just an ivory tower sports intellectual; he not only introduced and coached basketball in Washington, D.C., but also founded several athletic and civil rights organizations. Henderson was the chief administrator for Washington, D.C., Black (segregated) public schools and African American athletic administrators such as Henderson were more often than not part and parcel of Jim Crow school systems throughout the South.²⁶

The lack of management and administrative skills to govern Black life was not the chief problem of the color-line. In fact, on

numerous occasions that color-line forced highly over-qualified Black experts to assume jobs in Black public secondary schools rather than at white colleges and universities. The case of Edward Bouchet, the first Black person to earn the Ph.D. in physics (Yale, 1876), amplifies this point. When he completed his doctoral dissertation on "Measuring Refractive Indices" Bouchet became one of only six people in the country with the doctorate in physics. Despite his credentials and academic accomplishments, racism was a formidable roadblock to a career as a research scientist. Bouchet spent most of his career teaching and administrating segregated African American schools. Hence, sometimes, with respect to Black education, the enhanced distribution of expertise in Black secondary institutions was actually due to the color-line.²⁷

The Concept of White Shadow and Philosophy of History

Several years ago there was a television series with the title "The White Shadow." It was about a white coach and his high school basketball team made of predominantly Black and Latino players. This CBS network production began in 1978 and lasted for three seasons. The producer was Bruce Paltrow of MTM Enterprises, who was a liberal Democrat in political outlook. "The White Shadow" was based on a storyline, which depicted how a concerned Black principal recruited a former white Chicago Bulls player to coach at his inner-city school in Los Angeles, Carver High, which we can assume was named after the Black scientist George Washington Carver. Based on the cultural deprivation model, the writers of the television program sought to dramatically describe the problems of the inner-city and accordingly prescribe how to bring about the needed solutions to its social ills. The salient feature of the show is that the white shadow was the catalyst to solving the problems of Black and Latino male youth.

The Black principal's search for a coach begins not in the community of which he serves, rather he looks outward for that one (individual) white person willing to take a risk at redeeming a community that lacks the means to liberate itself. The storyline is modeled on the culture of poverty paradigm that presumes the Black community is culturally deprived and hence lacks the human resources to confront its own problems. This presupposition ignores the historical role of Black leadership, institutional development, and cultural organization in the African American community that emerges in light of the color-line. It fails to look beyond what Du Bois describes as the veil, which was so instrumental for the color-line and how the Black community established its own institutional and cultural framework to confront its own problems.

Cultural deprivation, of course, mandates that solutions come from outside of the inner-city. Cultural deprivation presupposes that the solutions to Black problems are always present on the white side of the color divide. Cultural deprivation means that Black communities lack what some economists refer to as "cultural capital" and as such they are without the internal resources to change their plight. This deprivation model perpetuates the myth that the Black community's problem is not racism in its systemic and institutional forms; instead, the problem lies within the communities themselves and their constant state of dysfunction forms the social basis of the decay found within the inner-city.

Du Bois in *The Souls* states, "They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem? they say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or, Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At these I smile, or am interested, or

reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word.”

This placement of the problem (whereby *Black people are the problem* rather than *Black people having problems* that are attendant with the color-line) explains a certain incongruity about the television show’s plot. Ironically this Black principal, an African American leader in his own right, does not consider recruiting a Black coach from the NBA, which is overwhelmingly made up of Black men, which at that time a substantial number had college degrees. Surely most of the best players in the NBA were African American and were directly acquainted with the circumstances of African American life in the hood. A considerable number majored in physical education and several pursued coaching after their professional basketball days.

The questions we must ask are: So why would the writers and producers have this storyline where we have this Black principal seeking out a white former professional player to assume the tasks of coaching these students of color? Would not a Black man, as the chief educator, most value having Black role models and mentors in his school? Is it not the case that this Black man, in his own role as principal, is in very important ways actually a role model and mentor to these young male students? Why do we have this paradox of a Black principal in search of a white shadow and thus ignoring how he has already cast his own Black shadow over the lives of his students?

Well, the answer lies with the show’s cultural deprivation model and its normative implications respecting how educational institutions should function in putatively culturally deprived communities. The presumption is that while Black men may generally make for better basketball players, they are not the most suitable choices as educators, role models, and mentors. Yet after a cursory examination of the history of African Americans in sports, we must acknowledge that the prescription aligned with the deprivation model, and its notion of the white shadow, falls short of depicting the real historical record. Specifically taking into account the plot of the story, we must ask the question, How, from the start, did this Black principal come to assume his own position in the school? Was his position merely an aberration or do we have historical precedence for Black people occupying such positions?²⁸

Indeed, in an empirically substantive way, we know that many educators in Black schools as well as leaders in the African American community have historically been African American. African American educators such as Daniel Payne, Mary McLeod Bethune, Joseph C. Price, Booker T. Washington, Olivia Davidson, Charlotte Hawkins Brown, and Nannie Burroughs were such role models and they actually founded and were chief administrators of Black schools. Some of our most noted African American leaders were students of esteemed Black educators and intellectuals. For instance, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had scholars and educators such as Dr. Benjamin Mays, Dr. George Kelsey, and Prof. Samuel W. Williams as role models and mentors. King’s leadership was fostered and nurtured in a definitive Black historical context that was rich with leaders and thinkers of the highest academic standing. The cultural deprivation model conflicts with the real and actual Black history as established with the aforementioned educators and King.²⁹

Furthermore, there is considerable empirical evidence that reveals how a sizeable number of Black leaders in the African American community (way before the advent of this television show) were accomplished Black athletes who attained sterling careers outside of sports and specifically as educators of Black youth. I have fond memories of a formidable role model and mentor in Mr. Dan Harris. My math teacher in the fifth grade,

Harris introduced us, with after school sessions, to the wonders of algebra and he also played basketball with us on the school playground. Harris shared his scrapbooks from his days as a basketball player and encouraged us to excel in our academic work. Loved and admired by his students, Harris was a gifted yet stern teacher and he set an example for how athletics was a means to educational advancement. My encounters with Black teachers with athletic backgrounds did not terminate with my elementary school days at Whittier school and Mr. Harris in Dayton, Ohio.

My high school physical education teacher, Mr. David D. Albritton, was a teammate of Jesse Owens at The Ohio State University. Albritton was also Owens’ teammate on the famed 1936 U.S. Olympics track and field team and was the silver medalist in the high jump at that historic Berlin competition. A superb high jumper and innovator of the technique known as the western roll, Albritton was a NCAA and AAU champion as well as a world record holder in this event. For a number of years, Albritton was the physical education teacher and track coach at Dunbar High in Dayton, Ohio. In addition to mentoring and coaching scores of young African American men, Albritton was a member of the state legislature in Ohio. As a student at Dunbar, my first ever research paper in high school was on Mr. Albritton and his role as teacher and civic leader.³⁰

My seminal experiences with my teachers Harris and Albritton sparked my initial reaction to the white shadow and its cultural deprivation paradigm. Additional empirical research and philosophical reflection would allow me to comprehend how this view of reality (the implicit ontology adjoined with the cultural deprivation model) was grounded on a particular philosophy of history that spoke to the past in a way that demanded a critique.

Harris and Albritton’s legacies are not isolated personal experiences from my youth; actually, they belonged to a long tradition in Black education, which I think we can gather lessons from in our search for the catalyst, which pushes us forward in history. Indeed, the positive impact of former African American athletes on young people is not limited to just the field of education. Some of the most important Black leaders and pioneers in civil rights, politics, scientific research, and the creative arts are former athletes that utilized their status as star athletes to springboard into other fields and thus contribute to the battle against the color-line. History confirms that Black athletic success more often than not pushed numerous men into avenues that allowed for making contributions to various aspects of African American life. Thus the philosophy of history ancillary with the idea of the white shadow falsifies and distorts the historical facts of African Americans in sport.

Why philosophy of history offers insights into African American experiences is precisely due to the fact that real concrete history need not be removed from the philosophy of history. When philosophy of history attempts to grasp the grand picture of the historical process it has the wealth of historical experience to draw on. Meticulous attention to the details of history permits forging the general principles that inform philosophy of history. I contend that speculative philosophy of history mandates having its starting point in empirical research; the historical facts of history are its building blocks. Now let us turn and take a look at a few of the historical facts about Black male athletes and their role as leaders, which chronologically precede the “White Shadow” television series. Next I offer summary presentations of William Henry Lewis, Ralph Bunche, Charles R. Drew, and Paul Robeson as counter-examples of the white shadow myth.

At the end of the nineteenth century, William Henry Lewis was a football star at Amherst College and Harvard. The first

Black football player to play on an integrated team, Lewis in 1888 started his career as a student/athlete for Amherst. An outstanding center, Lewis was selected the captain of the team in his senior year (1891). He was also voted his class orator in the same year. Before our contemporary rules on athletic eligibility players were allowed to continue in collegiate sports after graduation. Therefore, Lewis was able to play football for Harvard when he was student at the Harvard Law School. It was at Harvard where Lewis became a two-time All-American making him the first African American to achieve such recognition in football. At that time, Lewis was widely considered as the best player ever to perform at his position of center.

After completing his days as a player, Lewis was hired as football defensive coach at Harvard, which of course is a significant first for African Americans in sports. An intellectually inclined athlete and coach, Lewis published one of the first books on college football. This outstanding role as player and coach should not, however, overshadow the fact that Lewis was a fine lawyer and politician and he had an outstanding career in these pursuits.³¹

After winning election to the Cambridge City Council and later a seat in the Massachusetts state legislature, Theodore Roosevelt appointed Lewis as Assistant United States Attorney for Boston. Later, Lewis would become the highest-ranking African American in public office when William Howard Taft selected him for the post of assistant United States attorney general. Lewis used his legal expertise to fight a number of segregation and racial discrimination cases. Interests in law and politics were also an area that Dr. Ralph Bunche was deeply involved with, that is to say after his years as a student/athlete at UCLA.³²

Dr. Ralph Bunche played football and was a basketball star at UCLA and valedictorian of his class. Bunche later earned the doctorate in political science from Harvard. An important scholar of African and African American Studies, Bunche taught at Howard University and subsequently became the under secretary general of the United Nations. For his work as under secretary and in brokering a peace agreement in the Middle East, Bunche was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Bunche was the first African American awarded this esteemed honor and later we find that Martin Luther King would become the second African American recipient.³³

Another former student/athlete with ties to Amherst College, Morgan State University, and Howard University was Dr. Charles R. Drew. Drew excelled at both football and track at Amherst College. Drew was captain of the track team and gained All-American honorable mention recognition in football at Amherst. For his overall accomplishments, Drew won the Mossman trophy for his performance as the College's best athlete. When he was a student at McGill University in Canada, Drew held the Canadian intercollegiate record in the 120-yard high hurdle. Drew went on to earn two doctorates, the MD and later Doctor of Science, which made Drew the first African American to earn this academic degree. Selected as an examiner for the American Board of Surgery, Drew was also the first African American in that capacity. Drew became the medical supervisor for the "Blood for Britain" program during World War II. Drew challenged the idea that the very blood banks under his administrative oversight would be segregated based on the race of donors. Before Drew embarked on his medical career he was also a coach and athletic director at Morgan State.³⁴

In Drew's role of coach and athletic director at historically Black institutions was not uncommon among highly educated Black males. Before Drew, Dr. Edwin Henderson not only

coached basketball at Howard University, he also organized collegiate sports competition and introduced basketball to the Washington, D.C., area. Henderson also was a mentor to Drew, who was a native of Washington, D.C.³⁵

The winner of a state-wide competition for an academic scholarship, Paul Robeson was Phi Beta Kappa and an All-American at Rutgers. Only the third Black person to gain All-American honors in football, Robeson lettered in four sports and garnered fifteen letters. Robeson went on to play professional football, becoming one of the African American pioneers at that sport. Robeson also earned a law degree from Columbia University before he became an internationally renowned actor and singer. Robeson revolutionized the concert stage by introducing Spirituals and African American folk music into his repertoire. As an artist, Robeson was keen on giving expression to the political ramifications of the arts. Robeson was deeply involved in the vanguard of the civil rights, human rights, labor, Pan-African, anti-colonial, and international peace movements. Robeson was the co-founder of the Council on African Affairs, an anti-imperialist organization dedicated to eradicating colonialism and racism in Africa. Robeson also joined the fight to end Jim Crow in major league baseball several years before Jackie Robinson's entry. Robeson and other leftist activists such as Lester Rodney were at the forefront of challenging the color-line in baseball.³⁶

From the above, we can see that the television plot, based as it was on the cultural deprivation model with its notion of the white shadow, blatantly conflicts with the real history of Black athletes and their historic roles as leaders in the Black community. The philosophy of history attached to this deprivation model is no more than mythic accounts and they do not stand up to the test of historical research. This is at the heart of the irony surrounding this Black principal's search. His hunt is only ostensibly about a basketball coach and more substantively his quest is one of filling a leadership void, something that from the deprivation assumption requires a white shadow.

From the standpoint of the Black principal, basketball is not the pivotal issue with the students; it is rather giving direction to their lives. The presumption is that direction and leadership are matters best handled by white men, that is to say people with the needed cultural capital, which is missing from an African American environment. It follows that coaching basketball was only instrumental to the greater end of saving these young men from self-destruction. Thus the white coach's job responsibilities were more than simply charting out plays and teaching basketball skills. The white shadow combined the tasks of social worker with surrogate father as he sought to bring organization and civility to a bunch of unruly young men of color. As the show developed its storyline, the coach ultimately provided them with needed social guidance and even political leadership, which according to the show's scenario was obviously lacking in the African American homes and community. The overriding presumption of the show was that without the help of the white shadow, the students were destined to languish in the "black shadow" of ghetto life.

The metaphor of "the white shadow" comes at the end of the first episode. After achieving its first victory, the Carver High team celebrates in the locker room and the coach points out that with this first victory comes more responsibility and hard work. The coach conveys that he will push them more than ever before but that he will always be behind his team. At that moment, one of the players responds, "Like a white shadow." The metaphor of the white shadow is abundantly clear; a white shadow is a white person that Black people can always depend on in their struggles to overcome oppression. "The White Shadow" was a feel good story about how committed

whites can make a difference in the lives of people of color by bringing wise counsel to a people sorely in need of leadership, management, and a directed course of action.

I must confess that I could never bring myself to really watch the show in its entirety, too much white paternalism and the missionary complex for me. The message, however, was loud and clear; given the cultural deprivation of the Black community the road to Black progress required the good will of white people as well as their guidance and vision. The inertia of Black life required the presence of white initiative to push history forward and here at this juncture about history moving forward we observe that this television series had what I deem as an implicit philosophy of history.

With respect to the color-line, historical change in any progressive manner for the African American community must come from the outside, or better yet from the white side of the color-line. Moreover, within this implicit philosophy of history, the great man theory of history is employed to amplify how white shadows are individual white men of superior character. Their personal characteristics are actually virtues such as commitment to justice, liberal optimistic outlook, risk-taking, non-conformity to the racial status quo, and ethically informed visionary perspectives about the future of race relations. White shadows must have the willingness to sacrifice personal well-being and social status in the white community, specifically for the good of Black people and more generally for racial progress.

Historical change and the transformation of race relations is anchored in the emergence of white shadows that are willing to take the heat from other white people, those not capable of seeing the big picture of what constitutes the real purpose or end of history. This philosophy of history is optimistic because one of its core beliefs is rooted in the notion that racial progress is a real possibility; it is just a matter of going out and finding our white shadow.

On later reflection, it became transparent to me that “the white shadow” conception of Black athletic progress and the color-line, in terms of popular culture, actually originated much earlier than the television series. What is of import with respect to historical method and the presentation of the notion of the white shadow and Black advancement as popular culture is that the television show did not emerge out of a vacuum. Rather, there was a vibrant tradition of popular cultural presentation, which continually perpetuated the image of the white shadow as indispensable for overcoming the color-line. The notion of the white shadow was anchored on the assumption that Black progress against the color-line depended on Black individual inclusion, which in turn was fostered by a white shadow as the key facilitator.

The view that individual inclusion marks the end of the color-line is based on what I call the Jackie Robinson/Branch Rickey thesis. In fact, what became the standard interpretation of historical progress of the Black sports saga and the color-line was none other than the story of how the solitary white individual of conviction and vision led the charge in the fight against the color-line. This paradigm of the white shadow began to capture a substantial space within popular culture during the immediate post-World War II period and on into the 1950s. The role of Branch Rickey as the white shadow behind Robinson’s entry into Major League baseball was popularized in the press and culminated in the film *The Jackie Robinson Story* in 1950.³⁷

The presumptive view of the Robinson/Rickey thesis is that racism is primarily an attitude (or belief) based on bias and stereotyping and it can be surmounted by accommodationist actions and behavior on the part of Black people toward white racist treatment. Rather than confront and resist racist practices, African Americans must be willing to accept white racist abuse

until the racists come to realize that there are no fundamental differences between African Americans and themselves and ultimately accept Black people into their organizations after proving their worth. In effect it was necessary for Black individuals to gain white approval and acceptance. Subsequently they would have to become martyrs for the cause of individual breakthroughs into the “color-line.” The presumption was that the white shadow would engineer how the individual Black person made such breakthroughs by carefully selecting the “right” Black person as martyr for the cause.³⁸

The white shadow conception about the history of Black athletic struggle and the color-line was a counter-paradigm and oppositional icon to the burgeoning militant action of grass roots and particularly Black working class struggles that gained momentum during the Double V campaigns of World War II. As Tuskegee Airmen, and other African Americans in the arms forces, made battle against racism and fascism abroad, African American communities across the country embraced the idea that this war was actually battles on two fronts. Along with scores of local fights, it was A. Philip Randolph’s proposed March on Washington that put the fight against the color-line on the center stage of public life in the United States and made it abundantly clear that racial discrimination and the color-line was under assault. This growing movement eschewed the old gradualist approach to social change and rejected moderation in its tactical approach. Both gradualism and moderation were the practical outcomes ancillary with the principle that white approval was at the crux of destroying the color-line. Moral suasion and appeals to white conscience were the substance behind the philosophy of nonviolence, which was the strategic perspective of the 1950s civil rights movement.

Before Jackie Robinson embarked on the Branch Rickey road to racial integration in baseball, with its notion of turning the other cheek to white abuse and violence, Robinson adopted the tactics of direct confrontation in the fight against segregation. In addition to Jackie Robinson, a number of Black athletes such as champion boxer Joe Louis and basketball star Don Barksdale served in the armed forces during World War II, and many of these men urgently pushed for changes to eliminate racial discriminatory practices in the armed forces. Black soldiers were acutely attentive to the fact that this war, which was putatively fought for democracy and against racism, was indeed a manifestly ethical contradiction.³⁹

The hypocrisy about democracy was most apparent to the masses of Black people and especially given the rampant racism of the armed forces and the stark conditions of white supremacy throughout the United States. Disfranchisement, segregation, and police brutality not to mention job discrimination, unemployment, and poverty were the daily conditions and context for Black life. Du Bois’ views about the twentieth century and the color-line were just as relevant at the onset of World War II as they were four decades before.

This increased sense of Black urgency and direct militancy toward the color-line led to a large number of court martial cases against Black soldiers who refused to accept racist indignities under the guise of military orders and regulations. Jackie Robinson was one of the many servicemen faced with court martial for refusing segregationist protocol in the armed services. In Robinson’s particular case, he refused to give up his seat on a military bus when the white bus driver thought that Robinson was seated next to a white woman.

Over a decade before Claudette Colvin and Rosa Parks would take similar actions in Montgomery, Alabama, Robinson risked dishonorable discharge from the Army to defend his honor and his rights as a Black person in the United States. There were no white shadows in this chapter of Robinson’s

life; however, with the *Jackie Robinson Story* in 1950 we have a profound paradigm shift. The tradition of Black political militancy gives way to a passive approach based on a pragmatic view of white power. Rather than develop a Black power base for the confrontation with the white power structure behind the color-line, Black progress would be attained by means of white approval and acceptance. If the color-line is to be broken then one must take into account white sensibilities instead of Black victimization due to white abuse. Through Robinson's trials and tribulations as the single African American in the Major League, Rickey would stand as a white shadow on which Robinson could depend.

