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Publication Date

2012

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Contested Humanity:
Blackness and the Educative Remaking of the Human in the Twentieth Century

By

Ronald Kenneth Porter

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Education

and the Designated Emphasis

in

Critical Theory

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Daniel H. Perlstein, Chair

Professor Zeus Leonardo

Professor Nelson Maldonado-Torres

Spring 2012

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Abstract

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Doctor of Philosophy in Education

Designated Emphasis in Critical Theory

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Daniel H. Perlstein, Chair

The question of what constitutes “the human” has been of pivotal import since the rise of European modernity. While what it means to be human has been claimed to be a universal concept, the human has in fact been defined in ways that have been both narrow and exclusionary, especially in regards to race. The purpose of this dissertation, a work of intellectual history, is to understand how black educational thinkers have gone about the task of not only critiquing Eurocentric ideals of humanity, but also redefining what it means to be human. Because modernity and its ensuing Enlightenment focuses so centrally on the capacity to be educated and knowledgeable, or to reason, it becomes a crucial place for black educational thinkers to intervene. Thus, black educational thinkers pose a fundamental question: How do we go about the task of understanding, creating, and articulating notions of black humanity when the very language of humanity is based on a universal that excludes? I seek to understand how race has been rearticulated as a question of “the human” in the 20th century by critical theorists and movement intellectuals by focusing on the educational thought of three individuals: W.E.B. Du Bois, Alain Locke, and James Baldwin. The historicity of these thinkers illuminates a specific intellectual tradition in the 20th century concerning the relationship between blackness, universality, and the human in the modern era. Together, they illuminate a larger concern—ranging from optimism to despair—over the status of black people in 20th century America and how this status relates to educational projects. This study is important for several reasons: it shows how historical and philosophical debates concerning the human have influenced educational theory and transformation, it allows us to think about how we go about educating persons based on race and/or cultural background, and it also provides the opportunity for scholars from multiple disciplines to consider how we can go about reconciling simultaneous commitments to diversity and the assertion of universal principles of human rights.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my father, Ronald Kenneth Harbor, and my mother, Melba Quintina Veronica Porter. I know I was blessed with parents who guided me both physically and spiritually. Your love made me the person I am today. You love me for who I am, and to me that is the greatest gift in the entire universe.

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Acknowledgements

Completing this dissertation was a labor of love. Throughout the process I received so much loving support from mentors, family, and friends. The gratitude I have for those who stuck with me throughout this process is boundless, and a testament to the power of education to heal.

I want to thank my committee members: Daniel H. Perlstein, Zeus Leonardo, and Nelson Maldonado-Torres. Your feedback and support certainly gave me the strength to complete this process and allowed me to see the world with new eyes. Thank you for providing me with a wondrous educational opportunity. I am forever grateful.

I want to thank everyone in my family. I love all of you! You shined a light on me and gave me the loving support necessary to pursue my dreams. Special thanks to three beautiful women: Williette Maxcine Harbor, Candice Johnson, and Kennedy Thompson. You supplied me with the positive energy and inspiration necessary to stay on my path.

To my cosmic family: Angel Gonzalez, Kate Knepper, Annaliese Kiesnowski, Chiquita Brooks, Erica Lumpkin, John Friese, Mia Miller, Venus Jones, Josh Orphanidys, Ehab Samaan, Kashif and Roshni Malik, Gabrielle Williams, Lynette Parker, Elizabeth Inserto, my Alice Street family, and any and everyone else who provided support on this journey. You all gave me valuable insight into the fact that in order for education to change, we must change.

A very special thank you is in order for Shari Lee, who entered my life at the right place and the right time saying, "You can do this!" You taught me what a mentoring relationship can really be, and you taught me to always stay true to myself. I never expected to find such a compassionate and steadfast teacher and friend.

To Santiago, thank you for making me laugh and keeping me on my toes. You are such a beautiful blessing.

For those who are struggling to find a place in the darkness of this world, those who seek to give and receive love openly, I hope this dissertation can spark the light within. Remember, at all costs, love yourself because it is only through living as our unique selves that we can begin to heal the suffering in this world.

We are the ones we have been waiting for.

Part One: Foundations

I would like to begin with a brief anecdote that reveals the reasons why I have done this work.

I have a friend, a 17 year-old black male, who has had a horrible experience navigating the educational system. Because I am a Doctoral Candidate, a male, and a person of color others looked to me to find a solution. However, any suggestions I gave in terms of skills building fell on deaf ears. Then I decided to approach the problem from a different angle and asked him the following question:

“Do you feel worthy enough to fully engage in this life and the opportunities it has to offer?”

His answer: “No.”

*Chapter One:
Somethin's Strange In The House Of Education*

*I'm trying to find my peace
I was made to believe there's something wrong with me
And it hurts my heart
Lord have mercy, ain't it plain to see?
—Janelle Monáe¹*

The question of what constitutes “the human” has been of pivotal import since the rise of European modernity and its ensuing Enlightenment.² While what it means to be human may seem to be a universal concept, the human has in fact been defined in ways that have been both narrow and exclusionary, especially in regards to race. This historical period is marked by the particularity of universalism, which has been the archetype of a race-blind racism. The modern project resulted in a new conception of personhood, but with particular markings that constituted one’s humanity: most notably whiteness.³ Such a narrow category marginalized the majority of the global population and produced the devalued black subject. Consequently, theories and practices that constitute the human have been central to processes of dehumanization. This contradiction between a universalized notion of the human and the denial of humanity has been at the core of the dilemma of marginalization based upon subjectivity in the United States.

Though medieval thinkers and clergy classified human beings on the basis of morality and closeness to God, the push to science and secularism during the modern age meant that the human was to be defined not only due to its high moral character and/or ability to manipulate nature, but also because of its ability to reason. This capacity to reason was thoroughly racialized. In Immanuel Kant’s anthropological work, for instance, he argues that anthropology, which answers the question, “What is the human being?” is the highest of all the disciplines. But Kant also makes clear that there is a telos in his anthropological program concerning the issue of race and the capacity to reason. Kant thus asserts, “Humanity is at its greatest perfection in the race of whites.”⁴ Kant’s understanding of the white race is not simply hierarchical; it is a particular epistemological perspective that requires the subjugation of persons, places, and things that do not fit nicely into Kant’s understanding of reality. Thus, it should not be all too surprising that the modern redefining of the human occurs precisely at the moment when global colonial and slave projects began. The global subjugation of persons deemed inferior was *necessary* in order for those who held a particular racialized perceptivity of how the universe should operate to continue to concretize their reality and play god.

One may ask, “What does modernity, race, reason, and subjectivity have to do with the study of education?” However, the definition of the human based on race, combined with the black subject’s supposed inability to reason and obtain self-consciousness, has had profound implications for educational thought and practice throughout the modern age. The limited focus on reason and rationality as the *raison d’être* of the human being—as opposed to asking much deeper questions about what it means to be human, questions that perhaps transcend the confines of identity—is

directly connected to conversations surrounding the educatability of black persons. These debates have saturated the modern era and continue to appear in current debates focusing on the problems with black and brown students. For instance, we take for granted that educational access and equity is a good in and of itself. However, what if the reverse is true? What if the educational system we have come to both simultaneously love and hate regulates persons based upon their subjectivities and identities not for the benefit of the individual, but rather for the supposed normalization of a particular perspective on reality.⁵

The purpose of this study is to understand how black educational thought and projects have gone about the task of accommodating, critiquing *and* redefining Eurocentric ideals of humanity. Black educational thinkers have worked to destabilize the notion that the label of humanity is an unchanging or given concept. Rather, many claim that what it means to be human has been articulated via numerous historical projects whereby humanity has been defined through a dialectical relationship between philosophical inquiry and social practices. In other words, the concept of humanity has been made, remade, destroyed, and reconstructed over time. As I will argue, this particular claim is limited to the material world and does not get at how our notions of ourselves as humans is linked to consciousness, particularly in regards to the subject of recognition. This is an example of how limited our view is regarding education, because in most schools we are taught how to relate to authority outside of the self and not taught how to relate to the self: our internal desires and our internal knowledge. Simply put, our current paradigm of education teaches students not to trust themselves leading to the development of an inner sense of worthlessness. What the traditional concept of education misses is that if the relationship to the self is disturbed by constantly seeking recognition from without, a war of recognition ensues between self and other. Thus, the way we relate to ourselves and others, even with supposedly the best of intentions, becomes highly problematic.

Because the notions of the human found throughout the Enlightenment focus so centrally on the capacity to be educated, as well as the equation of intelligence and morality, it becomes a crucial place for black educational thinkers to intervene. Blackness as an identity has been constructed in such a way that persons identified as black are not supposed to have the capacity to be educated and therefore cannot be identified as human. However, black educational thinkers of all political stripes have posed a fundamental question: How do we go about the task of understanding, creating, and articulating notions of black humanity when the very language of humanity is based on a universal that in fact excludes? Both the praise and criticism of Eurocentric conceptualizations of humanity by black persons cannot be approached without understanding an essential connection between the struggle for liberation/equality and educational thought, particularly education as the practice of freedom and arguments focusing on the educatability of black persons. Black educational thought has focused on how black persons should utilize knowledge in the hope of disallowing, asserting, reclaiming, transmitting, and reconstructing humanity. This tradition, which is characterized by much rich and extensive debate, has in common the urgency of needing to grapple with being a personless person in the United States, as well as how to go about acquiring knowledge in the hope of not only developing political and economic power, but also a sense of self-worth, self-knowledge, and self-love. Thus,

inherently pedagogical movements aimed at both critiquing and reifying Eurocentric humanism have been intrinsic to U.S. black radicalism in the 20th century.

The central question driving this study is: *How have black persons living in the United States, as both oppressed people and social agents, simultaneously internalized, appropriated, and challenged Eurocentric ideals of humanity?* Two additional questions evolve from my central research question: *How has the Eurocentric conceptualization of humanity been critiqued and/or affirmed in black thought? How has the black project of asserting and/or redefining humanity been intrinsically tied to educational thought and practice?* I seek to both understand and move beyond the ways in which race has been rearticulated as a question of “the human” in the 20th century by critical theorists and movement intellectuals by focusing on the pedagogical thought of three individuals: W.E.B. Du Bois, Alain Locke, and James Baldwin.

While my research questions may appear to be purely philosophical, they in fact have great implications for the critical transitions, conditions, and issues impacting underrepresented students in the United States. Much educational research has shown that underrepresented students have weaknesses in skills, and the subsequent solution is to specifically address such weaknesses. However, these weaknesses are not the fundamental issue. I am interested in how educational theories, policies, and institutions enable underrepresented students to believe and/or internalize the notion that they do not possess the capacity to interrogate the world. My research is more expansive than simply getting at the problem of the achievement gap, and opens up questions of how educational scholars, practitioners, politicians, and the society as a whole position underrepresented students as learners. At the level of pedagogy, this would mean having students confront directly a both beautiful and terrorizing question: In what ways does this society dehumanize you and how do you navigate this terrain?

In addition, there is a fundamental incoherence between constructivism and the historical experience of black persons and other marginalized groups in the United States. Constructivism as a theory of learning posits that humans have the ability to construct the world, and is one of the central theories driving K-12 educational thought and pedagogy. However, as Du Bois, Locke, and Baldwin show, the constructivist approach generalizes from an ethnocentric standpoint, and does not account for the fact that throughout most of modern history black persons and persons of color have been said to not have the capacity to be educated, and are unable to reason about the world or obtain-self consciousness. The idea of reconstructing constructivism is not about doing away with constructivism so much as how to imagine a constructivism that is available to a child that deems her or himself unworthy of constructing. My hope is that this project can be utilized to address this fundamental issue and lead to the development of activities and resource materials that can help move students from marginalized communities, such as my friend, to feel they are worthy enough to engage and interrogate the world.

This study, which is both an intellectual history and a study of consciousness, explores how these thinkers critiqued the dehumanizing impact of Euro-traditional concepts of humanity while developing new definitions that transcend modern thought, as well as new methods of criticism that can contribute to educational theory and practice. However, this is not a work of philosophy or the history of ideas in the sense of an examination of a concept as it appears and transforms over time. Rather, it is an

intellectual history because its premise is that ideas are historically conditioned and best understood within a larger social context. Thus, I will be looking at how Du Bois, Locke, and Baldwin's thoughts on the human and its relationship to education were conditioned by biographical, historical, and social contexts. It is a study of consciousness in the sense that I utilize the educational thought of these thinkers to shed light on how they approached their life projects in lieu of the crisis of recognition created by limited notions of the human.⁶

This project emerges from an educational point of view, because I want to investigate how black educational thought has operated *pedagogically*; that is, how the relationship between black educational thinkers and historical movements have generated the seeds of new social and interpersonal relations that can teach people to transcend regulatory conceptions of humanity and identity. My understanding of education has been influenced by the work of Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci's conception of education was "active" and exceeded a "common sense" notion of scholasticism that automatically relegates education to "the passive reception of information and the solitary refinement of an individual's sensibility." This educational point of view illuminates "the transformative power of ideas, [and] the capacity to bring about radical social change and construct a new order through the elaboration and dissemination of a new philosophy, an alternative world view."⁷ Angel Rubiel Gonzalez brings this approach into the twenty-first century by pointing out that our limited sense of education has life or death consequences:

Those fighting to situate schooling in relationship to the projects of liberation and democracy have noted the tensions between reforming and fundamentally changing the nature of schools. While some teachers and organizers see schools as potential sites for fostering critical thought and practice, the emerging imperatives of schooling have made such efforts increasingly difficult. Narrow curricular demands, federal funding strings, and free market imperatives have left schools devoid of the dynamism and complexity found in life. This has led to a climate in which questions about our existence in the world, social justice, history, and difference are pushed to the margins in favor of a business model of education that privileges limited skills and operational efficiency. Similar to [Paulo] Freire's indictment of the banking model of education, I would argue that schooling in our time has become an act of *necrophilia* and not an affirmation of *life*.⁸

In keeping with Alain Locke's claim that cultures develop as they merge with differing cultures, I will rely on global interpretations in order to clarify my argument.⁹ My interest is in how the contributions of these thinkers and practitioners have operated with a pedagogical force that offers everyone a richer notion of the human that directly challenges dehumanization.

Unlocking a Historical Lineage: Justification and Significance

A study on Du Bois, Locke, and Baldwin immediately raises questions regarding purposes and contributions. In this section, I lay out the rationale for my project as well as how I see this study making an original contribution to the field of education.

First, although considerable research has been done on Du Bois, Locke, and Baldwin, little attention has been paid to their educational thought. This is intriguing, because these thinkers had much to say concerning education and its complex relationship to blackness and humanity. Derrick P. Alridge has done well to point out that research on Du Bois has typically been biographical, or a literary, philosophical, or sociological analysis of his texts. Others have explored Du Bois' debate with Washington, and Du Bois' thoughts on double consciousness. Both Herbert Aptheker and Eugene F. Provenzo have given us compilations of Du Bois' writings on education. Reiland Rabaka has sought to tie Du Bois' "evolving Africana philosophy of education" to his historical, social, and political philosophy, and Alridge has made a significant contribution by providing the first comprehensive work on Du Bois' educational thought. However, these analyses are not tied to broader debates in which Du Bois was involved concerning pedagogy and the human in the modern era.¹⁰

Locke's contributions to American educational thought have been either overlooked or dismissed outright. Scholars have charged that Locke sought to assimilate blacks "out of existence," and that the New Negro movement served only to advance "an apolitical movement of the arts."¹¹ In their commitment to nationalist and postmodernist thought, scholars miss Locke's advancement of a educational theory that not only sought to subject Western thought to critique, but also served as a useful warning against the dehumanizing impact of split subjectivity and regulatory blackness. Scholars focusing on Baldwin have produced biographies, literary criticism, and works that illuminate his position regarding sexuality and race politics.¹² But there is no comprehensive work that focuses on his educational thought. This lack of attention misses Baldwin's criticism of common sense understandings of education, as well as how his "high faggotry" invokes intriguing pedagogical questions regarding the human in light of the regulation of sexuality and masculinity. These gaps in the literature concerning education are unfortunate, because the work of Du Bois, Locke, and Baldwin has important implications for current conversations concerning universality, race consciousness, diversity, multicultural education, and the emerging study of the connection between sexual identity and schooling

Second, throughout the latter half of the twentieth century black scholars may have dismissed Locke and Baldwin because their homosexuality was a direct ontological challenge to both nationalist and cultural masculinities that equated political freedom with the assertion of heterosexual and patriarchal masculinity. In an attempt to link social struggle with the need for black men to assert their maleness, writers such as Eldridge Cleaver theorized homosexuality as a consequence of colonialism and/or a threat to "natural" gender relations. Cleaver, in reference to Baldwin, went as far as to assert, "Homosexuality is a sickness, just as are baby-rape or wanting to become the head of General Motors."¹³ In this type of climate gay writers and activists such as Baldwin were disparaged, and those of the past, such as Locke, were intellectually maligned or ignored. However, ignoring the pedagogical lessons of how men come to accept the full spectrum of their sexual selves and still embody a sense of worthiness is tragic. As Angela Y. Davis has pointed out, this historical legacy is haunting, especially considering the degree of respect Baldwin received from many of his male contemporaries.¹⁴ In light of Baldwin's praxis of defiance we must ask what the

limitations are of educational programs that claim to produce the archetype of, for instance, the “strong black man.”

Third, the historical placement of these three thinkers illuminates a specific intellectual tradition in the 20th century concerning the relationship between blackness, universality, and the human in the modern era. This debate centers upon the ways in which black persons should approach the issue of dehumanization and its relationship to split subjectivity, vindication, and mental/physiological degradation. Du Bois begins this debate by presenting the black subject as a “problem” in the context of an American polity “which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world.”¹⁵ He initiates early 20th century debates regarding the meaning of blackness and the education of black people in post Civil War and post reconstruction America. He thus solidifies the field of black studies through the seminal power of his intellection, and marks the first moment in America following the Civil War when blacks have the necessary infrastructure to develop an intellectual tradition. It is no mistake that Du Bois and other black educational thinkers, such as Washington, appear simultaneously at a moment when blacks seek to systematically understand white subordination.¹⁶

When reconstruction proved to be a false promise, and what was thus required was a deeper engagement with racism.¹⁷ Du Bois takes up the issue of race and the human on the terrain of philosophy and psychology. Du Bois’ double consciousness suggests that the Negro’s attempt to gain self-consciousness in a racist America is impaired because the reflected image coming from white America will always be distorted, and often harmful.¹⁸ The Negro longs for self-consciousness, and as Du Bois asserts, “He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face.”¹⁹ Despite this longing, the Negro cannot achieve synthesis in a racist state, leading Du Bois to ask the Negro, “How does it feel to be a problem?”²⁰ Du Bois stands the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* back on its feet.²¹ The Eurocentric understanding of humanity causes the black subject not to posit, “I think, therefore I am,” but rather, “I am not, and therefore I do not think.” This is essentially an educational problem. For Du Bois, if the Negro cannot obtain true self-consciousness then it is impossible to reason. How does it feel to be a problem, to be nonhuman, is thus a question of how does it feel not to be able to successfully reason about yourself and the world.

Du Bois writes at a period when lynching was a national pastime and the freedoms promised to those emancipated seemed ephemeral. Within twenty years, however, the project had changed. Although the majority of blacks still lived in the south, blacks in the north were presented with new possibilities that Jim Crow segregation denied. Not surprisingly, the project of humanization took on new meaning in the spheres of education and culture during this period, marked by the articulation of the “New Negro” by Alain Locke. The New Negro marks a critical turning point in black thought because it illuminates a cultural sophistication, the possibilities of modern urban life, and a claim that one can be both black and modern.