There is a quite poignant scene in the story where Branch Rickey, the Dodger director of player personnel, challenges Robinson about how to respond to racial abuse and violence. Rickey decides to do some role playing with Robinson to prepare for his eventual start in major league baseball. After directing several racist slurs at Robinson, Rickey asks Robinson if he has the guts. Robinson replies, the guts to fight back? And Rickey answers, no, do you have the guts *not* to fight back. Rickey suggests to Robinson that he must turn the other cheek. For Rickey the fight to eradicate the color-line is no fight at all. Rather, acceptance of white abuse is the way to win white approval and only white approval can function as the grounds for terminating the color-line. This is why I contend the fabrication of the white shadow phenomena is best understood as an instrument of a particular philosophy of history that seeks to diminish Black self-activity and its tactics of direct confrontation with the color-line.

The widely accepted depiction of Jackie Robinson's entry into major league baseball is an exercise in a philosophy of history that aims to abort the Black militancy of direct confrontation. I contend this story was a mythic fabrication and was actually one of the original white shadow depictions in the popular history of sports. The story took form over the course of four years and the image of Rickey as a white shadow was projected back into history over a forty-year period. Rickey proclaims that he looked for forty years he tried to find the right Negro to fulfill the role that he had envisioned for Robinson and the integration of major league baseball.

From Rickey's standpoint, it was not just about the merits of a given African American baseball player's athletic ability and skills at playing the game; rather, and more importantly, it was the possession of a certain type of character and personality suitable for how Rickey viewed the process of Black integration into baseball. Foremost among these characteristics is the propensity for being amenable to white racist abuse.

The genesis for Rickey's vision goes back to the days when he was an athlete and coach in Ohio and his encounters with Charles Follis and Charles Thomas. These two Black athletes, in my opinion, would play a prominent part in the Rickey saga that led up to Jackie Robinson. They were both inclined to suffer racist indignities in a "gentlemanly" fashion and with a disposition that was not overtly militant toward the color-line.

Charles Follis played both baseball and football; moreover, Follis became the first African American to play pro football. When Follis was a baseball player at Wooster College, he competed against Branch Rickey, who played for Ohio Wesleyan. They were also teammates on the Shelby pro football team. Faced with constant racist actions, Follis remained silent and passively endured such treatment. A number of scholars think that Rickey's views about the tactics for Robinson's integration of baseball were modeled on the Follis experience.⁴⁰

Charles Thomas was a baseball and football player at Ohio Wesleyan and the only African American on both teams, where

Rickey served as Thomas's coach. Thomas later became a dentist and he earned his medical degree from the Ohio State University. Thomas played baseball for a number of African American teams during his student years at OSU. While at Wesleyan, Thomas was often under racist attacks and these attacks are alleged to have motivated Rickey to fight segregation. As one recent article on Thomas and Rickey indicates:

The most often repeated story involves Ohio Wesleyan's Head Coach Branch Rickey and his star catcher Charles "Tommy" Thomas, who was denied lodging at the Oliver Hotel in South Bend, Indiana. The 1903 team was in town playing the University of Notre Dame and after being initially turned away, Branch Rickey was able to convince the front desk clerk to allow Thomas to stay in Rickey's hotel room. When Coach Rickey, himself an alumnus of Ohio Wesleyan University, arrived at his room, he found Charles Thomas sitting on the bed lamenting the color of his skin. As the story goes, this event and similar injustices Thomas encountered while in college remained vivid in Branch Rickey's mind for over forty years. When Brooklyn Dodger General Manager Branch Rickey brought Jackie Robinson to Major League Baseball in 1947, thus breaking the profession's "color barrier," the nation was made aware of the inspirational role Charles Thomas played.⁴¹

Before the film production in 1950 of the *Jackie Robinson Story*, journalists wrote numerous articles in both the white and African American press praising Rickey's efforts at bringing Robinson into the Dodger organization. Of particular note is Black journalist Dan Burley's article on Rickey, which appeared in December 1946 in *The Crisis*, the magazine of the NAACP. This article of course predates Robinson's actual membership on the Dodger team and speaks to the period when he played in the Dodgers farm system. Burley's remarks on Branch Rickey are instructive for our discussion about philosophy of history and its interpretative function.

Rickey...decided he wanted to give Negroes a chance and then he sent out scouts everywhere to find out who could make the grade. The deeply religious man with fire of the crusader burning in his breast, this heavy-set, spectacle-wearing "John Brown" of baseball then fortified himself against the inevitable blasts that he would get from his colleagues as well as the race-haters, fascists, and the worshipers at the cult of anti-everything but white.

Burley's notion that Branch Rickey as the "John Brown" of baseball" is a political assessment, which is expressive of a definitive ideological orientation towards racial oppression and historical interpretation. From the standpoint of ideological orientation, what we can gather from our earlier assessment of Rickey is that at best his ideological perspective, with regard to the color-line, is simply a liberal Christian outlook on race relations, which is patently apolitical. Therefore we ask: Can Rickey's Christian turn-the-other-cheek strategy square with Brown's analysis and practical tactics concerning slavery? In a nutshell, how does Burley's analogy stand up against the facts surrounding John Brown's views on the fight against slavery? If Burley's analogy is inconsistent with the facts then his analogy fails on the grounds of irrelevancy.

The historical questions before us are: "How did Brown conceive of Black oppression?" and "In what manner must the struggle for Black liberation be waged?" Brown presumed that the slaveocracy held power through force. At the very least, granted that the use of force was fundamental to slavery, then

John Brown did not presume that any appeal to the conscience of slaveholders would advance the cause of abolitionism.

In fact, Brown's actions were predicated on the assumption that the only way to end slavery was through the use of revolutionary violence. Slaves had to arm themselves to destroy the institution of slavery and the role of white people was to assist in such efforts. "Bleeding Kansas" and later Harpers Ferry were events where Brown took up arms to fight slavery and they stand as testaments to Brown's departure from the liberal strategies of other white abolitionists, including William Lloyd Garrison's moral suasion and Henry David Thoreau's radical pacifism. I would venture that since Garrison and Thoreau actively confronted the United States government with civil disobedience for its role in maintaining the institution of slavery, it follows that their ideological position was even more radical in substance than Rickey's turn-the-other-cheek posture. Consequently, with Burley's John Brown analogy, we discover that hyperbole substitutes for concrete historical analysis.

Moreover, Ricky's concept of individual assimilation as the road to confronting the color-line effectively discounts the need for institutional transformation whereby institutional racism would be challenged through the context of having Black organizations, teams, leagues, and management integrated into the major league structure. Ricky's idea of meritocracy was founded on Black individual merit and achievement without the acknowledgment that collective (racial) oppression was rooted in institutional power inequalities. With white approval and acceptance as the presumptive backdrop, Ricky sought to improve racial relations as the means to Black individualized integration while ignoring the material foundations of racial inequality.

In contrast to Ricky's Robinson experiment, Rube Foster had envisioned that the National Negro League, which he founded, would serve as the basis for the African American integration on the foundation of organizational power and thus on institutional rather than individualist grounds. Foster believed that preparation for integration required intelligent and skillful play and he promoted high standards of professionalism on and off the field. Foster was truly a Black shadow who sought to lead, organize, manage, and teach the intricacies of baseball as a sport and profession.⁴²

William Rhoden astutely notes the difference between Foster's approach and the Rickey/ Robinson model. Rhoden carefully points out how the interpretation of history, based on the Rickey/Robinson paradigm, marginalizes Rube Foster's historic place in the fight against the color-line. In turn, Rhoden presents us with an alternative view, which I contend rests on a different philosophy of history.

Rube Foster has become a mere footnote in the epic story of the sports integration in which Jackie Robinson is a central character. In some ways, however, Foster is an even more significant figure than Robinson. Foster used black resources to build a baseball league and nurture talents like Robinson while establishing an economically viable alternative to Major League baseball. Robinson became a symbol of the process of integration, a process that ultimately enriched white institutions while weakening and in many cases destroying black institutions. White America determined the pattern of integration; the white power structure chose blacks who made whites feel comfortable, who more or less accepted the vagaries of racism. This was the Jackie Robinson model of how an integration-worthy African-American behaved: taking abuse, turning the other cheek....⁴³

Rhoden goes on to point out that with Foster we have a different model and strategy with respect to confronting the color-line.

Foster represents a significant—and rare—departure from the pioneering tradition that defined—and, to a large extent, still defines—the journey of African American athletes. ...Foster was also a pioneer, but not in the same way. His innovation wasn't being the first black and a white-defined institution. He was a man of clear, resolute, and uncompromising vision: he wanted a professional league of black baseball that was owned, organized, managed and played by African Americans. ...He wanted his leg to be so competitive, so well run, that when the national pastime was integrated, the NNL would be in a position to dictate rather than be dictated to. His theory was that the league's strongest teams would be absorbed intact, not picked apart like carcasses by so many buzzards.⁴⁴

Rickey and even Robinson could not grasp Foster's vision for Negro League baseball and the problem of the color-line as a matter of power relations. In fact, Branch Rickey had nothing but disdain for the Negro Leagues. Arthur Mann's report "The Negro and Baseball: The National Game Faces a Racial Challenge Long Ignored," which was based on conversations with Rickey and initially designed to establish the basis for the "Rickey-Robinson story," devotes two pages to attacking the Negro League baseball as "the poorest excuse for the word league." Rickey had no intentions of respecting the professional status of Negro league baseball and wanted to merely raid them for talent. Black sportswriter Wendell Smith was quite concerned with the question of "player tampering" and how compensation for Black talent should be carried out along established business practices. Accordingly, Smith raised the question, "Would [Rickey] not first approach the owner of these Negro teams who have their stars under contract?" Smith argued that Rickey "is obligated to do so and his record as a businessman indicated that he would."⁴⁵

Smith was far from the mark with respect to Rickey and his business ethics in relationship to the Negro Leagues. As a white shadow, Rickey had little respect for African American organizational structures and leadership. Hence, Rickey's business ethics reflected his racist presumptions about Black institutions and culture. John Thornton and Jules Tygiel bring to our attention that Branch Rickey "had no intention of compensating Negro league teams for the players he signed. His repeated attacks on black baseball, including the Mann article, served to justify this questionable practice."⁴⁶

In conclusion, our conception of the color-line, along with the role of the white shadow, must be anchored in a philosophy of history that can shed light on how sports and its historical meaning offer insight into the struggle for Black progression and liberation. This alternative I submit is a materialist philosophy of history, which gives emphasis to the political economic reality of capitalism and racism and how power rather than moral suasion is the road to institutional transformation. Later in 1968, over forty years after Robinson's entry into Major League baseball, Tommie Smith, John Carlos, and Muhammad Ali, among others, would put Black power at the center of athletics and the struggle for Black progress and liberation. This paper is a modest step toward a critical introduction to this crucial topic.⁴⁷

Endnotes

1. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: New American Library, 1982), xi.
2. Arthur Ashe, *Hard Road to Glory: A History of the African American Athlete* (New York: Ballantine, 1976). Charles H.

- Martin, *Benching Jim Crow: The Rise and Fall of the Color Line in Southern College Sports, 1890-1980* (Champaign/Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010). Patrick B. Miller and David K. Wiggins, eds., *Sport and the Color Line* (New York: Routledge, 2004).
3. Edwin B. Henderson, "Foreword: The Negro in Sports," *The Negro History Bulletin* XV, no. 3 (December 1951). This issue of the Negro History Bulletin was specifically devoted to African Americans in sports. For Cobb's research with respect to sports also see W. Montague Cobb, "Race and Runners," *Journal of Health and Physical Education* VII, no. 1 (January 1936); Lesley M. Rankin-Hill and Michael L. Blakey, "W. Montague Cobb (1904-1990): Physical Anthropologist, Anatomist, and Activist," *American Anthropologist* (March 1994): 74-96; and Spencie Love, *One Blood: The Death and Resurrection of Charles R. Drew* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).
 4. Edwin B. Henderson, "The Colored College Athlete," *Crisis* (July 1911). For accounts on Henderson as scholar and mentor see David K. Wiggins, "Edwin Bancroft Henderson, African-American Athletes, and the Writing of Sport History," in *Sport and the Color Line*, edited by Patrick B. Miller and David K. Wiggins (New York: Routledge, 2004) and James H. M. Henderson and Betty F. Henderson, *Molder of Men: Portrait of a "Grand Old Man"-Edwin Bancroft Henderson* (Washington D.C.: Vantage, 1985). Some of Henderson's works include: *The Negro in Sports*, revised edition (Washington, D.C.: Associated Publishers, 1949) and "The Negro Athletes and Race Prejudice," *Opportunity* 14 (March 1936). *Opportunity* was the periodical of the National Urban League. Also see Edwin B. Henderson, with the editors of *Sport Magazine*, *The Black Athlete: Emergence and Arrival* (Cornwall Heights: Pennsylvania Publishers, 1968).
 5. W. E. B. Du Bois, "Politics and Industry," in *Proceedings of the National Negro Conference* (New York: 1909).
 6. Edward Hotaling, *The Great Black Jockeys: The Lives and Times of Men Who Dominated America's First National Sport* (Rockland: Prima Lifestyles, 1999). Black Jockey Isaac Murphy won the Kentucky Derby in 1884, 1890, and 1891 and holds the highest winning percentage of any other jockey. Murphy died in the same year (1896) as the Plessy decision. See Stephen P. Savage, "Isaac Murphy: Black Hero in Nineteenth Century American Sport, 1861-1896," *Canadian Journal of History and Physical Education* 10 (1979): 15-32; Robert Fikes, Jr., "Isaac Murphy" *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Patsi B. Trollinger, *Perfect Timing: How Isaac Murphy Became One of the World's Greatest Jockeys* (New York: Viking Press, 2006). Jockey Oliver Lewis was the first winner of the first Kentucky Derby and thirteen of the fifteen jockeys were Black. See Patrick Clark, *Sports Firsts* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1981), 76 and James Robert Saunders and Monica Renae Saunders, *Black Winning Jockeys in the Kentucky Derby* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2002). For Fleetwood Walker, see David W. Zang, *Fleet Walker's Divided Heart* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995). Robert Peterson, *Only the Ball Was White* (New York: McGrath-Hill, 1984). The first Black professional baseball player was John Bud Fowler; however, he was limited to the minor leagues despite his talents. See Consult Brian McKenna, "Bud Fowler" *The Baseball Biography Project*, <http://bioproj.sabr.org/bioproj.cfm?a=v&v=l&bid=3116&pid=19716>. Todd Balf, *Major: A Black Athlete, A White Era, and the Fight to Be the World's Fastest Human Being* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2009). Andrew Richie, *Major Taylor: The Extraordinary Career of a Champion Bicycle Racer* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1996). Joe Lillard and Ray Kemp were the last Black players to leave the NFL in 1933. Alan Levy, *Tackling Jim Crow: Racial Segregation in Professional Football* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2003). Charles Ross, *Outside the Lines: African Americans and the Integration of the National Football League* (New York: NYU Press, 2001). For college and the color-line see Charles H. Martin, *Benching Jim Crow: The Rise and Fall of the Color Line in Southern College Sports, 1890-1980* (Champaign/Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010).
 7. Earl Woods, *Playing Through: Straight Talk on Hard Work, Big Dreams, and Adventures with Tiger* (HarperCollins Publishers, 1998).
 8. Milton S. Katz, *Breaking Through: John B. McLendon, Basketball Legend Civil Rights Pioneer* (Fayetteville: the University of Arkansas Press, 2007), 17-20.
 9. Dana D. Brooks and Ronald C. Althouse, eds., *Racism and College Athletics: The African American Athlete's Experience* (Morgantown: Fitness Information Technology, 2000). Arthur Ashe, *A Hard Road to Glory: A History of African-American Athletes* (New York: Ballantine, 1976). Milton Katz and John B. McLendon, *Breaking Through: The NAIA and the Integration of Collegiate Athletics Post-World War II America* (Downers Grove: Maxaid, 1988). Charles H. Martin, "The Integration of College Basketball in the American South" in *Sport and the Color Line*, edited by Patrick B. Miller and David K. Wiggins (New York: Routledge, 2004). For an insightful look at the experience of the first African American Michigan State University athletic administrator read Clarence Underwood, *Greener Pastures* (Privately Printed, 2005).
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 11. For an electronic article on Gibson, see Larry Schwartz, "No Joshing about Gibson's Talents," <http://espn.go.com/sportscentury/features/00016050.html> (10/1/2011). Also consult Donn Rogosin, *Invisible Men: Life in Baseball's Negro Leagues* (New York: Kodansha International, 1995); John B. Holway, *Blackball Stars: Negro League Pioneers* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 1992); William Leggett, "The Torturous Road to 715," *The Hammer*, edited by in Christian Stone and Mark Mavic (New York: Sports Illustrated Books, 2007).
 12. Earl E. Thorpe, *Black Historians: A Critique* (New York: Morrow, 1971).
 13. John Hope Franklin, *The Emancipation Proclamation* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1963).
 14. Lerone Bennett, *Forced Into Glory: Abraham Lincoln's White Dream* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 2000).
 15. For a treatment of philosophy of history and its connection to Black history, read Earl E. Thorpe, *The Central Theme of Black History* (Durham: Seeman Printery, 1969). For a more general treatment of the philosophy of history, see E. H. Carr, *What is History* (New York: Random House, 1961).
 16. Berkley B. Eddins, "Historical Data and Policy-Decisions: The Key to Evaluating Philosophies of History" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 26, no. 3 (March 1966): 427-30.
 17. Berkley B. Eddins, *Appraising Theories of History* (Cincinnati: Ehling, 1980).
 18. Edwin Henderson, *The Negro in Sports* (Washington, D.C.: Associated Publishers, 1949). Nat Fleischer and Sam Andre, *An Illustrated History of Boxing* (New York: Kensington Publishing Corporation, 2001), 26.
 19. William R. Rhoden, *\$40 Million Slaves: The Rise, Fall, and Redemption of the Black Athlete* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2006). For boxing read especially chapter two, "The Plantation: the Dilemma of Physical Bondage," and chapter three, "The Jockey Syndrome: the Dilemma of Exclusion." Edward Hotaling, *The Great Black Jockeys: The Lives and Times of Men Who Dominated America's First National Sport* (Rockland: Prima Lifestyles, 1999).
 20. Edwin B. Henderson, "The Negro in the Olympic Games," *Negro History Bulletin* 15, no. 3 (December 1951), 44.