Locke’s philosophy reflected his view that marginalized groups must simultaneously maintain cultural distinctiveness while asserting their humanity through participation in the universal. In both his aesthetic vision and educational thought,

Locke claimed that cultural and/or racial differences should be treated in terms of their universal applicability and their importance to the whole of the human experience. Locke also raises questions regarding the meaning of blackness and its relation to the American polity/imaginary.²² Put another way, he engages the pedagogical implications of the Negro as a figment of the white American imagination. His contribution to educational thought, via the Old/New Negro trope, is to point out that a *problem* is educated in a different way and via a dissimilar philosophy than a complex, malleable, and rich human *personality*. Locke is also critical to this project because, contrary to others such as Carter G. Woodson, he not only represents the Harlem Renaissance and the “New Negro” aesthetic movement, but also debates over the status of black people in the midst of theories of ethnicity. Mentored by Horace Kallen, Locke was deeply engaged with the emerging theories and debates regarding ethnicity and cultural pluralism, and his personal experiences allowed him to subject these new theories to a racial critique.

As the Civil Rights movement began to gain ground, Locke realized that he might have been unduly optimistic regarding his focus on the cultural sphere. The Civil Rights movement initiated a new optimism regarding education and politics, especially following the landmark *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision. However, the Civil Rights movement transformed into the black liberation struggle as many involved became critical about the possibility of black persons receiving equality in America on par with whites. Baldwin epitomizes both the Civil Rights movement and its critique—“the reality which lies behind the words *acceptance* and *integration*”—and debates concerning integrationist and nationalist approaches to the “Negro problem.”²³ Regarding education, Baldwin illuminated a racial paradox in the American political-educational system. He acknowledged that the purpose of education is to civilize the child and perpetuate the aims of society. However, according to Baldwin, a black individual can become schizophrenic via processes of education as she is taught to love and respect a country that does not respect and love her in return. This may become pronounced in black children because of the way they are depicted as the un-model minority, but this depiction actually masks the fact that this schizophrenia influences everyone regardless of identity. Baldwin also moves us beyond race and pushes us to pose questions regarding the regulation of sexuality, desire, friendship, and love at the site of the school. Together, Du Bois, Locke, and Baldwin illuminate a larger concern—ranging from optimism to despair—over the very status of black people in 20th century America as human beings, and how this status relates to educational projects. Despite their historical specificity, the careers of these individuals intersected at many points, and together they had a great influence on American life. Their ideas changed, and continue to change, the ways we go about thinking about democracy, race relations, education, and—most importantly for this study—the very constitution of the human itself.

Finally, beyond the gaps that exist in the literature, this dissertation is significant because it gives scholars and educators the opportunity to make three considerations. First, it explores the legitimate thoughts of these thinkers and rightfully places them within the canon of U.S. American educational thought. I am not simply asserting that these thinkers were interested in education. Rather, I intend to make a scholarly intervention by demonstrating the *centrality* of pedagogical thought and practice within

their broader concerns regarding the status of black persons as human beings. It is important to note that while each thinker did have some level of respect for traditional educational institutions, they were also articulating questions regarding education as they relate to the development of human consciousness. This distinction will be explored throughout my dissertation and will contribute to a more robust understating of why students “check out” in traditional educational institutions. Second, scholars and practitioners of education can benefit from understanding how broader historical and philosophical debates concerning the human have not only influenced educational theory and practice, but also criticisms of American educational institutions. Third, this study gives us the occasion to think about both the benefits and pitfalls of educating persons based on race and/or cultural background. In other words, it allows us to reconsider how black students are treated as problems while white cultural dominance remains hidden behind a curtain of universalism and good educational intentions. An examination of the impact of Eurocentric conceptualizations of the human through an exploration of these thinkers provides the occasion for scholars in a variety of disciplines to think about how we can go about reconciling simultaneous commitments to diversity and the assertion of universal principles of human rights.

Method & Overview

This study is a work of qualitative research. Specifically, I have answered my research questions by conducting an intellectual history. According to Peter E. Gordon, an intellectual history “regard[s] ideas as historically conditioned features of the world which are best understood within some larger context, whether it be the context of social struggle and institutional change, intellectual biography (individual or collective), or some larger context of cultural or linguistic disposition (now often called ‘discourses’).”²⁴ This differs from a history of ideas, which is a study of a singular concept and how that concept transforms during different historical periods. My study is not an examination of how the definition of the human has changed over time, though this topic will surely be touched upon within the dissertation. Rather, it is a study of how critiques of supposed universal conceptualizations of what it means to be human have been intrinsically tied to black educational thought in the 20th century. A potential limitation regarding this method in the context of my study is that the work can become over ambitious if its contours are not clearly defined. In other words, an epic study can be done on Du Bois, Locke, or Baldwin. However, such a study would miss the point of my work, which is to illuminate the relationship between ideas and historical processes relating to race and the human as they have evolved throughout the 20th century. To mediate this drawback, I will focus my study primarily on the educational thought of these thinkers, using their perspectives on other topics (such as black reconstruction, aesthetics, and literary criticism) as background.

Data was collected from two types of sources: archival materials and published sources. I collected materials from several archives, including the Alain Locke papers at Howard University (Washington, D.C.), and the W.E.B. Du Bois papers at the University of Massachusetts (Amherst, M.A.). Published sources have helped me fill in the gaps while searching through archival materials, and also offer author’s perspectives and understandings of events. These include texts published by Du Bois,

Locke, and Baldwin, upon which I have done close readings. Sources also include newspaper articles, publications developed by organizations and groups, and scholarly reports and publications. Scholarly publications published during the time period I am interested in also serve as primary sources by illuminating how scholars viewed, researched, and debated questions of the human.

My study has been divided into five chapters. Chapter Two, "Misguided Liberation: Defining and Redefining the Human in the Modern Era," provides an epistemological introduction to the study. In this section I have laid out the racialized notion of the universal human in Euro-American philosophical thought, and the relationship of such thought to the lived conditions of black people. Chapters Three, Four, and Five, which are entitled "A Pedagogical Dogma From Hell: W.E.B. Du Bois, Double Consciousness, and The Fractured Human," "In Search of a Diverse Humanity: The Critical Educational Thought of Alain LeRoy Locke," and "Faggot Pedagogy: James Baldwin and the Praxis of Defiance" explore how each thinker critiqued and/or affirmed the modern human and how their rearticulation is connected to their educational thought. Chapter Six, entitled "Towards A Holistic Educational Praxis" is the conclusion, where I build on my findings to articulate a critical educational theory, addressing the impact and criticism of Eurocentric conceptualizations of humanity and the rearticulation of what it means to be human via black educational thought and projects.

¹ Janelle Monáe, "Cold War," (Georgia Wondaland Arts Society, Bad Boy, 2010).

² I do not mean to indicate that European modernity and the Enlightenment are interchangeable terms. To be clear, European modernity refers to a post-medieval period marked by global exploration, colonialism, slavery, capitalism, secularism (an increased suspicion of the church that reaches its apex during the Enlightenment), and the rise of the nation state. Wynter argues that the modern period begins in Europe following the 1492 discovery of the Americas that generated an epistemological revolution in Europe. In contrast, the Enlightenment is primarily an intellectual and political movement occurring during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Schmidt argues that during this period the primary debates focused on the public use of reason, the tensions produced between enlightenment and religion, and the relationship between enlightenment and authority following the French revolution. However, as Mills points out, Schmidt misses the intrinsic debates going on during this period focusing on the issue of race. For example, such arguments miss the fact that debates concerning enlightenment and authority were not only initiated by the French Revolution, but also the Haitian revolution. Within this project, the Enlightenment serves as a useful point of departure because, despite the many debates, it is a moment of the solidification of a particular type of knowledge base (as Gramsci notes, "a kind of pan-European unified consciousness") across Europe. Sylvia Wynter, "1492: A New World View," in *Race, Discourse, and the Origin of the Americas: A New Worldview*, ed. Vera Lawrence Hyatt and Rex Nettleford (Washington, DC: Smithsonian, 1995); James Schmidt, "Introduction: What Is Enlightenment? A Question, Its Context, and Some Consequence," in *What Is Enlightenment: Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth Century Questions*, ed. James Schmidt (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996); Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); Antonio Gramsci, "Socialism and Culture," in *Selections from Political Writings :1910-1920*, ed. Quintin Hoare and John Mathews (New York: International Publishers, 1977/1916), 12.

³ This new conception of personhood was also marked by notions of property and gender. While these markers will be touched upon in this study, the primary focus will be on the complex relationship between what it means to be human and race, with subsequent foci on sexuality and masculinity.

⁴ Immanuel Kant, "On the Different Races of Man and Physical Geography," in *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader* ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997/1775), 63.

⁵ I use the term educational system and schooling broadly in this dissertation in reference not only to the public school system, but also the particular perspective we have developed on what education is, can be, and what it can actually do. I seek to push us to begin to think beyond the limits of our common sense understandings of education.

⁶ To be clear, when I use the term consciousness I am not referring to a sense of being aware of issues, such as political events, but the notion that one is aware of the relationships that exist between thought and action/self and other.

⁷ Carmel Borg, Joseph A. Buttigieg, and Peter Mayo, "Introduction. Gramsci and Education: A Holistic Approach," in *Gramsci and Education*, ed. Carmel Borg, Joseph A.

Buttigieg, and Peter Mayo (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC., 2002), 6-7. Gramsci made this point clear when he described the Enlightenment as an educative revolution. "The Enlightenment, a period which has been so slandered by facile critics of theoretical reason, was in fact not—or at least not entirely—a featherweight gathering of superficial, dilettante intellectuals, discoursing about anything and everything with complacent indifference [...]. It was not, that is to say, simply a phenomena of pedantic, arid, intellectualism, like the one we see before our eyes now, exhibited in its full glory in the low grade popular universities. The Enlightenment was a magnificent revolution in itself [...] it created a kind of pan-European unified consciousness, a bourgeois International of the spirit, with each part sensitive to the tribulations and misfortunes of the whole, which was the best preparation for the bloody revolution which would subsequently take place in France.