21. Albert N. D. Brooks, "Democracy through Sports," *Negro History Bulletin* 15, no. 3 (December 1951), 56.
22. On a number of occasions African Americans came under violent attacks during games and Black teams and individuals had to leave town on threat of violence after winning. In 1896, the year of the Plessy decision, football player Frank "Kinney" Holbrook of Iowa (its first Black player) faced repeated threats of "kill the nigger" from the University of Missouri crowd during the game. Jack Thrice of Iowa State actually died from a gang tackle at the end of a play when they played Minnesota in 1923. Race riots (white mobs attacked African American individuals and communities) following Jack Johnson's defeat of Jim Jefferies in 1910. Al-Tony Gilmore, *Bad Nigger: the National Impact of Jack Johnson* (New York: Kennikat, 1975). In a game against Oklahoma in 1951 Johnny Bright, the leading offensive player in the country for three years was knocked unconscious three times and then hit with an elbow after a play that broke his jaw. Bright's team was undefeated coming into the game and this injury sidelined Bright for several games and he lost his chance to win the Heisman trophy. Hugh Wyatt reports, "Johnny Bright might very well have become the first black Heisman Trophy winner, until a brutal, unsportsmanlike act of racism cost him whatever chance he had. He was a first-round NFL draft choice, but he had already experienced first-hand the physical, racially-directed violence that Jackie Robinson, for all his courage, had only been threatened with. Unsure of his safety on the playing fields of his own country, he left it for Canada, the first NFL first-round draft choice ever to do so. And instead of becoming one of the best players the NFL has ever seen, he became one of the best players in the history of Canadian football, and a valued and respected member of his community when his playing days were over." Hugh Wyatt, "Johnny Bright – America's Loss" <http://www.coachwyatt.com/johnnybright.html>. Also see *The Des Moines Register* (October, 21, 1951) and Mike Chapman, *Triumph and Tragedy: The Inspiring Stories of Football Legends Fred Becker, Jack Trice, Nile Kinnick and Johnny Bright* (Newton: Culture House Books, 2010), Charles H. Martin, *Benching Jim Crow: The Rise and Fall of the Color Line in Southern College Sports, 1890-1980* (Champaign/Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010).
23. Prior to *Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois uttered the phrase about the color-line at the London Pan African conference, see The Address, W. E. B. Du Bois, "To the Nations of the World."
24. W. E. B. Du Bois, "The African Roots of War," *The Atlantic Monthly* 115, no. 5 (May 1915), 707-714.
25. On January 1980, McClendon was called to referee for the Morris Brown and Clark-Atlanta game in the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (SIAC). McClendon was an official for several HBCU conferences including the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic, Mid-Eastern, Southwestern Conferences. She is a member of several Hall of Fames including the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame, SIAC Hall of Fame, and the Tuskegee Hall of Fame. See "Georgia Sports Hall of Fame: Bettye McClendon To Be Inducted in 2006 Class," *The Weekly Online* (October 14, 2005).
26. Edwin B. Henderson, *The Negro in Sports* (Washington, D.C.: Associated Publishers, 1949). David K. Wiggins, "Edwin Bancroft Henderson, African-American Athletes, and the Writing of Sport History," in *Sport and the Color Line*, edited by Patrick B. Miller and David K. Wiggins (New York: Routledge, 2004), 271-274.
27. For Bouchet, read John H. McClendon III, "Edward Alexander Bouchet (1852-1918)," Blackpast.org, <http://www.blackpast.org/?q=aah/bouchet-edward-alexander-1852-1918>. Ronald E. Mickens, "Bouchet and Imes: First Black Physicists," in *The African American Presence in Physics*, edited by Ronald E. Mickens (Atlanta, 1999), 20-24; Garry L. Reeder, "The History of Blacks at Yale University," *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 26 (Winter 1999-2000): 125-126.
28. The cultural deprivation model omits the role of Black leadership in the wake of the color-line. Pamela Gundy outlines the role of Coach McLendon in negotiating an incident around segregated seating on a bus. The bus driver had threatened the lives of his basketball player players when they refuse to adhere to the back of the bus policy. McLendon's task was to two-fold, he had to preserve the lives of his players and at the same time uphold their manhood against racist assault. See Pamela Gundy, "Manhood and Community in African-American Institutions, 1923-1957," in *Sport and the Color Line*, edited by Patrick B. Miller and David K. Wiggins (New York: Routledge, 2004), 101-104.
29. Lawrence Edward Carter, Jr., ed., *Walking Integrity: Benjamin Elijah Mays, Mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998). For Kelsey's influence on King see the "Introduction," *The Papers of Martin Luther King Jr.*, v. 1, edited by Clayborne Carson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 42-46. In the preface to King's *Strength to Love*, he states, "I am also indebted to my teacher and friend, Samuel W. Williams, for helpful and stimulating suggestions." Martin Luther King, Jr., *Strength to Love* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1981), 12. "Special Meeting of Doctors M. L. King Jr. and Samuel W. Williams" (November 2, 1960), *The Papers of Martin Luther King Jr. Volume VI: Threshold of a New Decade, January 1959 - December 1960*. Lerone Bennett, "Men of Morehouse," *Ebony* 16, no. 7 (May 1961). "Correspondence from Samuel W. Williams to Martin Luther King Jr. (November 18, 1954)," *The Papers of Martin Luther King Jr. Volume II: Rediscovering Precious Values July 1951-November 1955*.
30. See the entry for "David D. Albritton" in *African American Legislators: Those Who Followed*. <http://www.georgewashingtonwilliams.org/Legislators.aspx?letter=A&publicOfficialId=19>.
31. Gregory Bond, "The Strange Career of William Henry Lewis," in *Out of the Shadows: A Biographical History of African American Athletes*, edited by David K. Wiggins (University of Arkansas Press, 2006).
32. See Clarence Contee, "William Henry Lewis," in *Dictionary of African Negro Biography*, edited by Rayford W. Logan and Michael R. Winston (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1982).
33. Charles P. Henry, *Ralph Bunche: Model Negro or American Other?* (New York: New York University Press, 1999). See Thomas Clarkin, "Bunch, Ralph Johnson," in *African American Lives*, edited by Henry Louis Gates and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
34. Charles E. Wynes, *Charles Richard Drew: The Man and the Myth* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).
35. David K. Wiggins, "Edwin Bancroft Henderson, African American Athletes, and the Writing of Sports History," in *Sport and the Color Line*, edited by Patrick B. Miller and David K. Wiggins (New York: Routledge, 2004).
36. Despite being the third African American to gain All-American honors in football, Robeson was not inducted into the College Hall of Fame until 1995. Consult George Beres, "The Color Line: Remembering Paul Robeson," *George Mason University's History News Network*, <http://hnn.us/articles/576.html>. Dorothy Butler Gilliam, *Paul Robeson All-American* (Washington, D.C.: New Republic Books, 1976). Irwin Silber, *Press Box Red: The Story of Lester Rodney, The Communist Who Helped Break the Color Line in American Sports* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003). Lloyd Brown, *The Young Paul Robeson* (Boulder: Westview, 1997). Philip S. Foner, ed., *Paul Robeson Speaks* (New York: Brunner/Mazel Publishers, 1978). For Robeson and the Council on African Affairs, read Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anti-colonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997). Also consult the prior research of Clarence Contee, "Black American Red and African Liberation: A Case Study of the Council on African Affairs," in *Afro-Americans and Africans: Historical and Political Linkages*, edited by Lorraine William (Washington D.C.: Adams Press, 1974).

37. *The Jackie Robinson Story* was directed by Alfred E. Green, the writers included Arthur Mann, Louis Pollock, and Lawrence Taylor. Mann was a colleague of Branch Rickey and assisted in fashioning the popular presentation of the story prior to the film. See the summation of Arthur Mann's report "The Negro and Baseball: The National Game Faces a Racial Challenge Long Ignored," in "Jackie Robinson's Signing: The Untold Story," in *The Jackie Robinson Reader*, edited by John Thorn and Jules Tygiel (New York: A Plume Book, 1997), 89-90. The cast included noted African American actors Ruby Dee as Jackie's wife and Louise Beavers as Robinson's mother. Also Kenny Washington, Robinson's UCLA football teammate and one of the first players to re-integrate the NFL, plays a role in the film as the coach of the Tigers. See A. S. (Doc) Young, "The Black Athlete Makes His Mark," *Ebony* XXIV, no. 7 (May 1969): 114, 118-119.
38. Prior to the Robinson and Rickey, we find that in 1938 Clark Griffith stated, "A lone Negro in the game will face caustic comments. He will be made the target of cruel, filthy epithets. Of course, I know the time will come when the ice will have to be broken. Both by the organized game and by the colored player who is willing to volunteer and thus become a sort of martyr to the cause." The quote can be found in Jules Tygiel, "Jackie Robinson: A Lone Negro in Major League Baseball," in *Sport and the Color Line*, edited by Patrick B. Miller and David K. Wiggins (New York: Routledge, 2004), 167.
39. Jules Tygiel, ed. "The Court-Martial of Jackie Robinson," in *The Jackie Robinson Reader* (New York: PLUME, 1997).
40. Milt Roberts, "Charles Follis: First Black Pro Gridder Labored in Obscurity," *Black Sports* 4 (November 1975).
41. "Charles Thomas (Ohio Wesleyan) - Inspiration to Branch Rickey," BLACKCOLLEGENINES (March 2, 2009) <http://blackcollegenines.com/?p.12>.
42. Donn Rogosin, *Invisible Men: Life in Baseball's Negro Leagues* (New York: Kodashana International, 1983), 67-91.
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44. William C. Rhoden, *\$40 Million Slaves* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2006), 101-102.
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The Paradox of the Ethical Criminal in Richard Wright's Novel The Outsider: A Philosophical Investigation

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He damned the day he had met the man who knew so well the spiritual malady that had plagued and undone him—the dilemma of the ethical criminal, the millions of men who lived in the tiny crevices of industrial society completely cut off from humanity, the teeming multitudes of little gods who ruled their own private worlds and acknowledged no outside authority. Hating that part of himself that he could not manage, Cross must perforce fear and hate Houston who knew how close to crime men of his kind had by necessity to live.

Richard Wright
The Outsider

In our civilized world, we learn to know almost only the wretched criminal, crushed by the curse and the contempt of society, mistrustful of himself, often belittling and slandering his deed, a miscarried type of criminal; and we resist the idea that all great human beings have been criminals (only in the grand and not in a miserable style), that crime belongs to greatness (—for that is the experience of those who have tried the reins and of all who have *descended* deepest into great souls—). To be "free as a bird" from tradition, the conscience of duty—every great human being knows this danger. But he also desires it: he desires a great goal and therefore also the means to it.

Friedrich Nietzsche
The Will to Power

The Black situation in the United States of America always has been complex, complicated, and often contradictory. The long historical nightmare—from enslavement to the present—has created a crisis of Black existence: the "psychic alienation" of being Black in an anti-Black world.¹ To be sure, white supremacy historically has operated as a global system—of imperialism, colonialism, annihilating wars, enslavement, and racism.² Significantly, following the official termination of enslavement in the United States of America, Blacks found themselves the objects of continued cultural domination as white elites constructed criminalized images of them. In the mid-nineteenth century, industrialized cities developed, establishing police forces that buttressed systems of criminal law. Simultaneously, urban Blacks made the transition from being slaves to being always already guilty of some crime in the white imagination. Legal codes—upholding racist segregation, which might be more accurately characterized as (il)legal codes—throughout the developing nation allowed, and perhaps even encouraged, increasing forms of anti-Black police control and violence.³ As a result of being largely excluded from formulating the laws that govern American society—although too often the target of the laws' uneven applications—many Black Americans have held as suspect a criminal (in)justice system that has historically worked against them.⁴ Most assuredly, Richard Wright was among those Black Americans who experienced the pain and anguish of social injustice and who dared to write resentfully, indicting the political hypocrisy of a nation that was democratic in theory but not in practice.

The historical and contemporary reality, and the resulting brutalizing experience of Black people, has constituted the occasion and catalyst for the emergence and articulation of Africana existential thought in America. Because white Americans refused to treat Blacks as fellow human beings, the consequential dehumanization produced a people whose existence and ideas have both challenged and embraced European and white American ideas. Through the pain, anguish, and desperation caused by the historic struggle to extricate themselves from what revolutionary Caribbean psychiatrist Frantz Fanon referred to as the “zone of nonbeing,”⁵ Blacks have raised questions designed to give full expression to their identity and desire for liberation. Consequently, it is perhaps correct to avow that Black thought always has been framed by existential distress.⁶

Into this existential vortex stepped Richard Wright who articulated the anguish, suffering, anger, desperation, and resentment that gnawed at the lived experience of Black people. Wright was acutely aware of the *culture of pretense* that was firmly embedded in modern Western, especially American, civilization—given the apparent bad faith and hypocritical pronouncements of democracy and equal justice under the law, but coupled with the reality and practice of white supremacy and anti-Black racist injustice. Here was a disjuncture—more extreme than a contradiction—that simultaneously included and excluded Blacks. As a radical Black intellectual warrior, Wright sought to overthrow the orthodoxy of the white American or European conception of existence and, in the process, assert the validity and complexity of the Black experience. From the perspective of Africana theorist Anthony Bogues, Wright was a Black heretical thinker who had the courage to expose dangerous truths about the West.⁷

Wright remains one of modern America’s most influential writers and political thinkers. His attempts to unmask the motives underlying Western civilization’s violent, anti-Black racism and Black people’s existential struggle for meaning and liberation in an absurd world have deeply affected subsequent generations of philosophers, literary critics, psychologists, historians, writers, political scientists, sociologists, and activists. Indeed, it has been argued that Wright’s work constitutes a discourse on racism and culture that is unparalleled in world literature.⁸ The claim is substantiated because Wright was able to think through the pretensions and consequences of racist and capitalist Western culture in a way that helped to shape the content and fashion the contours of global Black literary and post-colonial expression long after his death in 1960.

An abundance of scholarly and critical literature has focused on Wright’s novel of ideas, *The Outsider*.⁹ Much of this literature has examined various themes in the novel, such as French existentialism, double consciousness/double vision, Kierkegaardian dread, the Nietzschean overman, Marxism, the Communist Party USA, God’s death, images and roles of Black women, nihilism, resentment, racism, man’s search for freedom, Wright’s use of Dostoevsky, and anti-Black violence and the threat of death.¹⁰ However, a neglected theme among Wright scholars is his concept of the ethical criminal, which Wright mentions only once in *The Outsider*. The present discussion attempts to fill that void.

This essay examines Wright’s construction of the figure of the ethical criminal in his powerful novel of ideas, *The Outsider*. The novel centers on the lived experience of the existential-nihilist hero, Cross Damon, who is the embodiment of the ethical criminal. Conscious of the negative view of Blacks in the white imagination, perhaps Wright sought to explore the meaning of this kind of existence but from a different perspective—that of philosophical criminals whose crimes

have their bases in ideas. These figures, these outsiders, are dangerous to the social order, in Wright’s view, because they had become cynically disillusioned about their society’s values. As Wright’s early biographer, Constance Webb, stated:

These were the men dangerous to the status quo, for the outsider was one who no longer responded to the values of the system in which he lived. Communists and Fascists sought to share in the wealth and power of the nation by substituting themselves but without essentially changing its structure for governing. The greatest danger to the government stemmed from those millions of individuals who held no dreams of the prizes the nation held forth; in them, whether they knew it or not, a revolution had already occurred and was biding its time until it could translate itself into a new way of life.¹¹

The Outsider is Wright’s most obvious fictional display of philosophical ideas, manifesting as it does the author’s major contribution to Africana philosophies of existence.¹² As Gordon indicates, Africana existential thought emerges as a result of the lived experience of being Black in an anti-Black world. It is this historical and contemporary encounter with the pathology of racism that gives rise to the anxieties of Blackness, which constitute the seminal subject matter of Black philosophers of existence. *The Outsider* is philosophically important, among other things, because its narrative reveals unique philosophical concepts and problems often challenging received philosophical perspectives.¹³ In what follows, I pursue a phenomenological description of Wright’s ethical criminal; I explore the structure of his everyday life-world, seeking to reveal what lies at the core of his alienated human experience in the modern industrial world. That is, I attempt to elucidate the meaning of the ethical criminal’s being-in-the-world.¹⁴ This project also shows how literature opens us to the domain of possibilities and how metaphor proffers philosophical power for thinking about the Black struggle for liberation and change.¹⁵

Since God had been the natural genesis of Western values and the origin of all of their meaningfulness, the death of the conception of God only hastened the expansion of a smoldering culture of nihilism, an anxiety of the soul, a contamination of despair.¹⁶ God’s demise, for Dostoevsky and Nietzsche, meant that everything was possible because there were no longer any prohibitions on human conduct.¹⁷ This is the conclusion of all outsiders—human beings who are conscious of and therefore do not deny the barbarism, inhumanity, and savagery of modern Western civilization.¹⁸ Modern European and white American thinkers have spilled considerable ink discussing civil society, but few, if any, explore the meaning and practice of civility as the main ingredient of civilization.¹⁹

Richard Wright understood this contradiction; and he embraced the resulting paradox in the construction of his central character, Cross Damon, the powerful figure of the ethical criminal. Damon is the criminal type, who stares into the abyss of desire, wrenched by moral nihilism. For Wright, there is little, if any, actual justice in the American (il)legal system; from his perspective, the rational-legal perception of modern civilization is a veil of illusion. Barbarism and savagery, not civility and justice, are deeply implanted in the heart of modern Western civilization. Damon declares: “You call this *civilization*? I don’t. This is a jungle. We pretend that we have law and order. But we don’t, really. We have imposed a visible order, but hidden under that veneer of order the jungle still seethes.”²⁰ The ethical criminal’s motto is: Everything is possible, nothing is necessary. One can do whatever one pleases. For Wright’s ethical criminal, all of modern society’s ethical laws are suspended. He is a man

who acts like a God; he tries to live beyond good and evil. But is he successful?

Cross had to discover what was good or evil through his own actions which were more exacting than the edicts of any God because it was he alone who had to bear the brunt of their consequences with a sense of absoluteness made intolerable by knowing that this life of his was all he had and would ever have. For him, there was no grace or mercy if he failed.²¹

Wright's anti-hero, Cross Damon, is overwhelmed by a fear of the dreadful. Entitled "Dread," the first section of the novel contains the epigram from Walter Lowrie, the translator of Soren Kierkegaard's text, *The Concept of Dread*: "Dread is an alien power which lays hold of an individual, and yet one cannot tear oneself away, nor has a will to do so, for one fears what one desires."²² Kierkegaard expresses the same idea in slightly different form in the body of the text, and the context surrounding it there helps us to understand the dialectical manner in which Cross Damon must be viewed.

In *The Outsider*, Cross Damon is a Black man in urban America who in many respects transcends the assumed limitations of his Blackness. As such, Wright fashions a conception of Blackness as a complex system of meanings, and consequently proffers a new paradigm of the Black hero (or anti-hero) for modern, crisis-ridden America. He proposes the ethical criminal as the Black hero of a nihilistic age—an atheistic and morally destitute world—and introduces the paradox of the avid pursuit of greatness when no transcendental standard exists.

As the novel opens, Damon is suffused with feelings of alienation and self-loathing. As a post office employee, he has developed a friendship with several fellow workers; yet, his personal reading, intellectual autonomy, and persistent search for the meaning of things separate him from them. Similarly, his relationships with Black women are alienating and discomforting. Alas, Wright does not harbor positive views of Black women. Damon drinks heavily—perhaps to alleviate his loneliness. Having bequeathed him a curiously paradoxical name (god-like but demoniacal) that seems to have rendered him always guilty of something and engulfed by a sense of dread from birth, Damon's mother constantly berates him for his sorry performance as husband and father. His wife appears antagonistic and conniving; Damon suggests that she entrapped him into the marriage. Finally, he is entangled with a minor whom he impregnates. She and her friends are out to get Damon; they intend to take legal action against him. In essence, Damon's Blackness is significant because it constitutes the cultural matrix for understanding his predicament as an outsider in modern American society; it embodies the moroseness of Black existential dread.

Yet, as a result of a freak subway accident, Damon is enabled to escape his situation and to (re)create himself in familiar existential terms. Thinking he is dead, his relatives and friends hold a funeral for him, as Damon watches in God-like fashion. Following the event, Damon finds it necessary to kill a talkative friend who discovers that Damon is not dead. He leaves Chicago for New York City. On the way, he tries to master his dread and control his guilty thoughts and feelings. It is during this journey that Wright complicates even more his representation of Black existential life. He chooses this occasion to demonstrate how the ordinary experience of Black people in the United States of America enables them to see with a special clarity of vision—dreadful objectivity—the same constellation of problems which existentialist thinkers had identified in more lofty and abstract arrangements.

In this way, Wright creates an almost superhuman (clearly Nietzschean) Black anti-hero whose alienation and dread place him both outside of and yet very much inside modern American, that is to say Western, civilization. By now responsible for four murders and a suicide, Damon is the ethical criminal who is highly knowledgeable, and deeply perceptive. In contrast to (but recalling) Du Bois' representation of the double consciousness as a horrifying burden in *The Souls of Black Folk*,²³ Wright's complex image of Blackness as double vision is a source of strategic power, freedom, and knowledge. Here is an intellectually powerful figure, a philosophical criminal, who struggles to find some meaning in his complex existence.²⁴ The philosophical criminal is a criminal, not so much because of what he does, but because of what he feels and thinks. What characterizes him, Wright tells us, is that he thinks through multiple layers of illusionary veils—e.g., Christianity, law, racism, ideology, fascism, communism, and traditional family relations.

Perhaps the deepest intuition of the ethical criminal is that life is filled with adversity. His firmest judgments are that adversity itself is evil; evil is in the world and not merely in the self; evil cannot be rationally justified. In some respects the ethical criminal internalizes evil into his spirit as he makes war upon the world, himself, and other selves. Human existence may not be good, for it is hardly that, but depravity is more bad than imprudent; nothing is really necessary, it's just unfortunate. As adversity becomes self-loathing, it precipitates a loathsome world. Here we have nihilism writ large, the single attitude toward human existence that the ethical criminal embraces; it becomes quintessential to his being. From this perspective comes the affirmation of struggle that drives the ethical criminal's life. Wright indicates: "He had the kind of consciousness that could grasp the mercurial emotions of men whom society had never tamed or disciplined, men whose will had never been broken, men who were wild but sensitive, savage but civilized, intellectual but somehow intrinsically poetic in their inmost hearts."²⁵

Significantly, the ethical criminal rejects the legitimacy of the American criminal (in)justice system. Wright tells us that the law is one of America's numerous veils of illusion. In his view, the (il)legal system and its laws are established by lawless people. "Only men full of criminal feelings can create a criminal code," declares Wright (1991: 378).²⁶ As a careful and clear-eyed examination of American history would disclose, those who historically have formulated U.S. law often have been lawless people themselves. They and their descendants created a body of societal rules that had very little to do with justice and more to do with the self-interests of ruling class whites. In their social relations of power and racism with people of color in America, Europeans and their white American descendants have exhibited criminal behavior. European colonialists' treaties with Native Americans, slave codes, the original pro-slavery U.S. Constitution, racist Supreme Court decisions (e.g., *Dred Scott [1857]* and *Plessy v. Ferguson [1896]*), segregation laws, or the inequitable application of contemporary law, are glaring examples of the lawless contradictions within the system of American law.²⁷ It was the American (il)legal system and its laws that condemned Damon merely because he was Black, making his ordinary existence criminal. When one's normal everyday existence is defined as criminal, a great amount of resentment can be the result. Cross Damon, the ethical criminal, embodies this attitude.