In Italy, in France, in Germany, the same things were being discussed, the same institutions, the same principles [...]. The bayonets of Napoleon's armies found their way already cleared by an invisible army of books and tracts, which had been swarming out of Paris since the first half of the eighteenth century, preparing men and institutions for their badly needed renovations." Gramsci, "Socialism and Culture," 12.

⁸ Angel Rubiel Gonzalez, "Introduction: Educating to Affirm Life: Sexuality, Politics, and Education," in *Sexualities in Education: A Reader* ed. Erica R. Meiners and Therese Quinn (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 345; Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 2003/1970).

⁹ Alain Locke, *When People Meet: A Study in Race and Culture Contacts* (New York: Committee on Workshops, Progressive Education Association, 1942).

¹⁰ Derrick P. Alridge, "Conceptualizing a Du Boisian Philosophy of Education: Toward a Model for African-American Education," *Educational Theory* 49, no. 3 (1999); David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century 1919-1963*. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000); Robert Gooding-Williams, "Du Bois's Counter-Sublime," in *The Souls Black Folk: Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism*, ed. Henry Louis Gates and Terri Hume Oliver (New York: Norton & Company, 1999); David Farrell Krell, "The Bodies of Black Folk: From Kant and Hegel to Du Bois and Baldwin," *Boundary 2* 27, no. 3 (2000); Charles F. Peterson, *Du Bois, Fanon, Cabral: The Margins of Elite Anti-Colonial Leadership* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007); Shamoan Zamir, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to W.E.B. Du Bois* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Jacqueline M. Moore, *Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, and the Struggle for Racial Uplift* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2003); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Dickson D. Bruce Jr., "W.E.B. Du Bois and the Idea of Double Consciousness," *American Literature* 64, no. 2 (1992); Herbert Aptheker, ed. *The Education of Black People: Ten Critiques* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001/1973); Eugene Provenzo, *Du Bois on Education* (Lanham, MD: Alta Mira Press, 2002); Reiland Rabaka, "W.E.B. Du Bois's Evolving Africana Philosophy of Education," *Journal of Black Studies* 33, no. 4 (2003); Derrick P. Alridge, *The Educational Thought of W.E.B. Du Bois: An Intellectual Tradition* (New York Teachers College Press, 2008).

¹¹ Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: A Historical Analysis of the Failure of Black Leadership* (New York: William Marrow, 1967), 437; Henry Louis Gates Jr., "The Trope of a New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black," *Representations* 24(1988): 147; Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971); Sterling Stuckey, *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

¹² Horace A. Porter, *Stealing the Fire: The Art and Protest of James Baldwin* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989); William J. Weatherby, *James Baldwin: Artist on Fire* (New York: Donald I. Fine, Inc, 1989); James Campbell, *Talking at the Gates: A Life of James Baldwin* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991); David Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994); Joshua L. Miller, "The Discovery of What It Means to Be a Witness: James Baldwin's Dialectics of Difference," in *James Baldwin Now*, ed. Dwight A. McBride (New York: New York University Press, 1999); Henry Lewis Gates Jr., "The Fire Last Time," in *Bloom's Modern Critical Views: James Baldwin*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007); Carolyn Wedin Sylvander, "'Making Love in the Midst of Mirrors': Giovanni's Room and Another Country," in *Bloom's Modern Critical Views: James Baldwin*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007); Leslie A. Fiedler, "A Homosexual Dilemma," in *Critical Essays on James Baldwin* ed. Fred L. Standley and Nancy V. Burt (Boston, MA: G. K. Hall & Co, 1988); William J. Spurlin, "Culture, Rhetoric, and Queer Identity: James Baldwin and the Identity Politics of Race and Sexuality," in *James Baldwin Now*, ed. Dwight A. McBride (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

¹³ Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice* (New York: Delta, 1991), 136.

¹⁴ Ronald K. Porter, "A Rainbow in Black: The Gay Politics of the Black Panther Party," in *Sexualities in Education: A Reader*, ed. Erica R. Meiners and Therese Quinn (New York: Peter Lang, 2012); Angela Y. Davis, "Black Nationalism: The Sixties and the Nineties," in *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, ed. Joy James (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1998/1992).

¹⁵ W.E.B Du Bois, "The Souls of Black Folk," in *W.E.B. Du Bois the Souls of Black Folk: Authoritative Text, Context, Criticism*, ed. Henry Lewis Gates Jr. and Terri Hume Oliver (New York: Norton & Company, 1999/1903), 9, 10-11.

¹⁶ Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery* (New York: Penguin, 1986/1901).

¹⁷ Leon F. Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980).

¹⁸ Henry Lewis Gates Jr., "Introduction," in *The Souls Black Folk: Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism*, ed. Henry Lewis Gates Jr. and Terri Hume Oliver (New York: Norton & Company, 1999), xxvii.

¹⁹ Du Bois, "The Souls of Black Folk," 11.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

²¹ René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Related Writings* trans. Desmond M. Clarke (New York: Penguin Books, 2003/1637).

²² Alain Locke, "The New Negro," in *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, ed. Alain Locke (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1968/1925); ———, "Negro Youth Speaks,"

in *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, ed. Alain Locke (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1968/1925).

²³ James Baldwin, "A Talk to Teachers," in *The Price of the Ticket: Collected Nonfiction 1948-1985* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1985/1963), 19.

²⁴ Peter E. Gordon, "What Is Intellectual History? A Frankly Partisan Introduction to a Frequently Misunderstood Field," (<http://history.fas.harvard.edu/people/faculty/documents/pgordon-whatisintellhist.pdf>), 2.

Chapter Two
Misguided Liberation:
Defining and Redefining the Human in the Modern Era

*Confusion is a walrus,
Yet there's still so much left for us to learn.
I hear the riot community approaching...
Take my hand...let's go talk to them.
Janelle Monáe & Of Montreal²⁵*

I draw from a broad range of scholarly literature in order to inform the historical and theoretical basis of my study. These works can be grouped into two main areas: literature concerning race and the critique of modern philosophies of the human, and literature related to black educational thought and practice. My intention in this review is to provide an intellectual framework regarding the critique of the racialized universal human. In the sections that follow, I review these bodies of literature in order to shed light on the problems and debates that are intrinsically tied to my project.

Literature Concerning Race And The Critique Of Modern Philosophies Of The Human

The human in modern history—celebrated as the apex of evolutionary achievement, and living example of the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity—is indeed a paradox. This paradox is due to the simultaneous existence of discourses of freedom and universality in conjunction with the practices of slavery and colonialism that characterized that rise of European nations as global powers. European philosophers and politicians played a major role in articulating this paradox between ideals and practices, revealing two distinct themes. First, while there has been an emphasis on universalism, European thinkers defined the human in ways that differentiated between European man and persons who are geographically, culturally, or religiously different.²⁶ Second, the human has been defined scientifically, through systems of classification, in relationship to the natural world.²⁷ However, what unifies these themes, in both implicit and explicit ways, is the concept of race, and the defining of the European human in dichotomous opposition to its racial other.

In spite of Enlightenment philosophers' espousals of such ideals as universality, cosmopolitanism, liberty, equality, and fraternity, this philosophy was laced with a "virulent and theoretically based racism."²⁸ This is puzzling, because the ideals of this period might seem to be the panacea to racism. However, as scholars have pointed out, the universalism, egalitarianism, and cosmopolitanism found in Enlightenment thought do not necessarily contradict racism as much as play a role in its legitimation.²⁹ Racism is thus accommodated by universalism. Supporters of universalism are given a sense of superiority over those perceived to be tied to particularism, and groups deemed as other must submit to the particular of the universal group. This moves Robert L. Bernasconi to ask several pressing questions:

Why were so many Enlightenment thinkers apparently unable to articulate the new sense of humanity without at the same time drawing the boundaries within

humanity more rigidly and explicitly than before? Does not the historical record show that cosmopolitanism not only was introduced to combat racism, but also readily accommodated racism? Does this not suggest that the ease with which scholars today define [cosmopolitanism and racism] as contraries and then read these definitions back into history distorts the historical relation of these two ideas? Did the advocacy of cosmopolitanism also give to its supporters a sense of superiority over all those whom they perceived as tied to their particularisms? Even if universalism does not necessarily take the form of a demand that others assimilate to those standards that the dominant group holds to be universal, thereby establishing a universalism for everyone else, while the dominant group retains its particularism, is it not a constant threat?³⁰

These questions can help us understand the persistence of racism today and the ways that it is masked behind universalism.³¹ The historical relationship between racism and universalism would trouble black educational thinkers who simultaneously held the concept of universalism as a goal worth striving for, but also recognized its contradictions. This is a profound problem in the educational thought of Du Bois, Locke, and Baldwin, as well as a hurdle for educational practitioners in the 20th century.³²

Scholars and activists have not remained quiet on the contradiction between universalism and racism in modern thought, or the impact of such a Eurocentric episteme. Some critique the modern human using European methodologies, while others argue for new methods of criticism. A firm believer in the power of reason and science to combat racism, Anténor Firmin thought that the ideals of the French revolution would result in a more egalitarian world. He criticized the polygenic views of race held by Arthur de Gobineau and others as unscientific and nonobjective. Firmin argues for a holistic Kantian anthropology that examines the human in its physical, moral, and intellectual complexities. However, unlike Kant, Firmin suggests that these attributes are found equally in all races of man. Firmin's anthropology is positivist in its outlook, grounded in scientific evidence and reason. Based on the evidence of race interbreeding and adaptation without sterilization, Firmin insists that there is a unity to the human race without genetic or mental inferiority. Firmin's work is also teleological, as he believes that the Haitian Revolution was the apex of human development: the black race helping to live out the entire story of humanity to its end. Sadly, Firmin's efforts were disregarded. Though his methods mirror the mainstream science of his era, his work has until recently been ignored in the traditional anthropological, philosophical, and political canon.³³

Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno provide a critique of the Enlightenment human utilizing the critical theory of the Frankfurt school. Many have argued that Enlightenment liberates one from the absolute knowledge of religious and political institutions.³⁴ Those who had authority prior to the Enlightenment—specifically the church and the monarchy—had the power of mystery over knowledge, making it inaccessible to the public. The Enlightenment project asserts that human reason is capable of answering all the questions to which previous authority possessed answers. Horkheimer and Adorno instead argue that Enlightenment betrayed its own liberating capacity. While the Enlightenment developed as a critical exercise dispelling myth, as well as religious and political authoritarianism, it in turn made its own principles

absolute. Reason, or traditional/positivist forms of thinking therefore become accepted without reason. Reason in the 20th century has thus become irrational.

Horkheimer differentiates between what he calls “traditional” and “critical theory.” Traditional theory assumes it is possible, and necessary, to develop a method of rational inquiry that is ahistorical and objective. Horkheimer argues that traditional theory ignores the historical nature of perception and understanding in the conditioning of ideas. Critical theory (materialism) sees the object of inquiry and the inquirer as socially and culturally constructed and changing over time. The source of World War II and the Holocaust was the domination inherent in Enlightenment thought in a triple sense: domination of nature by human beings, domination of nature within human beings, and the domination of some human beings by others. Horkheimer and Adorno primarily focus on how the failure of the Enlightenment resulted in the concentration camp, and not the practices involved in slavery, colonialism, and segregation that coexisted with the modern project. In addition, critical theory in the Horkheimerian sense appears to be committed to a form of relativism that at best accounts for the material conditions of knowledge, and at worse means that no universal knowledge claims can be made.³⁵

Aimé Césaire argues that the path of modern humanism leads through global colonialism directly to Hitler. Césaire rejects the argument that colonialism can act as a project of humanization that civilizes the colonized. Colonization results in the thingification of the colonized, and the dehumanization of the colonizer. In his treatment of others like animals the colonizer becomes an animal himself, a phenomenon that Césaire calls the “boomerang effect of colonization.” Césaire rejects western humanism, calling it a “pseudo-humanism...that for too long...has diminished the rights of man, [and whose] concept of those rights has been—and still is—narrow and fragmentary, incomplete and biased and, all things considered, sordidly racist.”³⁶ For Césaire, Nazism was not a surprise. Fascism does not represent an unexpected turn from the march of progress, or the crazed activities of a few extremists, but is rather a rational development in the progress of western civilization.³⁷

A student of Césaire, Fanon argued that the solution to the problem of the Eurocentric human was a new humanism that transcended whiteness, and therefore blackness. Like Césaire, Fanon suggests that colonialism creates a violent and dehumanizing situation that can only be undone through the “cleansing force” of violence. Violence “rids the colonized of their inferiority complex, of their passive and despairing attitude.”³⁸ For Fanon, the black subject is not a human being, and the “black soul is a white man’s artifact.”³⁹ The solution to this problem is flawed if liberation is sought through blacks seeking to either emulate whiteness, or declaring racial superiority over whites. What results is a terrible cycle that critiques vindicationism and a politics of respectability: whites are neurotic because they consider themselves superior to blacks, and blacks seek to prove to whites, “at all costs, the richness of their thought, [and] the equal value of their intellect.”⁴⁰ Fanon expands on Césaire’s critique of the modern human by arguing for the dissolution of blackness and whiteness as neurotic conditions. He states, “I believe that the fact of the juxtaposition of the white and black races has created a massive psychoexistential complex. I hope by analyzing it to destroy it.”⁴¹ Fanon’s method of destroying this complex is a phenomenological study of blackness, thus exposing both whiteness and blackness as the foundation of a

psychiatric disorder characterized by anxiety and depression. Lewis Gordon adds that this complex places European man in a crisis:

“Man,” “Person,” “Self,” “Individual,” “Community,” even “Other,” have peculiar, racialized residues of “White Man,” “White Person,” “White Ego,” “White Individual,” and “White Community.” Their “glow” permeates praxis and restricts anthropological possibilities. Fanon wants to find man, but he keeps bumping into White Man, or perhaps more appropriately, White Men.⁴²

Fanon’s objective would thus entail the destruction of the idea of whiteness as the apex of human development. Gordon continues, “For the white man looks at the black man and wonders when it will all end, but the white man knows deep down that a just future is one in which he himself no longer exists in virtue of his ceasing to function as the End, or less ambiguously, the telos of Man.” This conclusion is terrifying to white sensibilities because it would require the complete unraveling of modern thought. “European Man dreads, then, as Lenin once put it, what is to be done.”⁴³

Gordon also offers a powerful criticism of both universality and the European human in his thesis on antiblack racism. Gordon uses the term “antiblack racism” rather than “white supremacy” because he asserts that antiblack racism can still exist without white supremacy. In other words, it is possible for individuals to reject white supremacy while still affirming black inferiority. For Gordon, racism is not simply prejudice or discrimination. It is an act of self-deception that leads one to believe that a particular race is the only race qualified to be human.⁴⁴ Gordon suggests that there is a need for blacks themselves to overcome racism without falling prey to antiblack racism in the forms of self-hatred or exoticism. He states, “Since the ‘racially neutral’ in antiblack societies is *white*, all efforts toward purely human significations—that is ‘universality’—appear to be problematic.”⁴⁵ References to the human thus become a reference to whiteness.

Seyla Benhabib cautions against Gordon’s argument, asserting instead that universalism is not ethnocentric and such claims necessitate a belief in cultural homogenization. Like Locke, Benhabib presupposes that democracy makes room for cultural differences and multiple voices to coexist.⁴⁶ However, Benhabib does not account for the history of the racialization of universality, something Locke struggled with throughout his work regarding cultural pluralism. Gordon continues, “[A]bsolute antiracism seems to entail discrimination *against* blacks in the form of an opaque reference to a presumed homogenous human race with white pigmentation.”⁴⁷ If we follow Gordon’s premise we are left with two essential questions: “First, can the struggle against racism avoid being racist? And second, can the achievement of black liberation avoid the elimination of the black race?”⁴⁸ The latter of these questions also haunted Fanon. After reading a section of Sartre’s *Orphée Noir* that suggested that negritude was the antithesis in a logical dialectical progression towards synthesis in the form of a raceless human society, Fanon stated that he felt as if he has been “robbed.”⁴⁹ This was information that he “needed not to know.” According to Gordon, Fanon “ultimately rejected negritude as a basis for achieving black liberation because he realized its irrelevance to the problem of the racist Zeitgeist.”⁵⁰

Charles W. Mills speaks of the defining of the human in the modern era in terms of a “racial contract.” He suggests that the racial contract is a set of meta-agreements between whites to categorize nonwhites as humanoids rather than humans, and

relegate them to an inferior moral and legal status. Social contract theory, he argues, exists as a prescriptive thought experiment, but the racial contract is a historical fact. There is no single act that indicates the signing of the racial contract, but there are an entire series of actions—including theological pronouncements, philosophical treatises, legal decisions, and governmental decrees—that impose the status of inferior humanoid on the non-white world. For Mills, while gender, class, and sexuality have been important in determining hierarchal relationships in modernity, race has been the most important category in determining one's ability to attain power and access. The social contract makes it appear that racism was, and continues to be, a deviation from the idea of a color-blind society. But history makes clear that racism has been a central part of the political, moral, and epistemological fabric of modernity. This system is able to maintain itself because “white misunderstanding, misrepresentation, evasion, and self-deception on matters related to race are among the most pervasive mental phenomena of the past few hundred years, a cognitive and moral economy psychically required for conquest, colonization, and enslavement.” The solution to this problem involves the recognition of the racial contract, thus making room for white renegades and white traitors. While Mills makes a singular contribution in identifying the implicit racism involved in the project of defining the human, and possibly gives us a solution, he does not focus on how the need to combat the racial contract has necessitated an entire questioning and reworking of the meaning of humanity, nor the process of how that questioning might occur.⁵¹

Nishitani Osamu explores the division between the human and the humanoid through an analysis of the terms *Anthropos* and *Humanitas* as they have developed in western thought. *Humanitas* refers to the western human as both the subject and producer of knowledge. *Anthropos*, related to anthropology, describes those who remain outside of the west and are therefore the objects of western knowledge. *Anthropos* is thus scrutinized under the gaze of *Humanitas*. Osamu illustrates how this regime of knowledge works at its apex, in the aftermath of the Enlightenment, in the thought of Hegel. According to Hegel, consciousness (subject) arises from the darkness of nature and confronts the world (object). It negates the world and turns it into an object that must be understood. This understanding is expressed as knowledge, and consciousness realizes itself within this knowledge (subjective + objective). The result is *Geist*, or self-reflection. What is important is that while *Humanitas* can participate in this activity, *anthropos* cannot. In a fascinating twist, *Anthropos* can only be humanized by recognizing *Humanitas*' knowledge as universal, and Osamu illustrates this point by telling the story of how Aztec people can only write of their own culture in Spanish (the language of *Humanitas*) instead of their own. Osamu asserts that the move against the dominating regime of *Humanitas*' knowledge must be done not through humanization, but through turning the gaze against *Humanitas*. In other words, *Humanitas* must become *Anthropos*, or the object of anthropology.⁵² Césaire makes a similar argument, stating, “It is the West that studies the ethnography of others, not the others who study the ethnography of the West.”⁵³

A review of the literature on the criticism of the modern human introduces new themes and questions. While these scholars have been attentive to the racialization of the universal, they have been less attentive to the way black thinkers have responded to this problem. For black educational thinkers, the critique of the modern human is not

new. However, what I am suggesting is new are the ways in which black educational thinkers moved beyond criticism towards a pedagogical project of redefining and asserting humanity. This study aims to make an innovative and original contribution to the literature not by providing a critique or method of deconstruction, but by using the educational work of Du Bois, Locke, and Baldwin to show how black educational thought has been educative in both a scholastic and ontological sense. In other words, these thinkers give us insight into education's capacity to give new meaning to the very definition of the human. The section that follows explores black educational thought and its relationship to debates concerning western humanism, and illuminates how black educational thinkers make a unique contribution by asserting and legitimizing the humanity of a people in a nation that has been historically bent on denying black humanity at all costs.