For Wright, the distinguishing element of the ethical criminal is that in breaking the laws of society, he is guilt-free. This attitude emerges from his view that the criminal (in)justice system is bankrupt; the law in modern American society is

shrouded in illusion. According to Wright, even those sworn to uphold the law disbelieve its veracity. During the train ride to New York, Damon and New York District Attorney Houston engage in a perceptive exchange about American law and those who break the law. Although Damon is cautious in discussing these matters with Houston, himself an outsider as a result of physical deformity, Damon's outsider consciousness compels him, as it does Houston, to scrutinize the law and assert the consciousness of the ethical criminal. Due to social and economic oppression, Black Americans are outsiders, but fear of white supremacy forces them to conceal their anger and resentment. Yet, there are those who overcome their fears of legal condemnation and act out their resentment, essentially rejecting the American system of criminal (in)justice. Significantly, it is the district attorney—a man sworn to defend and enforce the law but also a man with criminal impulses—who understands and acknowledges the manner in which the (il)legal system has oppressed black Americans; Wright then articulates through Houston the ethical criminal's philosophy of self-conduct. When Damon asks if Houston is sympathetic to those who break the rules of civilization, the district attorney responds: "In a way, yes. . . . But it all depends upon *how* the laws are broken. My greatest sympathy is for those who feel that they have a *right* to break the law."²⁸ But how and where does the ethical criminal exist?

The ethical criminal dwells in the crevices of post-civilized modern industrial cities.²⁹ An existential-nihilist rebel, he believes that human existence is pointless and absurd. It leads nowhere and adds up to nothing. Existence is completely gratuitous in that there is no justification for it, but there is also no reason not to live. The outsider/ethical criminal is a man who has embraced a pessimistic philosophical outlook, a philosophy of self-fortification and self-conduct, that does not deny the ugliness of world, but takes it as it is.³⁰ He attempts to become a free spirit, perhaps god-like, who has rejected all of the expectations and restraints that have characterized human existence since the emergence of the Christian era. Yet, as a modern man, he is a person absent of the moral and ethical controls of Christianity. He is an intellectual who has all the unique benefits of being no stranger to modern Western knowledge, but he has either renounced it or has somehow succeeded in avoiding its oppressive power and minimized the degree to which he has been victimized by its tentacles. There is no doubt that he is an atheist, but he has transcended it as well. Wright describes him as a civilized savage who feels no requirement to worship any god. He is a modern intellectual with the mind, consciousness, and behavior of a pagan; he has not been subdued by modern society.

The ethical criminal is a civilized savage who demystifies Western culture. He thinks through the illusory aspects of modern Western civilization—myths that Europeans foisted upon all of us in order to forestall their fears, and thus pacify their dread. Yet, the ethical criminal concludes that these very myths are dying in the West's intellectual and emotional consciousness. These myths no longer possess utilitarian value; Western Europeans and their white American descendants have jettisoned them. A growing cynicism now smolders in the soul of an increasingly decadent and morally destitute Western civilization. Wright's ethical criminal, reminiscent of the Nietzschean last man,³¹ rebels against those myths, as they constitute a culture of pretense in post-civilized modern American society. Since modern America represents the devaluation of its most sacred political values (e.g., legal freedom, justice, and equity), the ethical criminal breaks the laws of an increasingly decadent society *sans* remorse. Cross Damon is a criminal; yet, he thinks of himself as innocent.

The ethical criminal believes the world has no intrinsic meaning. He can try to live with meaninglessness, he can try to create his own meaning and impose it on the world, or, more realistically, he can try to impose his own meaning and values on a small part of the world, in particular on his own microcosm and those with whom he interacts. The collapse of the idea of objective meaning leaves him free to create his own life. Self-creation is how the "will to power" expresses itself in human life. Wright's anti-hero attempts to create his own values and laws by which he will live. The ethical criminal tries to stand beyond God and the human, becoming a little secular god himself. That is, he seeks to live beyond good and evil. He is an atheist in whose heart and mind religion has no meaning. In the wake of God's death, the molds for the formation of the human were broken. Now the ethical criminal's highest elevation is the embodiment of his own philosophy of conduct, which would be based on his own individual desires. He is self-possessed. He seeks to become autonomous. He is the personification of Nietzsche's heroic individualism.³²

In one of the most intriguing episodes in the novel, Damon encounters and overwhelms members of the Communist Party. Since the party cannot discover Damon's true identity, members are frightened of him. As one party member says:

"Lane, what the hell ghastly joke is this you're pulling? Who the god-damn hell do you think you *are*? What are you *doing* here? When we try to check on you, we run into a maze that leads nowhere. That's no *accident*. Are you a spy? Frankly, we doubt it; we thought so at first, but you've not been close enough to us to get hold of any information. Don't you think, now, that we are scared of you. If we were, you'd not be breathing now. . . . But we want to know . . ."³³

Damon's superior intellect puts him in possession of the patent duplicity of the Communist Party nihilists' will to power. Employing a cold-blooded Marxian analysis of capitalist industrialization, he mocks the Communists' quest for power, suggesting that they are similar to Western imperialists:

"Now, during the past thirty-five years, under the ideological banner of Dialectical Materialism, a small group of ruthless men in Russia seized political power and the entire state apparatus and established a dictatorship. Rationalizing human life to the last degree, they launched a vast, well-disciplined program of industrialization which now rivals that of the United States of America in pretentiousness and power. . . . Again I say that what happened in Russia, just as with what happened in America, could have happened under a dozen different ideological banners. . . . If you lived in Russia and made such a statement, they'd shoot you; and if you lived in America and made such a statement, they'd blacklist you and starve you to death. . . . Modern man still believes in magic; he lives in a rational world but insists on interpreting the events of that world in terms of mystical forces."³⁴

Damon's power of erudition enables insight into the systematic lies of his Communist Party adversaries. He pierces the veil of the Party's illusions, pointing out the organization's contradiction between idealism and naked power. To one of its functionaries, Damon declares authoritatively:

"I'm propaganda-proof. Communism has two truths, two faces. The face you're talking about now is for the workers, for the public, not for me. I look at facts, processes. . . . You did what you did because you had to! Anybody who launches himself on the road to

naked power is caught in a trap. . . . You use idealistic words as your smoke screen, but behind that screen you *rule*. . . . It's a question of *power!*"³⁵

The ethical criminal Damon is a product of Wright's urgent mission to challenge the decadence of post-civilized modern Western society's barbarism and savagery, especially the lived experience of Black people forced to "live in but not of" American society. Wright seems to be arguing that a decadent social order with a bankrupt legal system brings into existence a philosophical criminal. The ethical criminal is a lawless man inhabiting a lawless and decadent social order. For various reasons, he does not believe that his victims have a right to exist. Yet, he attempts to rein in his lawless impulses, which forces him to live in a subjective prison. This requires self-mastery and lucid intellectual power. Yet, the ethical criminal has a certain self-possessed callousness that allows him to break modern society's rules without feeling guilt. This is because he considers himself innocent!

The ethical criminal's dilemma is that he still lives in the wake of modern civilization, even though his death-of-God decree is succeeded by the realization that modern culture has become dehumanized at the same time that it remains all too human. At the novel's end, Wright seems to suggest that a nihilistic-existential approach bears its own chaotic and suicidal logical illogic, which, tragically, is the ultimate irony of a philosophy dependent upon ambiguities. Wright seems to be saying that the path of the complex, knowledgeable, powerful, yet cynical ethical criminal ends in destruction. In what appears to be Wright's rejection of existential nihilism, Damon, the ethical criminal, cannot transcend human existence; he cannot exist as a god beyond good and evil. The human cannot be concerned only with the self, its fears, and desires. Wright seems really to be suggesting that people must be responsible not only for the self, but also for others. Individualism, heroic or not, is inadequate. Shot by a Communist Party operative and dying, Damon's quest has been necessary but not sufficient. He declares weakly:

"I wanted to be free . . . To feel what I was worth . . . What living meant to me . . . I loved life too much . . . Alone a man is nothing . . . Man is a promise that he must never break . . . I wish I had some way to give the meaning of my life to others . . . To make a bridge from man to man . . . Starting from scratch every time is . . . is no good. Tell them not to come down this road . . . Men hate themselves and it makes them hate others . . . We must find some way of being good to ourselves . . . Man is all we've got . . . I wish I could ask men to meet themselves . . . We're different from what we seem . . . Maybe worse, maybe better . . . But certainly different . . . We're strangers to ourselves." He was silent for a moment, then he continued, whispering: "Don't think I'm so odd and strange . . . I'm not . . . I'm legion . . . I've lived alone, but I'm everywhere . . . Man is returning to the earth . . . For a long time he has been sleeping, wrapped in a dream . . . He is awakening now, awakening from his dream and finding himself in a waking nightmare . . . The myth-men are going . . . The real men, the last men are coming . . . Somebody must prepare the way for them . . . Tell the world what they are like . . . We are here already, if others but had the courage to see us . . ." ³⁶

Damon, the ethical criminal, has searched in vain for the meaning of life. He has found neither meaning nor values—or so it would appear. His apparent predicament is complicated when, after he has committed four murders and has been

directly responsible for another death, he whispers in his dying moment, "In my heart. . . I'm. . . I felt. . . I'm *innocent*. . . That's what made the horror."³⁷ Again, the significance of Damon's dying statement is contextualized by Kierkegaard's observation: "The qualitative leap is outside of ambiguity, but he who through dread becomes guilty is innocent, for it was not he himself but dread, an alien power, which laid hold of him, a power he did not love but dreaded—and yet he is guilty, for he sank in the dread which he loved even while he feared it."³⁸

Significantly, the contradiction is that in fighting other little gods, the ethical criminal becomes the very thing against which he has struggled—a little god. Yet, Wright demonstrates that the Black man, as ethical criminal, cannot step outside of history—to become a little god, create new values, and live in accordance with those values—and survive. Wright seems to be suggesting that the Black man (or Black people, as such) cannot become a free spirit in the existing American social order, even if he becomes as lawless as his white oppressors. His quest for freedom, knowledge, and self-mastery is not enough. Wright seems to be arguing that the oppression of Blacks, especially in the absence of God, makes their lives hopelessly meaningless. At the novel's end, ethical criminal Damon does not find meaning in his life through the lived experience of heroic individualism. His new ethics have demanded the thoroughgoing stripping away of his attachments (to family, friends, employment, ideologies, religion, political organizations, laws, and other human beings) so as to purge his creative will of every trace of necessity. However, he is murdered by one of his white communist adversaries. Wright seems to be saying that the struggle for Black liberation cannot be an individual project; rather, it must be a collective vocation. Even so, freedom is unobtainable. The ethical criminal is the response to the emergence of the uncivil savagery and barbarism of modern culture, which flourishes in an environment shaped by increasing decadence and nihilism. He has sought to be creative—to create new values by which to live. But the ethical criminal cannot successfully create a new self; nor can he create new values and the meaning of his life. Ultimately, he cannot achieve authentic self-mastery as a little god. Realizing this, perhaps the only thing the ethical criminal can do, Wright suggests, is to pull oneself together and employ one's knowledgeable vision in order to help others to pierce the many illusionary veils that characterize the horror of an oppressive post-civilized modern society.

Knowing and seeing what is happening in the world today, I don't think that there is much of anything that one can do about it. But there is one little thing, it seems to me, that a man owes to himself. He can look bravely at this horrible totalitarian reptile and, while doing so, discipline his dread, his fear and study it coolly, observe every slither and convolution of its sensuous movements and note down with calmness the pertinent facts. In the face of the totalitarian danger, these facts can help a man to save himself; and he may then be able to call the attention of others around him to the presence and meaning of this reptile and its multitudinous writhings.³⁹

There is no final overcoming or transformation for the individual or the social order. As the ethical criminal, Damon cannot live beyond good and evil. Perhaps beyond good and evil there is nothingness.

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Reflections on George Yancy's Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race

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George Yancy centers chapter one of *Black Bodies, White Gazes* around a discussion of what he calls “the elevator effect.” True to the title of the book, the effect under discussion is the impact of the white gaze. When a Black man enters an elevator occupied by a white woman he experiences her as seeing his body as “supersaturated with meaning” (4). She responds not to the individual who occupies this space with her, but to a threatening phantom injected into her by hundreds of years of racist white supremacy. As Yancy puts it, he gets his body handed back to him without its subjectivity. His experience is denied while another story replaces it.

This is one of the themes of this rich and complex book: the way in which under the white gaze, i.e., in a white world, the Black body is returned to itself as a thing—as only possessing an exterior, having lost its life history. Anti-racist whites need to be concerned about this aspect of the white gaze. But our concern will come to nothing unless we pause to absorb the significance of such events as the elevator effect in the context of the “epistemological community” of which Yancy is a member. A second theme of this book is a careful explanation for white people of the importance of the knowledge of this community vis-à-vis whiteness.

Pausing to absorb knowledge doesn't seem like such a big deal. Yet, reactions to the elevator effect suggest otherwise. At the beginning of the last chapter of the book, coming back around to the elevator effect, Yancy tells of a student's reaction to his discussion of it. She said “Bullshit” (227), rendering Yancy the bullshitter and erasing his experience as a Black man (228).

Pausing to absorb particular sources of knowledge will require whites to “tarry with the negative,” as we may well describe this aspect of anti-racist work. Yancy, in his newest book, *Look, a White!* explores the notion of whites tarrying with their own whiteness and tarrying with Black pain and suffering under white supremacy. What I mean is that some of the knowledge generated in Yancy's epistemological community about white people is not at all flattering.

I will not simply say “bullshit” when Malcolm X says I'm a blue eyed devil or when bell hooks warns me of my capacity for eating the other, or when Lewis Gordon tells me that my identity is premised on being an agent of hate, or when Barbara Christian tells me about crimes of innocence, or when Charles

Mills analyzes my epistemology of ignorance. I must tarry with these negatives to see why an epistemological community with a long history—180 years ago David Walker made the observation that the humanity of whites has been distorted by avarice and greed—has come to these conclusions.

The activity of tarrying with the negative has considerable overlap with Yancy's discussion of ambush. Yancy and I have had very productive conversations about the importance of this link. The last chapter is specifically devoted to this idea. The most dramatic example of ambush in the chapter is Michael Richards' outburst at the Laugh Factory in 2006 (231-32). After the event, Richards apologized, saying that he is not a racist but admitting that the racist comments he made “fired out” of him. Yancy says Richards was ambushed by whiteness. Richards thought he was free of racism, but he was wrong. Less dramatic examples of ambush are white people who are surprised by their ignorance as in the case of a white woman who is the mother of “interracial” (230) sons. She is outraged when she finds out that her son is frequently stopped by police and questioned because he is driving a nice looking car. When her outrage subsides, she realizes how blind she is to the racism around her every day.

Ambush is a third theme of this book. Not just explicitly in the last chapter. The entire book is a slow motion ambush, as it were, pushing deeply to reveal white blindness as it reveals the findings of Yancy's epistemological community. In chapter two, he carefully takes apart “white solipsism” (39) even as it exists in philosophy and at the APA. We whites evade recognizing our whiteness and the privileges that accompany it by taking advantage of a social structure that makes the white epistemological community the right epistemological community. Yancy recognizes in his discussion of the elevator effect that “racist actions are habits of the body and not simply cognitively false beliefs” (22).

The blindness in the white epistemological community is blindness to habits as well as beliefs. Habits are of both thought and action. Using the language of habit is very useful and potent. The “white gaze” and the idea of “whiteness” can easily become disembodied notions. Thinking of them as habits—which are both individual and social—keeps them connected to bodies. It is true that whiteness can be seen to work itself through us—and the “us” here can be both Black and white bodies, albeit in different ways. But, if whiteness is not also us, white people and our habits, it tends (1) to become so abstract as to wander away from being anybody's responsibility and (2) to become a force that is so abstract as to have no discernable locations at which to attack it.

An example of one of the slow motion ambushes the book accomplishes begins in chapter three and expands to encompass chapters five and six. In chapter three, Yancy does a superb job of supporting Lewis Gordon's observation that white people gain a “sense of secure being” (67) by our ability to, through the white gaze, return Blacks to themselves as thing-like, possessing no subjectivity. Yancy illustrates this from his own experience with a high school teacher. His story is one of seven vignettes in this chapter entitled “The Return of the Black Body.” The return of which he speaks is an ugly irony as in each vignette a Black body is captured by the white gaze and assigned a destiny not of its own making.

For me, the ambush intensifies with Yancy's discussion of Frederick Douglass in chapter five. Using Douglass's writings, Yancy vividly presents the brutality and sadism of slavery and the Middle Passage. He then juxtaposes this presentation with philosophical positions like those of Kant and Hegel to illuminate the brutality and sadism that these positions elide. I am forced to recognize that my “sense of secure being” is

based in part on circumstances that I and all white people are protected from facing the horrors perpetrated and preserved by white supremacy. We are also secured from experiencing the destructive self-hatred which Yancy illustrates in chapter six in his discussion of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*.

There are two moments of ambush that I associate with chapter four in which Yancy discusses "the Black body's history...of resistance" (111). A person looking at the world with the white gaze will not see Black people as having agency. I can vividly remember the experience of realizing that so many of the behaviors seen through the white gaze as evidence of Black inferiority were acts of resistance. Yancy points out that resistance is the affirmation of an identity which refuses to be totalized into "pure facticity" (113) and which is in a process of "recreating its being-in-the-world" (116).

Acknowledging Black agency is a powerful antidote to the white gaze. The second moment of ambush comes with the realization that the recognition of Black agency also places an important constraint on the idea of tarrying with the negative. Taking seriously unflattering, sharp critiques of white people who are caught in the grips of whiteness (I use Yancy's term here) offered by those who are not captives of whiteness should not become an occasion for the reagrancement of whiteness. Tarrying with the negative focuses on the behavior of white bodies—on white agency. It is not about white people being victims of whiteness. I believe it can be very tempting for whites to shift agency from ourselves to what can become a virtually cosmic force called whiteness. We whites, thus, remain secure and even become heroes in our own eyes as we battle the evil invader called whiteness.

Yancy's chapter seven, the one in which he specifically talks about ambush, places white agency right where it belongs. Initially, in Yancy's discussion, ambushes happen to people—recall Michael Richards. These events are very important for they can be used to explode one of the foundations of white security. They show that we whites do not have complete control over the creation of our identities. So an important use of white agency is in our response to a Richards-type ambush that can happen to any white person at almost any time.

Yancy goes on to argue that an antiracist white person should use agency to seek out ambush, to make being ambushed an important part of one's life, to be thankful for the occurrence of ambush. Welcoming ambush helps to create a "form of white double-consciousness" (240) that places us whites in a self-reflexive position from which we can launch challenges to our white gazing. This is a project in which whites and other people of color can join together. For no matter the level of white double-consciousness, "people of color must keep whites cognizant of the limits of their visions," Yancy says (240).

George Yancy stands in a long and distinguished line of Black Americans who have dedicated themselves to educating white people about our racism. I very much appreciate his willingness to do this and I thank him for it. His lesson is, however, that we whites should take primary responsibility for challenging our own racist habits.

Jay-Z, Phenomenology, and Hip-Hop

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In his text *Decoded*,¹ hip-hop² artist Jay-Z (Shawn Carter) relates an incident that occurred during the listening party for

the release of his *Black Album*. After he debuted the album, Elizabeth Méndez Berry, an author and journalist for *The Village Voice*, approached him and asked "Don't you feel funny?" When asked why he ought to feel funny, Berry responded by pointing out a seemingly "obvious contradiction" in his attire—he was simultaneously wearing a shirt bearing the image of revolutionary hero Che Guevara and a jewel-encrusted platinum necklace (DC 22). In fact, in a review on Jay-Z's first three albums, written prior to their meeting, Berry describes Jay-Z as follows:

Jay-Z is convincing. When he raps, "I'm representing for the seat where Rosa Parks sat / where Malcolm X was shot / where Martin Luther was popped" on "*The Ruler's Back*," you almost believe him. When he rocks his Guevara shirt and a do-rag, squint and you see a revolutionary. But open your eyes to the platinum chain around his neck: Jay-Z is a hustler.³

That is, according to Berry, Jay-Z can *either* be a revolutionary or a hustler, but not both. If you are a revolutionary, like Guevara, then you are *not*, almost by definition, a hustler and, similarly, if you are a hustler then there is no possible way for you to be a revolutionary. For Berry, Jay-Z cannot be both a revolutionary and a hustler, and in the end she labels him as the latter.⁴

In fact, there is a whole series of contradictions and oppositions in hip-hop that could be analyzed in the sense that Berry does, i.e., under the principle of non-contradiction. For instance, after his encounter with Berry, Jay-Z recorded "Public Service Announcement,"⁵ which, in the second verse, contains the following line: "I'm like Che Guevara with bling on / I'm complex." In speaking to his mother in the song "Dear Mama,"⁶ 2Pac tells her "And even as a crack fiend, mama / You always was a Black Queen, mama." Furthermore, Notorious B.I.G., in "Things Done Changed,"⁷ describes the relationship of his generation with their parents as "Back in the days, our parents used to take care of us / Look at 'em now, they even fuckin' scared of us." Under Berry's logic, it would be impossible for Tupac to view his mother as both a drug addict *and* an object of respect, as would the impossibility of viewing one's parents as both a system of support *and* as someone who is afraid of you, or, in the case of Jay-Z, the possibility of being both a revolutionary *and* a hustler.

However, as Jay-Z argues in *Decoded*, the power of hip-hop music lies in its ability to act as a vehicle for the articulation and communication of complex and particular experiences, primarily in its ability to express experiences of contradiction—experiences in which you see yourself as a revolutionary *and* a hustler, or your mother as a drug addict *and* someone to be respected. That is, the specific power of hip-hop in expressing these experiences lies in its ability to conjoin oppositions, rather than treating them as mere disjunctions (either/or statements). This allowing for conjunction gives hip-hop the ability to "express those feelings that you can't really name" (DC 261). Furthermore, not only is hip-hop able to express these contradictions, but it also has a unique ability to *communicate* them in a way that is *not* a so-called rational argument (i.e., one that presupposes the principle of non-contradiction). Hip-hop communicates these experiences of contradiction through inducing the listener to *feel* the experience itself, or perhaps to experience-with the artist, which gives the expression of the experience an "almost unassailable" force (DC 243).⁸

What is it about the structure of hip-hop music that allows it to both articulate this contradictory experience and communicate it in such a way that the listener *feels* the experience? In *Decoded*, Jay-Z lays out the foundation for understanding this structure in a *phenomenological* way,

though he does not use this term. That is, rather than deducing or inferring the structure of hip-hop music, he instead refers to the *experience* of listening to it. It is in the experience of listening to hip-hop that its structure becomes apparent. To this effect, Jay-Z elucidates hip-hop's structure using two pairings of concepts: (1) beat and flow, and (2) music and rhyme. Each pairing zeroes in on a different level of hip-hop's structure. However, in the text itself, this analysis is neither given in terms of a *phenomenological description* of the experience of listening to hip-hop, nor is the entire text devoted to this kind of analysis. In fact, while the underlying theme of *Decoded* is that one ought to view hip-hop as a kind of transformative poetry, Jay-Z's specific discussions of the structure of hip-hop only occur twice: near the beginning of the text (DC 10) and near the end (DC 239).

In the discussion that follows, I will carry out the phenomenological analysis that Jay-Z points to, but does not carry out himself. In so doing, I take his terms and employ them in the basic manner that he does, but I will elaborate upon them. Rather than pairings, I show how each term (beat/music/flow/rhyme) describes a level of hip-hop's structure, understood phenomenologically, and how these levels, in working together, allow for hip-hop to express contradictions in such a way that the listener is *induced* to experience-with or *feel* the experience of the artist. The first section is devoted to a general explication of how Jay-Z understands (1) the structure of hip-hop music and (2) the way in which this structure induces the listener to experience the contradiction with the artist. In the second section, I take this general understanding as a jumping-off point for the carrying out of the analysis that Jay-Z points to, in terms of the experience of the *musical structure* of hip-hop, that is, the experience aside from the meaning of the words employed by the artist. The third section, however, focuses on how the musical structure of hip-hop allows for the inducing of the listener to experience-with the artist. The final section examines the relevance of these phenomenological analyses with Jay-Z's project as a whole.

Section 1: The Foundation for a Phenomenological Analysis of Hip-hop

Near the end of *Decoded*, Jay-Z tells us that the goal of his text was to accomplish three interrelated tasks:

The first thing was to make the case that hip-hop lyrics—not just my lyrics, but those of every great MC—are poetry if you look at them closely enough. The second was I wanted the book to tell a little bit of the story of my generation, show the context for the choices we made at a violent and chaotic crossroads in recent history. *And the third piece was that I wanted the book to show how hip-hop created a way to take a very specific and powerful experience and turn it into a story that everyone in the world could feel and relate to.* (DC 236, emphasis mine)

While all three tasks are equally important for grasping the overall goal of the book as such, it is the third goal that forms, in a sense, the mediator between the other two. Hip-hop is the vehicle for the articulation of the lived experience, the context that Jay-Z refers to, into poetry. As such, his understanding of how hip-hop functions both underlies and informs his analyses of hip-hop as a whole.

Jay-Z sees hip-hop music as consisting of two interrelated aspects. On the one hand, there are the various structural levels of hip-hop which, he argues, are what allow for it to articulate experiences of contradiction. On the other hand, there is the way in which this structure, understood as a whole in relation to each of its parts, *induces* the listener to experience the

contradiction *with* the artist. Let us look briefly at how Jay-Z describes this in *Decoded*.

To begin, what does Jay-Z mean by the experience of contradiction? His understanding of what this means is best outlined in terms of his song “99 Problems.”⁹ The second verse details a semi-biographical account of an incident which occurred while Jay-Z, in his youth, was transporting cocaine from “somewhere farther north” back to New York (DC 61). During the trip back, a police officer pulled him over because of his race, or for “driving fifty-five in a fifty-four.” The entire verse is dedicated to a conversation between these two people, both of whom are acting illegally. The police officer is not legally allowed to pull someone over *unless* they have broken a law. Similarly, Jay-Z is transporting an illegal substance over state lines. From the standpoint of argumentation, one would be tempted to pursue a line of inquiry as to which party is *more* right or *more* wrong. However, for Jay-Z, this would be to miss the meaning of the verse entirely. Instead, the verse is the articulation (from the perspective of the young man in the car) of the experience of two parties *both* being wrong, of two parties that, Jay-Z writes, “legality aside, both think they’re justified — the fact is that both are used to getting away with it” (DC 61). In other words, it is the experience of contradiction. Furthermore, to be human is to have, at least partially, contradictory feelings (DC 240). As will be examined momentarily, to understand this contradiction one must *listen* to the song and be induced to put oneself into the driver's seat of that car *with* Jay-Z.

For Jay-Z, the structure of hip-hop is built upon “contradictions,” thus allowing it to articulate them as well. He describes this structure in two moments of the text, and with two different pairings of terms: once near the beginning (beat and flow) and a second time near the end (music and rhyme). Near the beginning of *Decoded*, Jay-Z describes how “the story of the rapper” and “the story of the hustler” are “like rap itself, two kinds of rhythm working together, having a conversation with each other, doing more together than they could do apart” (DC 10). This leads into a discussion of the structure of hip-hop music, in an analogy with this conversation between these two stories. First, there is the *beat*. The beat, Jay-Z points out, is identical to meter in poetry, except “in rap, the meter is something you literally hear,” is “everywhere,” and is “like time itself, ticking off relentlessly in a rhythm” (DC 10). Second, there is the *flow*, which is how the rapper adds his or her own rhythm to the beat using the cadence of their words. Jay-Z writes that “Sometimes the flow chops up the beat, breaks the beat into smaller units, forces in multiple syllables and repeated sounds and internal rhymes...” (DC 12). Furthermore, and this will be important later, while beat is like time, flow is “like *life*”:

The flow isn't like time, it's like life. It's like a heartbeat, or the way you breathe, it can jump, speed up, slow down, stop or pound right through like a machine. If the beat is time, flow is what we do with that time, *how we live through it.* (DC 12 emphasis mine)

It is how the rapper takes up the beat, and thus *lives* it by expressing it. Thus, beat and flow are like a “conversation” between rhythm and life.

The second pairing of terms that Jay-Z employs to describe the structure of hip-hop is found near the end of the text (DC 10), in a discussion about how hip-hop is structurally open to embrace contradictions. First, there is the “nature of the music” itself (DC 10). Strictly speaking, all a hip-hop song *needs* is a beat—the music that is played *with* the beat, which accompanies or interprets it, can be anything. Thus, by its very nature, one can make a hip-hop song with two seemingly contradictory forms of music, for instance the adding of an

audible driving beat to the theme from the musical “Annie.” Jay-Z writes that he has “rapped over bhangra, electronic, soul samples, classic rock, alternative rock, indie rock, the blues, doo-wop, bolero, jazz, Afrobeat, gypsy ballads, Luciano Pavarotti, and the theme song of a Broadway musical” (DC 240).¹⁰ Furthermore, as I will argue in the next section, it is the way in which the beat and the music reciprocally determine the way each one is experienced, thus experientially bringing the two disparate halves together—the beat changes the feeling of the music and the music changes the feeling of the beat.

Just as the nature of hip-hop music can bring together two disparate types of music, the act of rhyming allows one to “make sense of the world in a way that regular speech can’t” (DC 243). To illustrate this, Jay-Z points to his song “Can I Live,”¹¹ in which he compares the song’s spoken word intro and a line from the first verse. The intro is a spoken description on the motivation for hustling. For Jay-Z, this intro, which consists entirely in non-rhyming lines, is “like the beginning of an argument” (DC 243). Here, the term “argument” means a set of premises that lead to a conclusion, with which one “can agree or disagree” (DC 243). For instance, in the intro, Jay-Z explains how “we hustle out of a sense of hopelessness, sort of a desperation” and that this leads to a kind of “addiction” to hustling. From the standpoint of argumentation, one can then take these premises and examine their validity, deciding whether Jay-Z is “right” or “wrong.” However, a line from the verse, which consists of rhyming words, is *not* like an argument. Instead, the line “I’d rather die enormous than live dormant / that’s how we on it” expresses the motivating experience of the hustler without *any* kind of argument—the experience *is* and *this* is what it is. Through the connection of words by rhyme (dormant / on it), the idea of *choosing* to live in such a way as to constantly risk death is articulated and expressed.

It is in and through the structure of hip-hop (beat/flow and music/rhyme) that experiences of contradiction are expressed in such a way that the listener experiences—with the artist. That is, it is through the pull of the beat, its articulation by music, the living of this beat by the artist, and the rhymes that he or she uses to “flow,” all come together in such a way that listeners are induced to hear the song “as their own voice” (DC 295). For example, in a song that consists of a threat, the listener does not feel as if the rapper is, in fact, threatening the listener. Rather, Jay-Z argues, the listener is “singing along” with the artist (DC 295).

Ultimately, this is how Jay-Z approaches the structure of hip-hop in *Decoded*—as that which, through the way in which its various parts interact with each other, allows for the articulation and expression of experiences of contradiction in such a way that the listener experiences the story with the rapper. Yet, a full analysis of how these parts interact is not given in the text, due to the brevity of his discussions.

Section 2: A Phenomenological Analysis of the Structure of Hip-hop

Though Jay-Z does not use this term, his analysis of the structure of hip-hop can be said to have a kind of *phenomenological* form. That is, he always describes this structure in relation to how we experience the music. In this section, I pursue this line of analysis and show how the three of the four terms that he employs to describe this structure (beat, music, flow, and rhyme) bear out phenomenologically, and give them specific technical meanings, though without the pairings that he employs. Through phenomenological description I will clarify and specify the terms *beat*, *music*, and *flow*, by showing how each designates a different level of what I have been calling the “structure” of hip-hop and how each of these levels function in

relation to each other. Specifically, I will describe how a song’s beat exercises an affective pull on the consciousness of the listener, and how this affective pull gets altered and changed through the music and flow that accompany it. The role of *rhyme* will be covered in the third and final sections.

First, it would be helpful to examine what is meant by the term “phenomenology.” In its most full sense, as outlined by Edmund Husserl, phenomenology designates the elucidation of the structure of consciousness through the description of experience. For instance, the structure of consciousness can be elucidated through the description of how we perceive objects. When I look at an object on my desk, such as a book, I only *see* one side of the object, yet I experience it as an object with other sides that I cannot see at that moment, i.e., as an object with *depth*. This tells us two things: (1) consciousness is *perspectival*, as I can never see *all* sides of the object at once, and (2) when I look at the object, I do not perceive it as something two-dimensional in space. Rather, consciousness goes *beyond* the simple perception of one side of the object and perceives it as something with other sides that I can look at, should I, for instance, choose to pick up the book and look at its back cover.

The analyses that follow will be based on this sense of Husserlian phenomenology but applied at the auditory level, so as to elucidate what one might call the “experiential structure” of hip-hop, or the way in which hip-hop draws the listener in so as to induce him/her to experience contradictions with the artist, in such a way that circumvents the principle of non-contradiction. This will be done by employing, clarifying, and specifying Jay-Z’s terms through descriptions of his song “Hard Knock Life (Ghetto Anthem).”¹² Furthermore, these descriptions will focus on how the song is experienced structurally. Though it will play a part at the highest level of our experience of a song, the actual meaning of the lyrics or what the artist intended to say or mean are not the focus of these analyses. Instead, the focus is on how we experience the song—how we experience the beat as something that draws us in and induces us to listen, and how the music and the flow performed by the artist that accompanies it changes and alters how we experience the beat itself.

Let us begin at the level of *beat*. When the song “Hard Knock Life” begins, we hear two distinguishable types of sound—percussive and harmonic. From the very beginning of the song, the percussive sounds form a *pattern*, in that there is a specific and repeated interval between the various percussive sounds. For instance, the metallic percussion, the “hi-hat,” sounds four times before the sound of the middle-range percussion, i.e., the “snare drum.” The lowest pitched percussive sound, the “kick drum,” sounds between and with the hi-hat and the snare. Taken together (as well as individually) the percussive sounds form a *rhythm*, or what Jay-Z specifically terms a *beat*. If we focus specifically on our perception of the beat, two things are immediately noticeable: (1) the very first percussive sound *pulls* our attention into the perception of a beat, and (2) the perception of the beat consists of our hearing the current sound, along with our memory (retention) of the percussive sounds just past and our expectation (protention) of sounds that we expect to occur in the immediate future. That is, while we hear the current percussive sound, we, in a sense, perceive the *whole*. Let us look at each in turn.

First, the sound of the initial percussive note exercises what Husserl calls an “affective pull” on consciousness.¹³ He writes that affection is an “allure given to consciousness” or “the peculiar pull that an object given to consciousness exercises on the ego” (APS 196). It draws the attention of the ego due to the vivacity of the object. For example, imagine walking down a

street at night. As you walk, the city around you is relatively quiet, in that there are sounds, but relatively few and at a low volume. Suddenly, you hear a large crash behind you. Consciousness is drawn to that sound—you may turn your head to see what happened or perhaps just begin to walk faster—but, either way, you become immediately aware of the sound and your attention is drawn to it (APS 197). This is the affective pull of an object of perception. From the initial percussive note, the consciousness of the listener is *drawn into* the formation of the beat itself, and thus into the song as such.

The second thing that we notice, after the song has played for approximately three seconds, is that we have a perception of a beat. That is, after these three seconds we do not have a perception of a cacophony of disconnected and random sounds. Rather, we *perceive* a cohesive unit or a whole—a *series* of percussive notes related to each other by the intervals at which they sound. If we focus specifically on this perception of a beat as a succession of percussive sounds, what we find are three different elements whose interrelations give us the perception of a unity. First, we have a percussive sound that is occurring *now*, perhaps the sounds of the “hi-hat” that occur between the sounds of the “snare.” This “now” occurrence of the percussive sound is what Husserl, in his discussions of internal time consciousness, calls a “primordial impression.”¹⁴ This primordial impression is never alone, however. With the perception of the current impression, consciousness joins together with it two other perceptions, both of which are perceptions of something absent. What does this mean? In perceiving a beat, I hear the percussive sound *now*, but this hearing of the sound *now* is joined with my *retention*, within consciousness, of percussive sounds that have *already passed*, and already passed in terms of those sounds which *just occurred* and those that occurred seconds, even minutes, before. Similarly, while we retain the sounds that have just passed and join this retention to the sound that is occurring now, we also *expect* certain sounds to occur, or what Husserl calls “protention.” This protention can be understood in two different senses. First, if we focus solely on the “hi-hat” sounds, we hear a succession of four sounds that occur between every hit of the “snare.” We hear one, two, and we *expect* to hear a third and a fourth, thus joining what is yet to come within the perception of what is sounding *now*. Second, this protention occurs at ever-increasing higher levels. That is, protention works at the level of the immediate sound we expect to hear, as well as the expectation of hearing that entire succession repeated. For example, once we hear the first rhythmic phrase of the song, we expect that phrase (four “hi-hat” sounds between each “snare drum” sound) to repeat itself throughout the song.

What is pivotally important here, in this description of beat, is the way in which the beat of a song *draws us into the experience of listening to the song itself*, through affection and protention. Through the affective pull of percussive sounds, or the way they exercise a kind of motivational allure on consciousness, the percussive sounds that constitute a beat pull our attention into the song itself. Furthermore, the perception of the beat draws us into it due to the structure of internal time consciousness—when we hear the percussive sound occurring now, we *expect* to hear the sounds or phrases repeated, and this expectation draws us into the song through the focusing of attention. For Jay-Z, hip-hop draws us into the experience that it articulates, and it does so at a fundamental level. It seems that this *drawing in* of the listener occurs, at its most basic level, at the level of beat.

While the beat articulates a rhythm that draws the listener in, the way in which this beat is experienced is changed through the *music* that accompanies it. Specifically, the music

that accompanies the beat can serve to either “contract” or “dilate” the space that is experienced between the individual “beats” (not to be confused with beat understood as a rhythmic whole) of the song. As mentioned above, the beginning of “Hard Knock Life” consists of two types of sounds. The first, percussive sounds, have already been described above and, as described above, form the initial foundation of beat within the song. However, the other type of sound, harmonic sounds, augment how this beat is experienced and come in two different forms: the deeper harmonic sound of the “bass” and the higher-pitched harmonic sound of the “piano.” The harmonic sound of the “piano” contracts the space that we experience between the beats of the “snare” by sounding at intervals faster than the “snare.” That is, we hear the “piano” sound four times between every hit of the “snare.” Without these harmonic notes we would experience a larger distance between each hit of the snare. Similarly, the harmonic sound of the “bass” accentuates the first three rhythmic beats in each phrasing, leaving the last one open. This serves to contract the space experienced between beats for the first three of each phrasing, while *dilating* the space experienced between the third beat and the first of the next phrase. This is especially apparent at the 0:03 mark of the song, in which the bass drops out entirely for one entire phrase of the beat. Here, the difference between the experience of the rhythmic phrasing with the “bass” and the experience of the same phrasing without it is immediately seen.

Similarly, while *music* augments how *beat* is experienced, so does the *flow* given through the vocalizations of the rapper, specifically as an articulation motivated through how the rapper *lives* the music and the beat taken together. If we think of levels of articulation, the beat is the foundation, which is augmented through the music that accompanies it. At a third level, the articulation done at the second level is given *another* articulation by the rapper’s vocalizations. This can be seen in “Hard Knock Life” in at least two different senses. First, at 0:08, Jay-Z adds an “uh huh” at the same interval as the “hi-hat” and “piano,” but drops it after two beats. This vocalization adds another level of percussion to the experience of the beat, accentuating the first half of the phrase, while at the same time dilating the experience of the space between the end of the vocalization and the resumption of the beat at the beginning of the next phrase. Second, at 1:48, Jay-Z picks up the pace of his vocalizations, fitting entire words in the space between the sound of the “hi-hat” and “piano.” In the same way as described previously, this fitting of entire words between “empty spaces” dilates the experience of the rhythm itself, by *widening* the perceived space between each beat. That is, by filling these spaces with words, Jay-Z effectively alters how we experience the beat itself—here it is dilated. Again, the *flow* of the rapper, or how the rapper articulates the *beat* and the *music* of the song, alters how the song is experienced.