Literature Concerning Black Educational Thought And Practice

The experience of being a black American can only be described as extraordinarily complex. As is the case with other racial, ethnic, gender, or sexual groups, it is difficult to relegate the entire corpus of the black American saga to one experience or idea. Such an approach can lapse into dangerous regulatory calls for authenticity, missing the range, depth, and reach of black life in America. However, there are a few collective traditions that can be found in the history of black life and thought. These traditions not only exist due to the material forces of slavery and segregation, but also because of the construction of a hegemonic epistemology that posited blackness and humanity as two oxymoronic states of being. One such tradition that has been a unique piece of the black experience in America is the attention paid to education as a humanistic and humanizing force.

As Stephen Nathan Haymes argues, the connections between blackness, humanity, and education began as soon as slaves were brought to America. Using evidence from former slave testimonies taken during the 1935-1939 Works Progress Administration's Federal Writers' Project, Haymes suggests that slave culture played a particular role not only in the education of black people, but also in the redefining of education itself. The pedagogy of enslaved Africans in America was more than just a process related to intelligence; it was connected to a process of existing within an anti-African world. Rightfully, Haymes critiques recent trends in black educational thought that focus primarily on literacy, and claims that this one-sided focus ignores the ontological, teleological, and existential concerns of black slave culture and the black educational tradition writ large, and how these concerns contributed to a radical humanism in black educational thought.⁵⁴

Haymes emphasizes that the focus on literacy and schools misses the bigger picture: how black slave culture was pedagogical in its transmission of values that taught slaves how to live and flourish in a world that denied their humanity. However, Haymes also makes a claim that has appeared at various moments in the black tradition of educational thought, one that seems to be simultaneously factual and dubious. According to Haymes, western educational philosophy insists that man is educated into his humanity. Thus, Kant claims that education changes man's animal nature into human nature, bringing him one step closer to perfection.⁵⁵ However, according to

Haymes, Preston Wilcox, and Molefi Kete Asante, the pedagogy of the black experience insists that being human is not something one becomes, but something one is already.⁵⁶ Saidiya Hartman critiques this position by stating that blacks in the slave community took up the language of humanism. While one would believe that the recognition of humanity would garner relief from an oppressive situation, Hartman argues just the opposite. She posits that new “forms of violence and domination [were] enabled by the recognition of humanity, licensed by the invocation of rights, and justified on the grounds of liberty and freedom.”⁵⁷ The liberal notion of that which is human—the trinity of liberty, equality, and the right to property and/or happiness—worked to further oppress blacks during slavery and after emancipation. Hartman suggests that during slavery the only way a slave could exert his or her agency, and therefore humanity, was through an act of criminality. A slave’s claim to being human, recognizable only through a criminal act, aligned the very articulation of personhood with punishment. Hartman states, “Thus, rendered, ‘person’ signified little more than a pained body or a recalcitrant in need of punishment.”⁵⁸

According to Hartman, in the wake of emancipation “whiteness [remained] the norm of humanity.”⁵⁹ Freedom for black persons was equated not with the availability of resources to ensure basic needs, but obligation and indebtedness. “Blame and duty and blood and dollars marked the birth of the free(d) subject.”⁶⁰ Those freed would have to pay the price paid in white life for their emancipation and prove that they were worthy of freedom and the status of human.⁶¹ This occurred in the context of abstract equality and universalism. Hartman argues that those who have been marginalized are often left outside of the grandiose claims made in the names of equality and universalism. Hence, the conferral of universal abstractions, such as equality and rights, may prove to do more harm than good for the oppressed.⁶² Those freed lived a life of what Hartman calls “burdened individuality,” where they were responsible for a freedom of which they could not enjoy and subjected to a liberal discourse while remaining dominated.⁶³

In addition to speaking on the contradictions inherent in the liberal ideal of the human, equality, and universality, Hartman offers some examples of how slaves and freepersons participated in counter articulations of these ideals. Hartman calls this “redress,” and offers as an example slaves gathering secretly for prayer meetings and dance. While these gatherings resulted in pleasure for the slaves, they also acted as times for self-reflection, communal gathering, and resistance because the gatherings were conducted without, and counter to, the permission of the slave-owner and overseer.⁶⁴ After emancipation, blacks asserted their freedom and humanity through movement (“a departure, literally and figuratively, from their former condition,” and arguing against freedom being aligned with a notion of indebtedness, suffering, and/or guilt.⁶⁵ Unfortunately, these forms of ontological and pedagogical critique were crushed beneath the ideological weight of American Northerners and Southerners whose intentions were to keep the newly freed subject in a form of hegemonic regulation. Rather than utilizing pure physical force, black humanity would be denied through the additive of generational patterns suggesting that the price of freedom was a feeling that one was not worthy of freedom, and if one did believe they were worthy their efforts would be crushed by ideological discourses within the “community” and/or the political arm of the State.

Haymes and Hartman fail to mention the number of blacks, many of whom were slaves, who lived in the Americas and who were educated through traditional methods. In his book, *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861*, Carter G. Woodson notes that the education of blacks in this country prior to the Civil War was marked by two periods. The first followed the introduction of slavery when it was widely believed that slaves should be educated, and the second occurred during the industrial revolution when educated Negro's attempted to resist the oppressive order produced by slavery.⁶⁶ Early advocates of Negro education included three classes: masters who desired to increase the efficiency of the labour supply, sympathetic persons who wanted to help the oppressed, and missionaries who believed that God's word came equally to all. According to Woodson, however, blacks began to make such strides after being educated that there was a reaction, and many whites began to believe that blacks should be educated only to the point that they could be colonized.

Woodson's second period is key because it produced an idea in the tradition of black educational thought that "knowledge is power" because a learned black individual was thought to be inherently dangerous. This presents a contradiction to the modern European definition of the human. While blacks were said to be humanoid and therefore uneducable, there was a real fear amongst segments of the white American population that education would cause blacks to revolt. As Woodson notes, these fears were exacerbated following the Haitian Revolution. An early example of this can be found in the *Narrative Life of Frederick Douglass*, when Douglass is taught to read by his white mistress. When Douglass' master finds out that this is happening he utters the famous phrase:

If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master—to do as he as told to do. Learning would *spoil* the best nigger in the world. Now...if you teach that nigger...how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master. As to himself, it could do him no good, but a great deal of harm. It would make him discontented and unhappy.⁶⁷

Despite these remarks, Douglass clandestinely teaches himself how to read, resulting in the theme of the acquisition of knowledge in and of itself as a form of resistance.

However, black educational thinkers have also noted that there is a catch to having the ability to take the ell. Douglass himself remarked that learning was often a curse because it made him conscious of his own condition as a slave. This hints at the contradiction between knowledge as power and knowledge resulting in a sense of powerlessness in a racist State. In the case of Douglass, his ever widening knowledge of his social condition led him to envy the "ignorant" slaves around him because he felt that he was coming into a knowledge of a situation that he could not change.⁶⁸ This schizophrenic quality of education is found throughout black educational thought. Du Bois' ruminations over the status of "being a problem" and double consciousness in *The Souls of Black Folk* began at the site of the school, where the youth of black boys "shrunk into tasteless sycophancy, or into silent hatred of the pale world about them and mocking distrust of everything white; or wasted itself in a bitter cry."⁶⁹ Baldwin also notes that the core contradiction of education for black people is that learning generates more knowledge of one's social position. As Baldwin asserts, the black student is

taught to love the United States, while at the same time “he is also assured by his country and his countrymen that he never contributed anything to civilization—that his past is nothing more than a record of humiliations gladly endured.”⁷⁰ In the tradition of black educational thought we see a double edged sword: a understanding that education is a form of resistance to an oppressive order that says that black people are incapable of learning, while at the same time the acquisition of such knowledge often leaves one depressed over her or his condition as a second class citizen in America. Kenneth and Mamie Clark articulate this dilemma in a different way, asserting that the combination of racist curricula and segregated schools creates a feeling of inferiority amongst black children.⁷¹ In other words, the educational paradigm in the United States results in a situation of psychological damage for the black student.

This is not to say that the description of coming to consciousness found in black educational thought necessarily results in a “dead end of despair.”⁷² Davis has noted that despair can result in the process of transcendence. Through education the black subject can learn that freedom is not a fact of life, but exists through a process of struggle, which includes resistance *as well as* mental and physical rejection.⁷³ In order to secure his freedom, Douglass needed to mentally transcend the image of himself created by the hegemonic order. We see this moment played out over and over again in the narrative form of black educational thought. Malcolm X highlights this transcendence when he describes his experience educating himself while in prison. His thirst for knowledge not only worked to give him a greater sense of self-worth, but also politicized him.⁷⁴ Audre Lorde also comments on how education allowed her to exceed the limits of her condition as a black woman. The oppressive conditions she experienced while in school would not only move her to transcend the oppressive order of whiteness, but also the regulatory power of her West-Indian family. Lorde’s later embrace of both her lesbianism and her abilities as a poet resulted from her maneuvering within and between educational and home sittings in which she felt she did not belong. Lorde later emphasizes:

In a paradoxical sense, once I accepted my position as different from the larger society as well as from any single sub-society—Black or gay—I felt I didn’t have to try so hard. To be accepted. To look femme. To be straight. To look straight. To be proper. To look “nice.” To be liked. To be loved. To be approved. What I didn’t realize was how much harder I had to try merely to stay alive, or rather, to stay human. How much stronger a person I became in that trying.⁷⁵

Baldwin also describes a similar experience in *Go Tell It On The Mountain*, where oppressive educational experiences moved him to question and transcend the domination he experienced at home at the hands of his stepfather.⁷⁶ Lorde and Baldwin help us understand that these themes not only move one to question and possibly act against white supremacy, but also to participate in a critique of a subtle notion of inter-black regulation.