We have now dealt with and clarified the terms *beat*, *music*, and *flow*, as three different levels of the experiential structure of hip-hop. I have shown that, at the phenomenological level, the structure of hip-hop is one that draws the listener in through the affective pull of beat, and how this experience of the beat is augmented through the music that accompanies the beat and the flow that accompanies both the beat and the music. At the first level, we have a perceptive object (the beat) that pulls consciousness into listening to it by both drawing our attention and keeping it through the process of expectation, or the experience of the beat as such. The second level of the structure of hip-hop lies with the music that accompanies it, which, in the case of “Hard Knock Life,” consists of a “bass” and a “piano” that contract and dilate how we experience the beat itself. Finally, the beat and music become articulated through the vocalizations of the rapper. In our example, Jay-Z’s

percussive “uh huh” at the 0:08 mark accentuates the beat and dilates the space between where his vocal phrasing ends and the next sounding of the “snare” begins. Similarly, the way in which he picks up the pace of his rhyming at 1:48 also dilates the perceived spacing between beats through fitting in multiple words between each hit of the “hi-hat” and “piano.”

The underlying aim of this part of our phenomenological investigation has been to articulate how it is that hip-hop draws the listener in so as to have him/her experience-with the artist. It is only part of the story in the sense that we have only focused so far on what might be called the “musical” aspect of the song, without taking into consideration how the song as a whole expresses contradictory experiences and induces the listener to experience the story *with* the artist. This will be the subject of the next section.

Section 3: Experiencing-With

At this juncture, I will focus the phenomenological investigation on how the songs as a whole induce the listener to experience-with the artist, in such a way that the listener experiences the stories as if they were his/her own, or, as Jay-Z writes, the way in which the listener hears the story as “their own voice” (DC 293). This investigation proceeds along two different levels: (1) the experience of the “samples” interwoven with the beat and music, which in the case of “Hard Knock Life” is the theme from the musical Annie, and (2) how rhyming brings together contradictory experiences.

Let us begin with the way in which the song “Hard Knock Life” brings together two seemingly disparate elements—the theme song from the Broadway musical Annie and Jay-Z’s “hard lyrics” (240). While seemingly quite disparate, these elements are brought together at a foundational level through beat, through the pairing and syncopation of the musical sample with the beat itself. That is, the beat, discussed in the previous section as a kind of inducing to listen, also serves as the foundational connecting factor, experientially, between the theme from Annie and Jay-Z’s “hard lyrics,” by allowing the two to come together in a common element. The beat brings both together, simultaneously, and joins them at a phenomenologically foundational level. The words from the theme song are syncopated with the beat of Jay-Z’s song, and the musical accompaniment of this song follows the musical notes of the original theme. This is why the listener is not shocked to hear the theme from Annie. Rather, within the experience of the song the pairing feels as if it “makes sense” in that we hear, from the beginning, a cohesive whole, i.e., the song.

What happens through the pairing of these seemingly disparate elements? That is, how does the listener experience them? For Jay-Z, the theme from Annie is experienced as a “mirroring” of the life of children in the ghetto. In other words, the story of the white orphan in 1922 is also the story of the black youth growing up in the Marcy Projects of Brooklyn, New York, and, as Jay-Z writes, “Annie’s story was mine, and mine was hers” (DC 240). The lyrics to the theme song, which comprise the sample that is used in “Hard Knock Life,” are as follows: “It’s the hard knock life for us / Instead of treated, we get tricked / Instead of kisses, we get kicked.” This is the expression of how Annie lives in a world that kicks her instead of kisses her, and tricks her instead of giving her treats—that is, the way in which one experiences a world that is hostile to them. Through beat, this expression of experience is brought into relation with Jay-Z’s own experience, and one can immediately *feel* the similarity between these two disparate elements. One does not need to create an argument that the life of a white orphan in 1922 is a mirror of the experience of a black youth in the 1990s. Instead, this mirroring is *felt* through the way in which the two elements are brought together, i.e., through their connection in *beat*.

This is the first sense in which the structure of hip-hop, at the foundational level of beat, brings together two oppositional experiences and articulates them as *one*, while at the same communicating this experience in such a way that the mirroring is *felt* by the listener.

The second sense in which this happens is based on how the artist employs *rhyme* within the song. As I outlined in the first section, the power of rhyme, for Jay-Z, is that it allows one to take two oppositional concepts and join them together through the rhyming of words within each concept. Let us look at an example from “Hard Knock Life,” specifically one that occurs in the third verse, where Jay-Z raps, “Hustling’s still inside of me / and as far as progress / you’d be hard-pressed / to find another rapper as hot as me.” Here, the oppositional concepts are the expression growing up as a drug-dealer and the braggadocio of being “the best” rapper. What we have in this line is the expression of the experience of being motivated by the drive that Jay-Z learned on the street in selling drugs. As a drug dealer, your goal is to move up the ladder, so that you are no longer the one dealer on the corner but the dealer in a position that is much higher-up—a position in which you reap the money based on the work done by the dealers that work underneath you. This is a specific kind of drive, one based in the desire to accumulate wealth within the context of an informal economy. This drive is communicated into the braggadocio of being “the best rapper” as a kind of *reason* for why he is “the best.” That is, the drive to succeed in the drug game carries over into his drive to be the best rapper. These two concepts are brought together through the act of rhyming words in the line, specifically the connection in the middle of the line (progress / hard-pressed) and at the beginning and the end of the line (the repetition of “me”). Furthermore, the act of rhyming here allows for the listener to *hear* these two concepts as *belonging* together. In describing the way that rhyming structures Rakim’s “In the Ghetto,”¹⁵ Jay-Z shows how the various words connect in such a way that the listener feels “like those words were *always* meant to be connected,” even if the concepts that are connected are seemingly disparate, oppositional, or contradictory (DC 244). In other words, rhyming allows one to *experience* a connection between disparate elements that circumvents or bypasses logical argumentation and the principle of non-contradiction. It is not the case that you can either be the best rapper or a hustler. Instead, the latter provides the drive for the former.

Furthermore, this connection is not only done through rhyme, but through beat as well. The inducing to listen on the part of the beat draws the listener in and underlies the connection between the rhyming words in the verse. Through being immersed in the beat, or the song itself, the listener is motivated to take-up the contradictory experiences related by the artist through their connection in rhyme. As such, one might say that this inducing to experiencing-with the artist takes place on two levels—at the level of beat and at the level of rhyme. Beat draws us in and rhyme communicates.

Section 4: Conclusion

Now that I have carried through the phenomenological analyses pointed to by Jay-Z, it is time to step back and take stock of how these investigations relate to Jay-Z’s project as a whole. I have argued that *Decoded* is an attempt to show how hip-hop music has the peculiar power to induce the listener to experience a story *with* an artist, as if the voice of the artist was his/her own, and how this is due to the structure of hip-hop itself. Jay-Z explains this power in terms of two pairings of concepts—beat/flow and music/rhyme.

In the investigations undertaken in the second and third sections of this essay, I showed how these terms bear out phenomenologically, though with slight modification. That is,

I disentangled these terms from the pairings that Jay-Z gives in order to show how beat/music/flow form what one might call the experiential musical structure of hip-hop. Then, rhyme was investigated as a kind of secondary structure, which works within the song as a whole, to express and communicate the bringing together of contradictory concepts.

Specifically, using the background of Husserlian phenomenology, I described the concepts of *beat*, *music*, and *flow*, as different levels of the structure of hip-hop, primarily in terms of how beat exercises an affective pull on the listener, and how this affective pull is kept through the structure of beat itself. *Music* was seen to be the way in which the experience of this beat is altered through musical accompaniment, in the sense that the spacing of harmonic sounds can dilate or contract how we experience the space between beats, and thus of the beat itself. This is further articulated at the level of *flow*, wherein the rapper imparts an articulation of the rhythm through his or her vocalizations. Taken together, we have a beat that pulls in the listener and motivates that same listener to experience the song in ways *other than* that which is dictated by the percussive sounds of the beat itself.

Then, in the third section, I examined how this underlying structure allows for the expression of contradictory concepts at two levels, specifically in reference to Jay-Z's "Hard Knock Life." First, beat allows for the joining of two disparate concepts, in the form of the sample from the Broadway musical *Annie* and the "hard lyrics" of Jay-Z himself. Second, the act of rhyming words within this structure allows for contradictory concepts to be joined together, through the common element of a rhyme, which is *experienced*, rather than argued for.

In the end, the aim of this essay was to carry out the analyses pointed to by Jay-Z in his text *Decoded*, and to show the way in which a phenomenological methodology is helpful for the analysis that he begins.

Endnotes

1. Shawn Carter, *Decoded* (New York: Spiegel and Grau, 2010). All references to this text will be given as DC, followed by the page number.
2. Unless otherwise stated, all references to "hip-hop" will be in terms of hip-hop music, rather than referring to a triad of hip-hop dance-art-music.
3. Elizabeth Méndez Berry, "Jay-Z: Reasonable Doubt, Vol. 3... Life and Times of S. Carter, and The Blueprint," in *Classic Material: The Hip Hop Album Guide*, edited by Oliver Wang (Ontario: ECW Press, 2003), 93-96.
4. One might be able to argue that Berry's resistance lends proof to Jay-Z's point about the proper level of analysis for hip-hop. When *listening*, Berry is "almost convinced" that Jay-Z is a revolutionary. It is only when she *looks* that he appears to be a hustler. It is the latter that she takes as definitive.
5. Jay-Z, *The Black Album* (Roc-A-Fella/Def Jam, 2003).
6. 2Pac, *Me Against the World* (Interscope, 1995).
7. Notorious B.I.G., *Ready to Die* (Bad Boy Entertainment, 1994).
8. The question as to whether or not it is good to experience certain things with an artist, for instance, one that is articulating the experience of murdering another person, is beyond the scope of this essay. Here, my attention is on how hip-hop has the power to express an experience in such a way that does not involve rational argumentation, through inducing the listener. Whether this inducing is "good" or "bad" would depend on the specific case, among other discussions. Furthermore, if the ethical question seems to be inseparable from the phenomenological question as to the structure of hip-hop, then a further question must be asked. What is the status of Johnny Cash's description of "killing a man just to watch him die?" If one can talk about the experiential structure of rock or country music without

bringing this question to bear, then one is forced to admit that the same can be done with hip-hop. If not, it would appear that hip-hop is being demonized a priori.

9. Jay-Z, *The Black Album*.
10. Earlier in the text Jay-Z points out that East Coast hip-hop music in his generation was largely driven by soul samples. That is, he often rapped about the absence of his father over the very records that were listened to by his father (DC 255).
11. Jay-Z, *Reasonable Doubt* (Roc-A-Fella, 1996).
12. Jay-Z, Vol. 2... *Hard Knock Life* (Roc-A-Fella/Def Jam, 1998).
13. Edmund Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Active and Passive Syntheses*, translated by Anthony Steinbock (Netherlands: Kluwer, 2001). The notion of affection is given its most full exposition in Sections 32-35. References to this text will be given as APS followed by the page number for the English translation.
14. Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893-1917)*, translated by John Brough (Netherlands: Kluwer, 1991).
15. Eric B. & Rakim, *Let the Rhythm Hit 'Em* (MCA, 1990).

Atomistic Individualism and the Hermeneutics of Racist Philosophy

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In the past fifteen years, race scholars have made an effort to reinterpret Western philosophy in light of the racism displayed by canonical thinkers. The racial hierarchies of Kant's anthropology, the participation of Locke in drafting constitutions that permitted chattel slavery, and the racial statements made by Rousseau, Hume, and others provide considerable difficulty for traditional representations of these thinkers' theories. In traditional representations, the moral and political theories proposed by the aforementioned thinkers are depicted as universalist in scope, applying to all people equally. Yet, as contemporary race scholarship has pointed out, the racism displayed by these philosophers is in direct conflict with universalism as it subordinates some racial groups beneath others.

Race scholars have offered two main ways of resolving this interpretative problem that can be summed up in the terms *racism-separation* and *racism-incorporation*, respectively. Scholars like Thomas Hill, Bernard Boxill, and Andrew Valls have argued that the racism of these thinkers can be nominally separated from their texts (*racism-separation*), while others, such as Emmanuel Eze and Robert Bernasconi, have insisted that interpretative honesty, among other things, requires us to read their racism into their texts (*racism-incorporation*).¹ The most prominent figure in the latter camp has been Charles Mills. Mills argues not only that the racism of these thinkers ought to be incorporated into interpretations of their texts, but that the theories of these thinkers remain racialized even when attempts are made at nominally stripping them of their initial racist intentions. Specifically, Mills argues that the substantive principles of the theories, even when nominally sanitized to apply in non-racially exclusive ways, remain racialized. In order to evaluate which interpretive approach is more plausible, it is necessary to determine whether those favoring racism-incorporation can actually demonstrate any principles or elements of previous racist theories which remain racialized after those theories are nominally sanitized of their initial racist intent.

Mills' scholarship on the social contract tradition and ideal theory is a first step in providing concrete examples which

support the arguments for racism-incorporation. Mills argues in *The Racial Contract* that the universalist social contract view is a revisionist historical fiction, and in *Contract and Domination* that social contract theories are racialized insofar as they focus almost entirely on ideal theory, a focus which excludes historical oppression from justice considerations. Mills claims that the methodological approach of ideal theory, although nominally separable from any racist extensions, remains racialized insofar as it neglects the justice needs of nonwhite people. If this argument is successful, it should indicate that the conjecture about the difficulty of handling racism within theories is a legitimate problem, which would favor the interpretive approach of racism-incorporation.

In this paper, I build on the ideal theory example given by Mills, and argue that the principle of atomistic individualism is a similarly racialized one even if it is articulated in a superficially non-racialized manner. Atomistic individualism, a common ontological description and methodological approach within Western philosophy, is racialized in that it generalizes from a white experience which is not shared by historically oppressed races, and differentially privileges the justice needs of white people by making group-based justice claims impossible. Through demonstrating the racialized nature of this principle, I aim to provide further support for the interpretive approach of racism-incorporation.

Interpretive Disputes

The fact that some of the texts and actions of many western canonical thinkers are racist is undeniable. David Hume writes that he is “apt to suspect” that all nonwhite people are “naturally inferior to whites.” Immanuel Kant establishes a similar racial hierarchy in his anthropology, and, as evidenced by his advice on proper ways to cane black servants, takes Hume’s more passive racism to a much more pronounced, active level. John Locke, although avoiding racist pronouncements in his texts, had investments in the slave trade, and helped to write *The Fundamental Constitution of Carolina* wherein he established an institution of chattel slavery, something he rejected as wrong in his other texts (Bernasconi, “Will the Real,” 14). The list of offending scholars could certainly continue, but the racism is so obviously pronounced in these cases that the debate can no longer concern whether philosophers like Kant and Hume were racist, but rather what their racism actually means for their theories and the philosophical traditions that those theories have spawned.

On this question, race scholars have split into two broad positions: racism-separation and racism-incorporation. Those advocating separation hold that the racism of canonical thinkers does not impact their texts and theories, or, in the event that they do, that the core arguments of the theories are easily divorced from racist extensions. Under this view, it is possible to nominally sanitize the texts and theories of racist thinkers in a way that insulates them from their racist views. This sanitization is supposed to permit contemporary theorists to utilize initially racist theories in non-racist, universalist ways. Those advocating racism-incorporation criticize this view, arguing first that separation is contrary to typical interpretive approaches, and second that the superficially sanitized theories still yield racialized philosophical prescriptions. Excising racist language with the intention to produce a nominally non-racist theory, it is argued, does not remove the racism-motivated theoretical principles which might still favor certain races over others.

The two best examples of this interpretive split appear in the secondary literature surrounding the racism of Hume and Kant. In his article on Hume, Andrew Valls admits that parts of Hume’s texts are indicative of racist intentions and thoughts, but argues that they are logically separate, and in fact contradictory

to Hume’s larger philosophical doctrines (Valls, 143). For Valls, even if Hume intended to be racist and intended to forward a racist theory, that should not prevent us from separating those views from his ostensibly universalist theories of human nature and the mind.

The most prominent dissenter of this view has been Emmanuel Eze. Eze argues that Hume’s depiction of nonwhites as inferior and incapable of arts and sciences is not something that can be logically separated precisely because of Hume’s other philosophical theories (Eze, “Hume,” 693). Instead, Eze argues, Hume’s theories of mind and human nature necessarily require that Hume holds nonwhites to be inherently “deficient as a knower and human being” (Eze, “Hume,” 698). Thus, Eze holds that in interpreting and applying Hume’s theory, we must incorporate his racist statements and intentions, not try to sanitize and separate them.

In the secondary literature on Kant, the same general division between separation and incorporation is also evident. Bernard Boxill and Thomas Hill argue that, despite Kant’s pronounced racist views and theories, Kant’s racist scholarship does “not reach Kant’s deep theory” (Hill and Boxill, 449). Among other things, Hill and Boxill argue that, although Kant viewed his racist theories as being part of his overall philosophical project, these theories are not “strictly entailed” by his underlying, core philosophy (Hill and Boxill, 452) and that Kant’s white supremacy is either the result of “false factual assumptions” or an invalid derivation from his deeper philosophical ideas (Hill and Boxill, 452). Hill and Boxill take this to mean that it is possible and logically necessary to separate Kant’s foundational ideas, like his deontological ethics, from his racist applications and extensions of them. This, Boxill and Hill are committed to hold, permits the usage of a sanitized, universalist, Kantian theory that does not carry any racist baggage.

This argument for separation in Kant’s theories is predictably opposed by those favoring incorporation. Eze points out that Kant’s denial of reason to nonwhite people interacts with his ethical theories in a way that denies them basic worth and dignity, and legitimizes immoral treatment (Eze, “The Color of Reason,” 121). Robert Bernasconi provides a harsh criticism of those who take on the task of simply “excising contradictions,” arguing instead that all we know of Kant and Kant’s immediate impact on the scholarship that followed him, shows his racist theories to be of central importance (Bernasconi, “Will the Real Kant,” 15-16; Bernasconi, “Who Invented,” 9-36). Charles Mills dedicates an entire article to taking on this position, arguing that the scope of ethical theories, i.e., to whom they grant ethical status, is a core element, not something usually considered interpretively separable (Mills, “Kant’s Untermenschen,” 182). Additionally, Mills points out that interpretive charity requires that we attempt to resolve contradictions when possible, and doing so in this case requires that we recognize Kant had in mind an “untermenschen,” or subperson class of humans, which he did not see as morally important beings.

This same back-and-forth manifests itself over and over surrounding the various canonical thinkers. James Farr makes a separation argument for Locke which is countered by Bernasconi and Maan (Farr, 509; Bernasconi and Maan, 89-107). Bernard Boxill makes a separation argument for Rousseau which is countered by Mills (Boxill, 150-166; Mills, “The Racial Contract,” 68-69). In all of these cases, the moves are essentially the same as the ones already expounded above with Hume and Kant: advocates of racism-separation argue that theories can be nominally sanitized of racism and applied in universalist ways, while advocates of racism-incorporation

insist that racism impacts the theories in a way that does not permit superficial sanitizing.

Attempts at navigating this interpretive dispute rest, I hold, on whether racism-incorporation advocates can actually demonstrate the residual effects racism has had on even the sanitized versions of these philosophers' theories. Charles Mills suggests that the racism of various philosophers could "affect the thinker's thought in other ways whose ramifications need to be worked out" (Mills, "Kant's Untermenschen," 190). Specifically, he suggests that "generalizing about humanity on the basis of one half of it" is bound to lead to important omissions, and that the construction of full humanity as quintessentially European may have led to principles and tendencies that lead to racialized philosophical prescriptions (Mills, "Kant's Untermenschen," 190). The challenge for the advocates of racism-incorporation then is to actually begin to provide instances of the racism bleeding over in this manner. Absent this, it seems that those advocating separation are correct in claiming that the racism of past thinkers is a matter of history, but not something significant in modern prescriptive debates.

Social Contract Theory as Racialized

Charles Mills makes an initial effort at providing examples of sanitized theories that still yield racialized prescriptions in his work on the social contract tradition. In his book *The Racial Contract*, Mills lays out an argument for interpreting the social contract theory as a racist construction meant to benefit whites and exclude nonwhites. He contrasts this interpretation from the usual universalist interpretation which makes no mention of the racism of the philosophers who make up the tradition. In addition to pointing out the problematic racism of thinkers already mentioned above, Mills provides similar examples of what he takes to be racism in the writings of John Stuart Mill, Voltaire, Hobbes, and others (Mills, "The Racial Contract," 60-66). He incorporates all of these racist sentiments into a reconstructed social contract theory, which he calls the "Racial Contract."