Debates still persist regarding the problem status of black persons in educational thought. Black educational thinkers urge us to consider the implications of the ways that blacks are represented in current debates on multicultural education and cultural pluralism via the Old/New Negro trope. As Gloria Ladson-Billings argues, the Old Negro has metamorphosed in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries into the culturally deprived, disadvantaged, underrepresented, and at-risk child. Ladson-Billings

makes the claim that this discourse continues because black persons are thought of as a “distinct racial group” that does not have a “distinct culture.” The ironic result, illustrative of a universalism that is saturated with a sinister particularity, is that “it is presumed that African-American children are exactly like white children but just need a little extra help.”⁷⁷ Locke, Ladson-Billings, and Lisa Delpit criticize such an approach to black students because not only are students treated as problems, but white cultural dominance also remains hidden behind a curtain of good educational intentions.⁷⁸

This review cannot encompass all of the various debates found in the tradition of black educational thought. I have touched on some of the central debates and themes that will be highlighted in this study. I acknowledge that I have left out the role of black history in the humanization of black students advanced by Woodson, Mary McLeod Bethune, and John Henrik Clarke, the status of the black intellectual within the black community, debates over black English within the larger context of language and domination via systems of oppression, and the connections drawn between education and whiteness.⁷⁹ However, while not the central focus of my research, this study will touch upon these themes by illuminating the interventions made in the tradition of black educational thought by Du Bois, Locke, and Baldwin. Thus, my research will improve on the study of black educational thought by offering a comprehensive overview of the main debates in the literature, as well as the connections of these debates to conversations regarding the contradictory status of black persons as human beings in the United States.

As we move into the contributions of Du Bois, Locke, and Baldwin, I utilize Antonio Gramsci to highlight what is at stake in these debates involving differing types of perspective regarding what it means to be educated and notions of what constitute the human. In line with thinkers and philosophers who are often circumvented in educational teaching, practice, policy, and scholarship, Gramsci knew that the push for rationality as the identifier of the human ignores how balanced human consciousness necessitates forms of knowledge that also require feeling and intuition. He thus asserted, “The popular element ‘feels’ but does not always know or understand; the intellectual element ‘knows’ but does not always understand and in particular does not always feel.”⁸⁰ However, he also knew that the extremes of feeling and rationality could result in a condition where one's consciousness is literally out of balance. While Marx focused on production, “Gramsci emphasized human consciousness as the defining attribute of humanity. Consciousness was akin to spirit, which was linked to the notion of history as a form of ‘becoming.’”⁸¹ Keep in mind, Gramsci is used here as an example. The ancient Egyptians spoke of balance between the masculine and feminine principles, and numerous ancient and modern philosophers and writers—including the Vedic philosophers, Socrates, Plato, Buddha, Jesus, Lao Tzu, Alice Walker, Rainer Maria Rilke and Paulo Coelho—have raised this point. Such thinkers give a pedagogical nod to the importance of maintaining balance as a means of heightening knowledge, perception, and feeling; of contributing to the praxis of being human. So the question is, why do we continue to ignore this in educational settings?

What this review highlights is that despite the many claims to humanity made in theory, our literal development as human beings on the ontological level has somewhat stagnated. Du Bois, Locke, and Baldwin show that this stagnation, and subsequent degradation of consciousness, is a direct result of how we traditionally approach

education as a means of categorizing persons into those who are worthy and unworthy of the title of human being. This categorization is further solidified by the idea that, for instance, a black male can become partially visible as a human being only to the extent that he embraces regulatory notions of being and seeing the world. Let me add, this means of categorization is not based upon hard work. As we will see, especially regarding differing identities, the notion that hard work can lead to “success” in the realm of traditional education actually crates a crisis of recognition.⁸² What does the hegemonic educational definition of “success” really mean, and how do we embody it in the ways we live, the ways we treat each other, and our very philosophy of life itself? We cling to institutions and traditions as if our lives depend upon them. Perhaps all our lives actually depend upon knowing when to let go.

²⁵ Of Montreal in Janelle Monáe, "Neon Valley Street," (Wondaland Arts Society, Bad Boy, 2010).

²⁶ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Crawford Brough Macpherson (New York: Penguin Books, 1985/1651); John Locke, "The Second Treatise on Government," in *John Locke: Political Writings* ed. David Wooten (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2003/1681); Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men," in *The First and Second Discourses*, ed. Roger D. Masters (New York: Bedford/St Martin's, 1964/1755); Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, trans. Maurice Cranston (New York: Penguin Books, 1968/1762); Kant, "On the Different Races of Man and Physical Geography.,"; Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* ed. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998/1781); Georg Wilhelm Fridrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Arnold Vincent Miller (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977/1807); Georg Wilhelm Freidrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* trans. J. Sibree (New York: Willey Book, 1944/1837).

²⁷ Carl von Linné, "'Homo' in the System of Nature," in *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997/1735); M. le Romain, "Nègre from the Encyclopédie and Negro from the Encyclopedia Britannica," in *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997/1751 & 1798); David Hume, "Of National Characters," in *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader* ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997/1754); Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment," in *What Is Enlightenment: Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth Century Questions*, ed. James Schmidt (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996/1784); Thomas Jefferson, "'Manners' and 'Laws' from Notes on the State of Virginia," in *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997/1787).

²⁸ Robert L. Bernasconi, "Kant as an Unfamiliar Source of Racism," in *Philosophers on Race: Critical Essays*, ed. J.K. Ward and T.L. Lott (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 145.

²⁹ Kay Anderson, *Race and the Crisis of Humanism* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Bernasconi, "Kant as an Unfamiliar Source of Racism.,"; Susan Buck-Morss, "Hegel and Haiti," *Critical inquiry* 26 no. 4 (2000); Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000/1955); Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 1963/1961); ———, *Black Skin White Masks*, trans. Charles Markmann Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967); Lewis Gordon, *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man: An Essay on Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Lewis Gordon, "Fanon Dans La Pensée Politique Africaine Récente, Penser Aujourd'hui À Partir De Frantz Fanon, Actes Du Colloque Fanon Éditions En Ligne," (<http://www.csprp.univ-paris-diderot.fr/gordon.html>: CSPPR - Université Paris, 2008); Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002/1944); Mills, *The Racial Contract*; Nishitani Osamu, "Anthropos and Humanitas: Two Western Concepts of 'Human Being'," *Translation*,

biopolitics, colonial difference 4(2006); Jean Paul Sartre, "Preface," in *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004/1961).

³⁰ Bernasconi, "Kant as an Unfamiliar Source of Racism," 146.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Du Bois, "The Souls of Black Folk."; Alain Locke, "Unity through Diversity: A Bahá'í Principle," in *The Philosophy of Alain Locke: Harlem Renaissance and Beyond*, ed. Leonard Harris (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989/1936); James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (New York: Dell, 1963); James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955); Baldwin, "A Talk to Teachers."; Molefi Kete Asante, "The Afrocentric Idea in Education," *The Journal of Negro Education* 60, no. 2 (1991); Mary McLeod Bethune, "The Adaptation of the History of the Negro to the Capacity of the Child," *Journal of Negro History* 24(1939); Kenneth Clark and Mamie Clark, "Racial Identification and Preference in Negro Children, Emotional Factors in Racial Identification and Preference in Negro Children," *Journal of Negro education* 19(1950); Lisa Delpit, *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom* (New York: The New Press, 1995); June Jordan, "Nobody Means More to Me Than You and the Future Life of Willie Jordan," in *On Call: Political Essays* (Boston: South End Press, 1985); Gloria Ladson-Billings, *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African-American Children* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994).

³³ Anténor Firmin, *The Equality of the Human Races*, trans. Asselin Charles (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002/1885); Joseph Arthur Comte de Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races*, 2 ed. (Torrance, California: Noontide Press, 1983/1853-55); Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, ed. Robert B. Loudon and Manfred Kuehn (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006/1798).

³⁴ Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment."; Schmidt, "Introduction: What Is Enlightenment? A Question, Its Context, and Some Consequence."

³⁵ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*.

³⁶ Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 37.

³⁷ Robin D.G. Kelly, "Introduction," in *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 20.

³⁸ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004/1952), 51.

³⁹ Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 14.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 10.

⁴¹ Ibid., 12.

⁴² Gordon, *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man: An Essay on Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, 11.

⁴³ Ibid., 12.

⁴⁴ Lewis Gordon, *Bad Faith and Antiracist Racism* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1995), 2.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁶ Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); Locke, *When People Meet: A Study in Race and Culture Contacts*; ———, "Unity through Diversity: A Bahá'í Principle.";

Alain Locke, *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations: Lectures on the Theory and Practice of Race* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1992/1916).

⁴⁷ Gordon, *Bad Faith and Antiracist Racism*, 4.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 135; Jean Paul Sartre, "Orphée Noir," in *Anthologie De La Nouvelle Poésie Nègre Et Malgache*, ed. Léopold Senghor (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948).

⁵⁰ Gordon, *Bad Faith and Antiracist Racism*, 5.

⁵¹ Mills, *The Racial Contract*, 19.

⁵² Osamu, "Anthropos and Humanitas: Two Western Concepts of 'Human Being'."

⁵³ Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 71.

⁵⁴ S.N. *Haymes, "Pedagogy and the Philosophical Anthropology of African-American Slave Culture," in *Not Only the Masters Tools: African-American Studies in Theory and Practice*, ed. Lewis Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2006).

⁵⁵ Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment."

⁵⁶ Preston Wilcox, "Education for Black Humanism: A Way of Approaching It," in *What Black Educators Are Saying*, ed. Nathan Jr. Wright (New York: Hawthorn, 1970); Asante, "The Afrocentric Idea in Education."

⁵⁷ Ssaiidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 6.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 94.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 121.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 131.

⁶¹ Ibid., 130-31.

⁶² Ibid., 123.

⁶³ Ibid., 121.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 78.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 128, 31.

⁶⁶ Carter G. Woodson, *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861* (Charleston, SC: BiblioBazaar, 2007/1919), 11.

⁶⁷ Frederick Douglass, *The Narrative Life of Frederick Douglass* (New York: Dover, 1995), 20.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 24.