Under this reconstructed theory, which Mills takes to be the actual historical and interpretively honest truth of the social contract, white people enter into agreements with one another to "categorize the remaining subset of humans as 'nonwhite' and of a different and inferior moral status" (Mills, "The Racial Contract," 11). In doing so, they bestow upon nonwhites a "subordinate civil standing" in order to create a "differential privileging of the whites as a group with respect to the nonwhites as a group" (Mills, "The Racial Contract," 11). This ultimately manifests itself in "the exploitation of [nonwhite] bodies, land, and resources, and the denial of equal socioeconomic opportunities to them" (Mills, "The Racial Contract," 11).

To reach this conclusion, Mills points out the contradictions between universalist interpretations of the social contract tradition and the racially exclusive writings and actions of those who constructed it. He then argues that these apparent contradictions and interpretive problems all resolve themselves if we suppose that by "persons," social contract theorists only intended to include whites, placing nonwhites in a subperson category. This interpretive addition fits with historical application of their ideas, is plausible in light of their racism, and cleans up what is otherwise an interpretive mess.

Although this theory of implied subpersonhood helps to solve the interpretive problems of racism in the social contract tradition, it does not *prima facie* explain why social contract theories would remain racialized when stripped of these initial racial intentions. Locke, Hobbes, and Kant may have only meant to include white people into the family of full persons, but that

does not require us to do the same. Separation advocates would point out that there is nothing that prevents us from going through each of the texts within the social contract tradition and replacing the particularistic racist meanings with universalistic non-racist meanings. Doing so would seemingly allow us to keep the core moves and theoretical advancements of the social contract tradition while severing from its racist past.

In order to argue against the effectiveness of this approach, racism-incorporation advocates like Mills are pressed to provide actual examples of principles and constructs within these theories which remain racialized even after they are superficially sanitized. Charles Mills provides an example of such a principle within the social contract theory in *Contract and Domination*. He argues in a chapter of this book that social contract theory's emphasis on ideal theory is racialized insofar as it "abstracts away from embarrassing questions of corrective justice" (Mills, "Contract of Breach," 107).

Ideal theory, according to Mills, privileges the white experience and white justice needs because it necessarily marginalizes the issues of rectification and remedial justice. By focusing on what kind of society we would construct from the state of nature, or an original position, the approach of ideal theory does not permit philosophers to consider histories of oppression when deriving ethical and political prescriptions. For the white philosophers that predominately make up those working within the social contract tradition, this may not appear as problematic. After all, these individuals do not personally feel the impact of historical injustices weighing on them in the present day. However, the justice needs of nonwhites, Mills argues, are woefully underserved by this approach because the current set of problems facing nonwhites are inextricably linked to historical injustices (Mills, "Contract of Breach," 111).

Mills takes this dominant tendency towards ideal theory to be evidence of racialized principles within the social contract tradition. He argues that this tendency is "not innocent, not a neutral methodological decision, but itself a deeply *ideological* one" that "reflect[s] and reproduce[s] the perspectives of the privileged (here whites)" (Mills, "Contract of Breach," 108).² Thus, with ideal theory, we have a concrete example of racialized ideas and tendencies which are not solved by simply erasing the overtly racist language of the contract tradition. Instead, the whiteness of the social contract tradition permeates all the way to the core fundamental assumptions and methodologies used by social contract theorists (Mills, "Contract of Breach," 111).

The approach Mills takes in attacking ideal theory as racialized sets up a general framework which should permit other principles of the social contract tradition to be cross-examined in a similar fashion. Using Mills' methodology, if one is able to identify a particular tendency or principle of the social contract tradition which privileges the white experience in a way that disadvantages the justice needs of historically oppressed races, then one is able to demonstrate racialized biases within the tradition. After all, as Mills points out, theorists are choosing to continue to navigate within the theoretical constraints that were initially established to privilege white people and exclude others. Elements of those theories which continue to differentially privilege races remain racialized no matter how much we nominally move the line of personhood.

Atomistic Individualism as Racialized

Using Mills' framework, it is possible to make similar attacks on atomistic individualism as a racialized principle. In this case, I use "atomistic individualism" to refer to the theoretical tendency to treat people as separate, self-sufficient individuals. The principle of atomistic individualism depicts individuals as

being essentially separate from everyone else, but capable of consenting to voluntary agreements to enter groups, societies, and other kinds of community arrangements. In the liberal social contract tradition, philosophers operate on the presupposition that we can navigate the justice needs of everyone by contemplating what an abstract, atomistic individual would consent to, taking such an individual to be an appropriate representative of humanity. Generalizing about humanity in this abstract way pulls individuals outside of the context of their social and racial conditions, treating group membership as a voluntary, secondary matter that is irrelevant to universalist justice considerations.

Examples of atomistic individualist assumptions are fairly pervasive throughout the social contract tradition and liberalism in general. Thomas Hobbes and John Locke both utilize atomistic individualism when contemplating what kind of government a person would hypothetically consent to in order to avoid the disadvantages of having no government at all. Kant's prescription for humanity to act as autonomous, rational, ends-setting beings, and the categorical imperative that he believes follows from this picture, similarly utilizes atomistic individualism to forward its claims. John Stuart Mill's arguments in favor of individual liberty also rely on depictions of individuals as atomistic. Even John Rawls' theory of distributive justice rests upon the social and political prescriptions an atomistic individual would make behind a sufficiently thick veil of ignorance. Although Rawls did not intend the individuals behind the veil of ignorance to be understood as actual individuals, it is still an atomistic methodology which he uses to generate universalist prescriptions. The list of thinkers relying on this idea could iterate further, but it is sufficient to say that the principle of atomistic individualism is one of the core assumptions of the entire liberal social contract tradition.

To analyze the racial ramifications of atomistic individualism, it is useful to contemplate the principle on its two main fronts: as an ontological description of humanity and as a methodological tendency. On the ontological front, atomistic individualism describes a white experience which has not been shared historically, or in the present, by nonwhites. The notion that individuals can navigate society, and enter into associations freely while belonging to no group involuntarily does not reflect the experiences of those who are caged into a limiting racial group at birth. On the methodological front, atomistic individualism makes it nearly impossible to make group-based justice claims, which are precisely the kind of claims necessary for remedial justice. This methodological choice then differentially privileges the justice needs of whites over nonwhites by marginalizing the justice claims needed by the latter group.

Ontologically speaking, when people are born in the present world, they are not born as pure individuals; they are born as raced individuals: black, white, brown, and so on. The racial membership of individuals is not something that is chosen voluntarily, but something that is imposed by society. In fact, if we were honest about the history of race constructions, we would need to say that since the modern period, the racial membership of individuals has been imposed by whites and their various bankrupt racial theories. Nonetheless, the present social reality is that individuals are involuntarily placed into racial groups, and that membership in said racial groups has definite, demonstrable impacts on their lives.

The claim that membership in racial groups is involuntary seems fairly non-controversial. Except for some borderline cases where individuals can choose to "pass" for one race or another, people do not choose the race to which they belong. This fact entails that individuals are not purely atomistic in that

they are inextricably forced into a particular group as soon as they are born. Despite this, atomistic individualism persists as a common way to depict humanity within the social contract tradition and liberal political theory in general. Given this, it is important to consider why this principle was ever deemed plausible and why it is still used in present social contract theories.

I submit that the reason this ontology exists and persists is because it is based upon the white experience, an experience well-represented in the field of philosophy. White people often do not consciously experience the impact of racial membership, perhaps because it typically serves only to privilege whites and rarely to limit them. This social reality might cause them to view themselves as basically non-raced, and therefore to truly see themselves as the kind of atomistic individual that is described by the liberal social contract tradition. Historically and presently, white men—the demographic working within philosophy—have not been particularly constrained by their racial membership; they have been able to occupy every position in society from low-level workers to heads of state and industry. It is conceivable that philosophers belonging to such a race might feel as if atomistic individualism approximately describes the kind of freedom of choice they have to associate with whomever they want, and to pursue whatever kind of life they desire.

This kind of experience has not been the case nor is it presently the case for members of historically oppressed races. Historically, nonwhite peoples—be they Native Americans, Africans, or Indians—have been systematically limited by white people on the basis of their racial membership. These histories of slavery, colonialism, and genocide are enough to indicate that the past nonwhite experience almost certainly did not mirror the kind of atomistic individualism supposed by white philosophers. Additionally, the lives of present people of color, such as those of Blacks in America, are substantially impacted by their racial membership. Various racial groups enjoy differential treatment in society by police, business owners, and employers. The race one belongs to, therefore, serves to dictate one's access to power, material wealth, credit, and other opportunities (Shapiro, Meschede, and Sullivan, "The Racial Wealth Gap"). Additionally, racial membership determines a significant number of privileges that certain races have which others are not permitted to share in (McIntosh, 319-321).

So, on the ontological front, atomistic individualism is both false and racialized. As a description of humanity, it does not account for the fact that people are involuntarily placed into groups which they are unable to escape from. This undercuts the basic idea of atomistic individualism, which is that individuals are essentially separate and are joined to societies, communities, and other groups purely through voluntary consent. In addition to being false, I maintain that this is a heavily racialized description of the white experience. Both in the historical period in which social contract theory arose and in the present day, this depiction of humanity could only apply to exactly the same group of people to which the social contract was intended to apply, i.e., whites. Thus, this false ontological description of humanity should be held up as a concrete example in favor of the incorporation approach to interpreting past racist theories because it demonstrates how nominally shifting the line of personhood does not actually de-racialize racially exclusive theories.

As a methodological approach to deriving prescriptions for moral and political philosophy, atomistic individualism is racialized in that it differentially privileges the justice needs of whites over nonwhites. Unlike the problems with ontology, the methodology of atomistic individualism is not racialized

because it records one experience to the exclusion of others; rather, the methodology of atomistic individualism is racialized because it disadvantages historically oppressed races. Using the same framework Mills uses to describe ideal theory as racialized, if one can demonstrate that atomistic individualism does underserve the justice needs of certain racial groups, one can fault western philosophy for persistently electing to utilize atomistic individualism as a foundational assumption. As Mills said about ideal theory, such a decision is “not innocent, not a neutral methodological decision, but itself a deeply *ideological* one” (Mills, “Contract of Breach,” 108).

The way in which atomistic individualism underserves the justice needs of nonwhite people is that it denies them (and everyone else for that matter) the ability to make group-based justice claims. The basic methodological move of atomistic individualism is to abstract away from membership in societies or other groups, distill some sort of general representative individual, and then determine what such a person would rationally consent to. As Charles Mills points out, this approach usually goes along with the usage of ideal theory in which the abstract hypothetical individual is further asked to consent to principles in a pre-historical position. Nonetheless, by stripping abstract individuals from their group membership, this method works against deriving principles that would favor group-based justice claims. Because the abstract individual used in the method is not permitted to belong to a group except through secondary voluntary agreement, then they necessarily cannot appeal to group membership (e.g., membership in a historically oppressed race) when considering what principles of governance or justice that they ought to rationally construct.

This is not a problem for white men who generally have no need for group-based justice claims, and thus it would not have been necessary to even contemplate for the philosophers who originally constructed the liberal social contract tradition. As Mills argues, the originators of the social contract tradition never intended their theory to apply to nonwhites. It would have been absurd for them to contemplate the extent to which atomistic individualism denies group-based justice claims because they only meant justice claims to apply to one particular group to begin with. In the present moment, white men also have no particular need for group-based justice claims, and would actually be most benefited by denying their validity. Treating all individuals exactly the same would serve to preserve the built-up power, wealth, and privilege that white people have come into possession of as a consequence of historical oppression of other racial groups. The denial of group-based justice claims would prevent transfers of these things to historically oppressed races because doing so would require considerations of race membership which are not permitted under the atomistic individualist framework. So white people in general, acting as rational self-interested agents, have no impetus to abandon the doctrine of atomistic individualism, which might explain the philosophical tendency towards the methodology.

On the other hand, the justice needs of historically oppressed races are centered on group-based justice claims. Unequal levels of wealth, power, and privilege caused by past injustice, the tendency for those things to be transferred across generations, and ongoing racism make prominent the need for group-based racial rectification. The arguments in favor of different kinds of rectification—reparations, affirmative action, and others—are fairly ubiquitous and unnecessary to reiterate here. The point I intend to press is that these arguments are almost entirely impossible to forward in a framework which relies on atomistic individualism. In this framework, one’s racial membership is depicted, like all group membership, as a secondary and voluntary matter which has no relevance in

considerations of justice. So advocating for wealth transfers, opportunity-leveling, or other kinds of rectification approaches would be impossible because it would rely on pieces of information that are excluded from the abstract atomistic individual’s calculations.

The establishment and perpetuation of a doctrine-like atomistic individualism is thus methodologically racialized as it leads to differential racial privileging. Atomistic individualism privileges the justice needs of racial groups that have benefited from historical oppression over the justice needs of those who have been victimized by it. This means that both ontologically and methodologically, atomistic individualism is unable to escape from the racialized nature of the original racist social contract tradition that spawned it. Even when one attempts to apply social contract ideas to all people equally, that does nothing to strip this principle of its racialized nature as it still describes the white experience and leads to prescriptions which benefit the interests of white people in general.

Conclusion

The racialized nature of atomistic individualism should bring us to two main conclusions. First, it should lead us to abandon atomistic individualism, or at least to modify it so as to avoid its racialized problems. If it is the case, as I argue, that atomistic individualism is generalizing from a white experience, and that it does not permit group-based justice claims, then continuing to use it either ontologically or methodologically in an unmodified way must be avoided. I do not see any possible way that modifications to atomistic individualism could successfully rid the concept of its racialized problems. Thus, I suspect that a completely different approach will be necessary for a theory which aims to achieve racial justice.

Second, the demonstration of atomistic individualism as covertly racialized provides additional support for the interpretive approach of racism-incorporation. Coupled with Mills’ analysis of ideal theory, a cumulative case is materializing which concretely demonstrates that superficial, nominal changes to racially exclusive theories are not sufficient to rid the theories of their racism. As Mills predicted, it is likely the case that theories which were intended to be racially exclusive rely on methodologies and generate principles which are inherently racialized. Although sanitizing the theories might rid them of their obvious racism, it does not completely de-racialize theories because it leaves other racialized features of the theories intact.

Endnotes

1. The racism-incorporation camp is not monolithic. I use the term here to refer to those who do not think that superficial, nominal sanitizing of racist theories actually de-racializes them. Those in this camp might think that more substantive modifications of the theories can de-racialize them (as Charles Mills does), or they might think that de-racializing is totally impossible.
2. Mills goes on to argue for a way of solving the problem with ideal theory, at least within Rawls’ social contract. He advocates modifying Rawls’ veil of ignorance to allow knowledge of historical injustices into the set of considerations. Thus, he does believe that it is possible to de-racialize theories by modifying the substantive elements of them, but he rejects de-racializing through purely superficial, nominal changes, i.e., what I call racism-separation. For the purposes of this paper, I won’t pursue whether that argument succeeds.

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In Memoriam: Civil Rights Leader Dorothy Height (1912-2010)

(Reprinted with permission from The Providence Journal, May 24, 2011)

Felicia Nimue Ackerman *Brown University*

Dorothy Height, alas, is dead,
Her praises rightly sung.
Yet one sad truth has gone unsaid:
She died far, far too young.

Ninety-eight years are not enough
When life has been so fine.
They're not enough for any life —
Not hers, not yours, not mine.

BOOK REVIEW

Critical Theory and Democratic Vision: Herbert Marcuse and Recent Liberation Philosophies

Arnold L. Farr (Lexington Books, 2009). ISBN: 978-0-7391-1931-0. Hardcover. 196 pp.

Clancy Smith
Duquesne University

In *Critical Theory and Democratic Vision: Herbert Marcuse and Recent Liberation Philosophies*, Arnold Farr offers a clear, concise, and illuminating reinvigoration of Herbert Marcuse's unique brand of critical theory. Applying the philosophical themes Marcuse developed in *One-Dimensional Man* and *Eros and Civilization* to contemporary issues of democracy, freedom, oppression, and recent liberation philosophies, Farr provides not only one of the most useful general introductions to critical theory but does so with a keen eye to its significance for the socio-political issues that permeate America's current cultural milieu. Further, Farr's investigation articulates not only one of the most insightful explorations of Herbert Marcuse's critical theory since Douglas Kellner's but likewise convincingly argues for Marcuse's enduring significance and continued inclusion as one of the most important figures arising from the Frankfurt School tradition.

"There is a *specter* haunting western philosophy—the specter of liberation" (1). Arnold Farr begins his opening chapter entitled "Liberation Philosophy and Democratic Struggles" by utilizing the imagery of this apparition, this "specter of liberation," to illustrate what he sees as the defining characteristic of critical theory. This specter is a revelatory force, an "unconcealing," a tearing back of the veil of falsities that are utilized by invested interests to dominate, subjugate, and oppress the wide spectrum of minorities as a means to perpetuate their hegemonic hold over society. This specter "makes visible that which has hitherto been invisible. It gives voice to those who have been silenced by multiple forms of oppression, domination and exploitation" (1), Farr says.

It is clear from the start the profound depth to which Herbert Marcuse has informed Farr's definition of critical theory as well as its scope, purpose, and import. Indeed, a decidedly Marcusean language permeates Farr's work from the start, framing his project through the lens, especially, of *One-Dimensional Man*. It is clear that the central concepts of Marcusean critical theory ("negative thinking," "the Great Refusal," etc.) form the backdrop to Farr's own critical enterprise. Farr says, for example, that "this specter wields the sword of negation thereby attempting to transform the present social reality into its hidden possibility. The specter of liberation inverts the abstract vocabulary of western democracy revealing a democracy that is not-yet" (1). Farr's apt and rather eloquent analogy of this specter of liberation fills in for Marcuse's critical project and the sword it wields seems to stand in for the negative thinking Marcuse saw as the necessary precondition for radical social change. As Marcuse himself said, "naming the 'things that are absent' is breaking the spell of the things that are, it is the ingression of a different order of things into the established one"¹ or as renowned Marcuse scholar Douglas Kellner notes, negative thinking "negates' existing forms of thought and reality from the perspective of higher possibilities."² It is precisely this

capacity for negative thinking that hegemonic powers attempt to stifle, thereby negating the necessary precondition for radical social change that Farr illustrates through this “specter of liberation.” It is the negation of this negation that is the aim of much of Marcuse’s philosophy, that is, the negation of the artificial status quo created and perpetuated by the hegemonic powers. This reaffirms nothing less than human freedom itself, thereby making Farr’s “spirit of liberation” all the more apt and all the more poignant.

The other key philosophical theme that Farr touches upon in his introductory segments is the application of critical theory to studies of oppressed minority groups as seen through a decidedly Marcusean lens. As Farr says, although the “American democratic project embodies a promise of liberation, freedom, equality...that has not yet been actualized in the concrete, everyday lives of many American citizens” (1). The goal, ideally, would be the dissolution of the powers in place to oppress minorities (Farr lists a few examples of what he means by oppressed people: “women, racial minorities, the poor, gays and lesbians” (1)) through the “unconcealing” of this rhetoric for what it is. This would allow for the possibility of radical social change, reanimating a genuine sort of human freedom for all citizens and thereby reinvigorating a democratic American vision that, Farr argues, has gone awry. It is precisely this move that unifies Farr’s explorations of democracy and liberation philosophies, that gives his project such weight and significance in our present cultural milieu, and that offers one of the most compelling arguments for the reinvigoration of Marcuse by articulating how critically important his insights remain.

Farr summarizes his project in saying that “this book is an attempt to develop a liberation philosophy that coincides with the project of critical theory, particularly the critical theory of Herbert Marcuse, and recent democratic struggles” (1). Further, Farr will apply these Marcusean insights to recent liberation philosophies such as “feminism and Africana philosophy” (1) and, in so doing, “rethink the project of democracy” (2). The theme that binds together critical theory, democratic vision, and liberation philosophies, Farr argues, is “freedom” (2). What Farr is looking for, specifically, is a type of critical theory that doesn’t “tend to favor a negative view of freedom,” (3) that isn’t a reduction of the concept of freedom to merely being left alone but rather freedom to the extent that “one has the ability, and resources, to pursue the good for one’s life” (4). If history, as Farr notes, tends to favor the victors, the majority, then liberation philosophy is the necessary counterbalance to such a position, “an attempt to see from the perspective of the oppressed” (7).

Thus, Farr ties critical theory and liberation philosophy together: if “critical theory is interested in the emancipation of the oppressed” and “seeks to offer or point to new ways of thinking and, thereby, new practices wherein our society will become less oppressive” (5), then the insights of critical theorists are invaluable to recent liberation philosophies that attempt to explicate the lived situations of citizens, particularly in advanced industrial societies, exclusively from the perspective of the oppressed. And if the “task for the philosopher interested in the project of liberation is to think from the perspective of the oppressed” (10), then Herbert Marcuse, Farr argues, is the ideal critical theorist for the task at hand, noting that Marcuse is most certainly “as vital today as during his lifetime” (10).

In chapter two, entitled “The Quest for the Revolutionary Subject: The Early Marcuse,” Farr succinctly summarizes some of the critical problems inherent in the forms of Marxism that Marcuse would have first encountered when beginning his own critical reflections. He notes that “Marcuse’s early work initiates a search for the conditions of revolution as well as the social forces that prohibit social change” (15), an apt and succinct

summary of what is indeed Marcuse’s early project. Intriguingly, Farr goes on to convincingly elucidate one possible reason for this particular predilection of the early Marcuse, namely, the fissures inherent in Karl Klautsky’s manifestation of Marxism and the Marxism of the Second International (1889-1914).

In short summary, seeing in Marx a necessary progression that should, by all accounts, usher in a predicted and expected end of capitalism, Farr notes that Klautsky succumbed to both a type of scientific reductionism (which “entails a naïve view towards science to the extent that it reduces all phenomena... to the goals, methodology, expectations, and rules of the natural sciences” (17)) and a type of economic reductionism that is “the reduction of all human struggle to economic struggle” (18). In so doing, Farr notes, Klautsky failed to recognize the other forms of struggle that human beings are engaged in, above, and beyond simply economic, like “struggles for political power, recognition, race and gender equality.” Further, Klautsky’s position “fails to understand the ability of capitalism to transform itself and absorb any possible revolution” (18). In so doing, Klautsky’s interpretation of Marx could not account for the acquiescence of the working class in advanced capitalistic societies, nor could it anticipate capitalism’s endurance. This is the key insight of Farr’s early exposition of Marcuse’s introduction to the Marxism of the day, similar to Alasdair McIntyre’s note that “when the Marxist script for the world drama required a European working class to emerge as the agent of historical change, the working class turned out to be quiescent and helpless”³ and as Jeffry O’Cay likewise notes, instead of the transition from capitalism to socialism, what happened instead was the “integration of the proletariat into the status quo” and “the absence of a revolutionary agent for progressive social change.”⁴ It is here that Farr begins his exposition of Marcuse’s early work, namely, to locate the revolutionary subject, this agent of change, and articulate the profound stultifying effects advanced societies have upon his development and ability to “recognize the disease”⁵ of his or her own social milieu.

Precisely because the Second International Marxism “eliminated the dialectical element” and “erased the role of human subjectivity” (19), Marcuse was motivated to turn to both Heidegger and Hegel for his early inspiration, Farr argues. Indeed, Farr presents a convincing account of Marcuse’s early inspirations precisely in light of the systemic problems he saw in the Marxism of the Second International. Further, by trying to locate human subjectivity and reinstating the dialectics that the Second International effectively eliminated by turning to Hegel and Heidegger, Farr is able to tie Marcuse directly into the function of recent liberation philosophies. For it was precisely to combat the problems left over by the Second International that Marcuse turned to an in-depth analysis of what was effectively a social psychology of the working class, a philosophy from the perspective of the oppressed (as liberation philosophies would advocate), exemplified in his *One-Dimensional Man*.

Farr expertly weaves together analyses of Marcuse scholars with his own insights into the Hegelian and Heideggerian influences upon Marcuse’s early work to create a dynamic articulation not only of the genesis of most of Marcuse’s more profound contributions to philosophy, but also situating Marcuse firmly in the ongoing conversation of the liberation philosophies Farr sketched out in his opening chapter.

Farr’s third chapter, entitled “The Retrieval of Eros and the Quest for a New Sensibility,” is a clear and concise account of Marcuse’s take on Freudian psychoanalysis, predominantly situated in Marcuse’s *Eros and Civilization*. Continuing with the theme consistent with recent liberation philosophies, Farr notes, rightly so, that one of Marcuse’s central projects running throughout his diverse career was to explicate the nature of

capitalism such that it quells the potential for a revolutionary agent of radical social change. In the search for such an agent, picking up from the previous chapter, Farr rightly turns to Marcuse's examination of "the potential emancipatory power of the instincts" (39) and hence Marcuse's interest in Freud. Conversely, just as Marcuse sought the ingredients for the revolutionary agent in part through the power of the instincts, so too did he seek to analyze the ways in which advanced industrial societies infiltrated the most private inner spaces of the working class to stifle the desire for radical social change. As Farr notes, "Marcuse's goal was to explain why revolutionary consciousness failed to develop among those who were most in need of liberation" (40) by extending "the Freudian theory of instincts in the direction of the struggle for liberation against the oppressive elements of advanced industrial societies" (40) thereby advancing Freud's theory of the id, ego, and superego from the familial sphere to the societal.

Farr weaves together the work of a diverse array of socio-political philosophers, from Adorno and Horkheimer to Paul Ricoeur, to present a concise exposition of Freud's basic psychoanalytic framework as well as the advances Marcuse made upon it. The key components of *Eros and Civilization* are discussed deftly: from the distinction between basic and surplus repression to the distinction among the pleasure principle, reality principle, and Marcuse's unique articulation of the so-called performance principle, Farr moves swiftly through Marcuse's Freudian insights leaving no major conceptual stone unturned.

The third chapter is more than a simple exegesis of *Eros and Civilization*, however. Farr, ever with an eye towards reinvigorating Marcuse in light of recent liberation philosophies, ties Marcuse's Freudian insights into the basic tenets of many of those contemporary projects. Recalling that a key component of liberation philosophies is to provide a perspectival account of lived experience from minoritarian vantage points, Farr notes that Marcuse's project sought to provide "an answer to the question of why the proletarian revolution never occurred as Marx thought it would" (43), effectively providing a social psychology from the perspective of the power minority that incorporated this sort of Freudian analysis of desire satisfaction and manipulation that led precisely to that acquiescence. This then ties neatly into Marcuse's project in *One Dimensional Man* where Marcuse distinguishes between true and false needs, the latter being artificially constructed, imposed through various forms of media and technology, and then gratified to create a euphoria of desire satisfaction that quells the need for radical social change. Further, in noting that "the performance principle embodies the idea of false consciousness by which working-class people are duped into supporting the very system that oppresses them" (43), Farr makes an implicit but direct connection with the race theorists, feminist philosophers, and liberation philosophers of all descriptions that have noted precisely this sort of stultifying and alienating effect which we see manifest in a diverse array of texts from Amié Césaire's *A Tempest*, to Du Bois' conception of a "double consciousness," to the recent work of George Yancy and the notions of "slippage" and "resistance" between opposing conceptions of self within a single subject.⁶

Ultimately, Farr sees a light of optimism in Marcuse, optimism in the form of the malleability of these instincts such that "although the personality of the individual is shaped by the cultural conditions where in the instinctual drives are repressed this cultural shaping is never final" (58). Where "negative thinking" has this role in *One-Dimensional Man*, a similar concept, Farr notes, is at play in *Eros in Civilization* in the form of the free interplay of "fantasy" or the imagination which function

"as the principle of negation whereby the present, repressive reality principle is constantly challenged by the possibility of a better, liberated existence" (58). It is here, Farr notes, where the potential for the revolutionary agent remains alive and the possibility of radical social change can still be kindled.

The fourth chapter, entitled "Marcuse and the Problem of Intersubjectivity: Beyond Drive Theory," begins with Farr's engagement with one of the more significant criticisms of Marcuse's interpretation of Freud and uses this discussion as a means to bring us into Marcuse's views of subjectivity and intersubjectivity. Farr takes issue with Nancy Chodorow's interpretation of Marcuse as emphasizing a problematic sort of radical individualism, of individual isolationism, to which Farr wishes to, in part, rescue Marcuse's interpretation of Freud in light of Marcuse's greater project. However, Farr is also quick to concede that, though Chodorow's interpretation may be a bit unfair in terms of Marcuse's supposed emphasis on radical individualism, she is quite right to highlight a lack of a dynamic intersubjectivity that Farr ultimately attempts to supply for us by appeal to Marcuse's larger project in the form of what Farr calls "dialectical intersubjectivity" (68). It is this project that occupies Farr for most of this chapter.

In one of the more intriguing sections of this chapter, Farr utilizes Chodorow's critique to situate Marcuse's views on individuality in the greater context of a more subtle theory of intersubjectivity that runs throughout the breadth of Marcuse's career. Farr argues "the very possibility of self-hood is dependent on interaction with others" (68). This leads Farr into developing a fascinating articulation of what, precisely, that intersubjectivity would be, for Marcuse, a "dialectical intersubjectivity" that offers the possibility of authentic individuality by cutting through the social mechanisms in place that would otherwise whittle individuality down to "sameness." With this schema in place, Farr explicates the ways in which Chodorow's critique can be explained in terms of Marcuse's greater project and, in so doing, Farr gives us a robust articulation of some of the most significant, but subtle, aspects of Marcuse's theory of intersubjectivity and its emancipatory potential in light of the stifling effects of advanced industrial societies.

Farr's fifth chapter, entitled "One-Dimensional Society and the Demise of Dialectical Thinking," offers the reader one of the most concise, general overviews of what many consider Marcuse's seminal text, *One-Dimensional Man*. What is of particular interest to Marcuse scholars will be his emphasis on the positive, almost optimistic undertones in what most consider one of Marcuse's most pessimistic works of critical theory. Farr summarizes Marcuse's overall project as examining "the ways in which advanced industrial societies are able to make themselves immune to revolution" (77) by supplying the sort of social psychology of capitalism's effects and explaining capitalism's apparent immunity to radical social change. Arguing convincingly that there are at least two different interpretations of one-dimensionality, Farr says that "Marcuse never gives in to pessimism" (79) and supports this significant claim through an in-depth analysis of what Farr sees as a dialectical tension between two different conceptions of Marcusean negation. The first type of negation, Farr argues, is "negation in its negative and destructive mode," a "leveling, erasure or repression of emancipatory, human, socially just possibilities" (85) in keeping with the "whittling down" of subjectivity Farr discussed earlier. As critical as this is to Marcuse's project, Farr rightly notes a second form of negation that he calls "positive negation" which is "the recognition of the contradictions that permeate our society" (86). It is the search of this second form of negation that preoccupies Marcuse and permits Farr to highlight the optimistic undercurrents of *One-Dimensional Man*.

Farr argues that these two forms of negation exist concurrently, in a dialectical tension that forms the foundation of what Farr draws out as Marcuse's applicability to recent liberation philosophies. The emphasis of *One-Dimensional Man* is, after all, Farr notes, "the erosion of freedom in so-called democratic societies...not necessarily the result of force, but rather, it results from a smooth, systemic, systematic reshaping of the human psyche so that freedom is given up voluntarily" (87). This is the very heart of Farr's earlier overview of the failures of modern democracy⁷ and Farr draws this point out clearly and concisely, thereby effectively reinvigorating Marcuse for modern liberation philosophers. Farr concludes the chapter with an intriguing analysis of the ways in which negative thinking in the first, negative sense, permeates not only the entire history of Western philosophy but also its manifestation in modern political discourse. By drawing on a wide array of secondary sources, and analyzing a few lesser-known texts by Marcuse himself, Farr constructs a good case for the continued significance of Marcuse's critical theory into the twenty-first century.

Farr's sixth chapter, entitled "Spectres of Liberation: Beyond *One-Dimensional Man*," continues his analysis of the optimistic, emancipatory undertones of Marcuse's seminal text by highlighting the nascent germs of radical social change that exist, suppressed, in the "incomplete" democracy of modern America. This "positive, emancipatory side is the spectre of two-dimensionality that haunts western industrial societies" (99), a spectre that Farr ties neatly into Marcuse's critical notion of dialectical thinking. Farr notes that "dialectical thinking does not rest with the facts of social reality but instead is conscious of the real potential for a qualitatively different form of life embedded in the present reality principle" (99). Farr develops these two sides to Marcuse's dialectic in *One-Dimensional Man* throughout the rest of the chapter: on the one hand, the oppressive, desublimating effects of capitalism and, on the other, the stirrings of resistance in what he calls "catalyst groups."

Breaking from what was a fair amount of (insightful) exegesis, Farr does a splendid job tying together lesser known essays by Marcuse into the central thesis of *One-Dimensional Man* and exploring these "catalyst groups" in greater detail (Farr focuses here on feminism, and will focus on other minoritarian groups in subsequent chapters). One of the most intriguing sections of the chapter is Farr's analysis of "sensibility" in Marcuse, and Farr's insightful comment that "the failed revolutions discussed by Marcuse failed because they attempted change at a very superficial level. They attempted to change society without recognizing the need to change our distorted sensibility. Change often fails to break with the old society" (106). That is, Farr notes, that real change, authentically radical social change, must address these Marcusean-cum-Freudian issues of instinct manipulation and take seriously capitalism's dynamic ability to change and adapt (Farr uses the clever analogy of capitalism as an "organism" (110) ever-adapting to survive) and influence its citizens on a far deeper, instinctual level than even Marx himself ever understood.

The seventh chapter, entitled "Liberal Democracy and its Limits," is "a slight departure" (119) from Farr's previous analysis, delving into what has up to this point been a tangential, sub-theme of the shortcomings of modern, liberal democracy in the United States. The challenge, as Farr puts it, tying it into both Marcuse's critical theory and the goals of recent liberation philosophies, is the enduring marginalization and oppression of minorities of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation.

After a poignant critique of Rawls' social/political theory, Farr notes that Rawls "falls short of developing a fully

emancipatory theory" (119), a problem that Farr hopes recent liberation philosophies will help to amend. Arguing "the concept of democracy cannot be reduced to universal suffrage" (120), Farr demands a theory that allows for the freedom and equality requisite for the flourishing of all individuals within a true democratic society, not just those who occupy places of political power. "The plight," Farr argues, "of such a large portion of humanity is evident of the absence of the ideals of self-determination and self-development" (120), ideals requisite for the true fulfillment of the "democratic experiment" (119).

Of particular interest is Farr's exploration of the politically charged rhetoric of emancipation that operates as a type of insulating cloaking device to obfuscate the obvious suffering of a large part of our supposed democratic society. Farr notes "one of the greatest obstacles to a Marcusean radical political theory is the belief that we are already a democratic society" (119). Farr's engagement of this weaponization of rhetoric in modern political discourse proves both refreshing and an unsettling reminder of the ease in which political invested interests may misdirect our attention from the shortcomings of true democracy requisite for the flourishing of a few through the oppression of many. Such topics have been of great interest in recent conversation within circles of critical race theory as well, since many have argued (unconvincingly) that the election of Barack Obama must clearly demarcate the end of racism in America. It is precisely this sort of "belief that we are already a democratic society," this (clearly false) belief that we are beyond racism and intolerance and the oppression of minorities, that is such a significant stumbling block to Marcusean critical theory and thus an important contribution, as well, to Farr's work here.

Farr's eighth chapter is entitled "Marcuse and Discourse Ethics Second Generation Critical Theory and the Paradigm of Discourse Ethics." Although Farr has already peppered his book with myriad arguments for the continued significance of Marcuse in critical theory circles, a more explicit justification of that position is made here. To do so, Farr must engage the vast contributions of Jürgen Habermas. Nearly as exemplary as his exegesis of Marcuse's major works, Farr gives us a clear summary of Habermas' theories of communication, intersubjectivity, and discourse ethics while both highlighting his contributions to critical theory and putting him in direct conversation with the goals of the liberation philosophies Farr articulated earlier. However, after taking the time to explain and commend many of Habermas' contributions to the tradition of Frankfurt School, he'll note "while Habermas's discourse ethics makes a valuable contribution to critical theory, democratic theory, and liberation philosophy it is inadequate without a Marcusean reconstruction" (137). Such a Marcusean amendment to Habermas' discourse ethics will occupy Farr throughout the rest of the chapter.

Farr's final chapter, entitled "Liberation and the Democratic Vision: Educating for a New Sensibility," is the culmination of all of his explorations thus far, and as such I will provide the briefest comment, so as not to divulge too much in this review about his concluding sentiments. Suffice it to say, however, as he notes, "so far our work has been descriptive" but in this final chapter, Farr's goal "is to work out the prescriptive or normative implications of Marcuse's form of critical theory as it applies to rethinking the project of democracy" (161). Farr masterfully weaves together a diverse array of philosophers, from Judith Butler to Frederick Douglass, from Hegel to Paul Ricoeur, demonstrating the shortcomings of our modern practice of democracy and the shortcomings of the theories that have informed that practice. Farr rejects the notion that democracy is as simple as a few scattered principles and the power to

vote and advocates a more dynamic conception in which democracy should be viewed as an ongoing “struggle wherein individuals and social groups strive toward a community of mutually free and responsible persons who also attempt to acquire the necessary resources for self-development and self-determination” (161). Farr brings to bear the depth and breadth of his research to forward this robust and multi-faceted conception of democracy and advocate for Marcuse’s necessary inclusion in its implementation by revisiting Marcuse’s Freudian conception of eros and a new “attunement” to this democratic vision. This completes the final chapter.

In sum, Arnold Farr’s book is a clear, concise, and exceptionally well-researched exploration of Marcuse’s critical theory and a convincing argument for Marcuse’s enduring significance for twenty-first century America. He offers those new to the field of critical theory a clear exegesis of Marcuse, Rawls, Habermas, and a wide array of diverse thinkers. To those already conversant in critical theory and socio-political philosophy, Farr offers a wonderful resource in which he bridges the gap between a great many thinkers and draws upon a rich and varied array of secondary sources that advanced students, professors, and professional scholars alike can utilize for their own research. In addition, his exploration of recent liberation philosophies in light of Marcuse’s enduring significance proves insightful and useful for theorists of race, gender, and sexuality. As much as I was able to include in this book review, it barely scratches the surface of the massive amount of research and critical insight that Farr has injected into this impressive exploration. Indeed, for every one theme I mentioned, a dozen more existed in each of his nine chapters that I didn’t have time to engage in detail.

Farr’s style alone is impressive, demonstrating his capability of conveying complex theories and vast philosophical movements clearly, concisely, but without watering down the content or import for less advanced readers, making it useful to a wide array of scholars at varying levels of expertise. One small handicap is that the book reads quite a lot like a dissertation, including extended and perhaps unnecessary explanations of what each chapter will engage before he begins, for example. This isn’t much of a critique, however, for if this is, in fact, a barely refurbished dissertation, it is one of the finest dissertations I’ve had the pleasure of reading and the style does little to detract from the overall impact of the book itself. Further, and this is more of a critique of the editors involved in the construction of this book and less Farr himself, the text is riddled with editing mistakes (sentences repeated, pages that begin in the middle of sentences that do not start on the previous page, etc.). These are all simply issues that the editors, somewhere in the construction of this book, should have caught, and they distract a bit from what is otherwise an absolutely exemplary philosophical exploration and a remarkably clear writing style from Farr.

Overall, *Critical Theory and Democratic Vision* represents a massive amount of research that philosophers at all levels will be able to use to further their own work in a wide array of diverse disciplines. This book is a must-have for readers of Marcuse, for critical theorists, for race theorists, and socio-political philosophers from any background. By masterfully weaving together Marcuse’s critical theory, liberation philosophy, and the unfinished project of American democracy, Farr has given us an exemplary exploration into some of the most significant and enduring socio-political problems that face our nation today and may well (though hopefully not) continue to influence the course of American politics into the foreseeable future.

Endnotes

1. Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991) 68.

2. Says Kellner in the introduction to the second edition of *One-Dimensional Man*, p. xiv, in this edition.
3. Alasdair Macintyre, *Herbert Marcuse: An Exposition and a Polemic* (New York: The Viking Press, 1970), 46.
4. See Jeffrey O’Cay’s essay “Eroticizing Marx, Revolutionizing Freud: Marcuse’s Psychoanalytic Turn,” in *Kritike* 3, no. 1 (June 2009): 11.
5. “Their satisfaction might be more gratifying to the individual, but this happiness is not a condition which has to be maintained and protected if it serves to arrest the development of the ability (his own and others) to recognize the disease of the whole and grasp the chances of curing the disease. The result then is euphoria in unhappiness” (Marcuse 1991, 4-5).
6. “The aim is to foreclose any possibility of slippage between the historically imposed imago and how the Black body lives its reality,” George Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008), 110.
7. See Farr, p. 9

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