⁶⁹ Du Bois, "The Souls of Black Folk," 10.

⁷⁰ Baldwin, "A Talk to Teachers," 326.

⁷¹ Clark and Clark, "Racial Identification and Preference in Negro Children, Emotional Factors in Racial Identification and Preference in Negro Children."

⁷² Daniel H. Perlstein, *Justice, Justice: School Politics and the Eclipse of Liberalism* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004).

⁷³ Angela Y. Davis, "Unfinished Lecture on Liberation—li," in *The Angela Y. Davis Reader* ed. Joy James (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004/1971), 57.

⁷⁴ Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1965).

⁷⁵ Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (Berkeley, CA: The Crossing Press, 1982), 181.

⁷⁶ James Baldwin, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (New York: Random House, 1981/1952).

⁷⁷ Ladson-Billings, *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African-American Children*, 9.

⁷⁸ Delpit, *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*.

⁷⁹ Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (Chicago: African American Images, 2000/1933); McLeod Bethune, "The Adaptation of the History of the Negro to the Capacity of the Child."; W.E.B Du Bois, "The Talented Tenth: Memorial Address," ed. David Levering Lewis (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995/1903); Jordan, "Nobody Means More to Me Than You and the Future Life of Willie Jordan."; Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*; Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991/1957); Signithia Fordham and John Ogbu, "Black Students' School Success: Coping with the 'Burden of Acting White' " *The Urban Review* 18, no. 3 (1986).

⁸⁰ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 2005/1971), 418.

⁸¹ Peter McLaren et al., "The Specter of Gramsci: Revolutionary Praxis and the Committed Intellectual," in *Gramsci and Education*, ed. Carmel Borg, Joseph A. Buttigieg, and Peter Mayo (Lanham, MD: Roman & Littlefield Publishers, INC, 2002), 157.

⁸² This crisis of recognition is akin to the crisis that occurs between master and slave in Hegel's dialectic of recognition. Hegel describes five major steps that must be taken before anyone can arrive at absolute knowledge: consciousness, self-consciousness, reason, spirit, and religion. The section entitled "Independence and Dependence of Self Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage" describes the *experience* whereby conscious beings come to realize self-consciousness. We can imagine Hegel's conscious agent as a passive organism who places importance upon the external world rather than itself. In contrast, a self-conscious agent is active, meaning that it places importance upon itself instead of the external world. Hegel tells us, "Self-consciousness is, to begin with, simple being-for-self, self equal through the exclusion from itself of everything else. For it, its essence and absolute object is 'I'; and in this immediacy, or in this [mere] being, of its being-for-self, it is an *individual*." This individual, however, exists only if it is acknowledged by another, a process that Hegel calls *recognition*. This need for recognition is the first instance of *desire* in the dialectical process. One would think that the desire for recognition would be enough to establish a relationship of mutual recognition between two self-conscious agents, but this is not the case. Hegel adds, "Each [self-consciousness] is indeed certain of its own self, but not of the other, and therefore its own self-certainty still has no truth." It is at this moment that the Hegelian shift from consciousness into self-consciousness results in a necessary relation of violence.

Each actor taking part in this process initially recognizes himself as a self-conscious agent vis-à-vis the other, who is only a living organism. The independence of an external object acts a direct challenge to the superiority of the self-conscious agent, who now desires to destroy the other. An ensuing war to the death occurs between the two agents. Participation in this "trial by death" is just one step in the process towards humanization. Hegel states, "The individual who has not risked his life may well be

recognized as a person, but he has not attained to the truth of this recognition as an independent-self consciousness.” In other words, self-consciousness is not fully realized if one of the agents is dead and thus unable to recognize its superiority. The other agent, now a semi-human, must be kept alive, but subdued, if only to recognize the dominance of self-consciousness. Hegel speaks of the resulting relationship as being between a master and a slave. According to Hegel, the master is “the independent consciousness whose essential nature is to be for itself.” The slave “is the dependent consciousness whose essential nature is simply to live or to be for another.” It would seem that the problem of self-conscious recognition would be solved through the master and slave relationship. But, as Hegel reminds us, this recognition is “one-sided and unequal,” and therefore not pure. Scholars such as Angela Davis and Paulo Freire have rightfully utilized the master and slave dialectic to account for instances of domination in the material world. However, I want us to keep in mind how instances of domination occurring between two beings are in fact a symptom of a crisis of recognition occurring at the level of consciousness. Thus, in terms of education, how do our traditional understandings of education create a crisis within the self regarding recognition, and thus led to an ensuing war between self and other for recognition and control? We do have a genuine desire for the other, but I believe that desire becomes perverted as we begin to feel that we have to control the other to receive recognition. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 111-19.

Part Two: Looking Back, Feeling Forward

Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter around it. 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 in 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.¹

Here, then, is the present dilemma; —we feel and hope in the direction of universality, but still think and act particularistically.²

In order for me to live, I decided very early that some mistake had been made somewhere. I was not a “nigger” even though you called me one. But if I was a “nigger” in your eyes, there was something about *you*—there was something *you* needed. I had to realize when I was very young that I was none of those things I was told I was. I was not, for example, happy. I never touched a watermelon for all kinds of reasons that had been invented by white people, and I knew enough about life by this time to understand that whatever you invent, whatever you project, is you! So where we are now is that a whole country of people believe I’m a “nigger,” and I *don’t*, and the battle’s on! Because if I am not what I’ve been told I am, then it means that *you’re* not what *you* thought you were *either!* And that is the crisis.³

¹ Du Bois, "The Souls of Black Folk," 9-10.

² Locke, "Unity through Diversity: A Bahá'í Principle," 135.

³ Baldwin, "A Talk to Teachers," 329.

Chapter Three
The Pedagogical Dogma From Hell:
W.E.B. Du Bois, Double Consciousness, and The Fractured Human

*You're free but in your mind,
 Your freedom's in a bind.*
 —Janelle Monáe⁸³

The first African-American to earn a doctoral degree from Harvard University, William Edward Burghardt Du Bois stands as a titan not only in the African American intellectual tradition, but also in the canon of intellectuals of color across the globe that sought to wrestle with racism in the modern age. Du Bois has influenced a host of modern thinkers and activists who sought and are still seeking to make sense of the racial situation in the United States and abroad. The texts he left behind, such as *The Philadelphia Negro*, *The Souls of Black Folk* and *Black Reconstruction in America*, have become required texts for understanding the condition of black persons in America in the twilight of Reconstruction and the darkness of Jim Crow segregation. Far from being an intellectual confined to the ivory tower, Du Bois was also a political activist who helped create the Niagara Movement and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Du Bois “recognized that the keystone in the arch of oppression was the myth of inferiority and he dedicated his brilliant talents to demolish it...History cannot ignore W.E.B. Du Bois. Because history has to reflect truth and Dr. Du Bois was a tireless explorer and a gifted discoverer of social truths.”⁸⁴

W.E.B. Du Bois was indeed a renaissance man, and at the cornerstone of his political program were his concerns regarding the education of black persons in twentieth century America. “Dr. Du Bois was not only an intellectual giant exploring the frontiers of knowledge,” Dr. Martin Luther King remarked on the centennial of Du Bois’ birth. “He was in the first place a teacher...One idea he insistently taught was that Black people have been kept in oppression and deprivation by a poisonous fog of lies that depicted them as inferior, born deficient and deservedly doomed to servitude to the grave.”⁸⁵ As an educator, Du Bois was never foolish enough to argue that education in and of itself is a good. Quite the contrary, Du Bois knew that the type of education deployed, combined with a warped understanding of what education is supposed to be, could work to imprison rather than liberate consciousness.⁸⁶ “Men openly declare their design to train these millions as a subject caste,” wrote Du Bois, “as men to be thought for, but not to think; to be led, but not to lead themselves.”⁸⁷

A mind constantly on the move, Du Bois sought to challenge both the socio-economic and theoretical assumptions of not only whites in America, but also blacks who thought of themselves as inferior. Throughout Du Bois’ work we see a double critique: a criticism of the white supremacist political and epistemological structure of the United States of America and a criticism of placating blacks who sought to assert their humanity via acquiescing to white sensibilities. For example, in 1924 Du Bois returned to Fisk University, his alma mater, where he challenged the school’s role in propagating black inferiority in its curricula and social policies.⁸⁸ Du Bois was particularly upset with

Fisk's silence on the racial situation and the South's regulatory pedagogical policies that allowed black students to express themselves only as subservient to whites.⁸⁹ "Fisk University is not taking an honest position with regard to the Southern situation...It overpraises the liberal white south," spoke Du Bois. "It continually teaches its students and constituency that this liberal white South is in the ascendancy and that it is ruling; and that the only thing required of black men is acquiescence and submission."⁹⁰

The preceding speech was delivered in the middle of Du Bois' lengthy career, and prior to this speech Du Bois had already distinguished himself as a philosopher and sociologist of race. However, categorizing Du Bois primarily as a race scholar may prevent us from seeing the bigger pedagogical picture. What we miss by singling out Du Bois as a race scholar are larger questions regarding the relationship between pedagogy and the human condition. Beyond his eloquence and precision as a thinker, what was Du Bois' program to counter the theoretical, practical, and psychic realities of racial oppression brought about by a white supremacist situation and blacks seeking to define their humanity via a politics of respectability/recognition? What was Du Bois really fighting for, and how are we to understand and utilize the contribution he made to American educational thought writ large?

In this chapter I argue that Du Bois' early educational thought was inherently tied to concerns he had regarding the opposing relationship between the recognition of humanity and the subjugation of black person's in early twentieth-century America. I focus primarily upon Du Bois' earlier thought, specifically *The Souls of Black Folk*, because it is within the context of early Du Bois that we begin to see the contradictions inherent in the black subject's search for recognition. Examining the notion of double consciousness not simply in regards to a black person's search for recognition in the United States, but more in line with larger debates regarding education and human consciousness allows us to come to a new understanding of how "two warring ideals in one dark body" may become one.⁹¹

Questions regarding human consciousness may appear beyond the realm of the standard empirical and ethnographic methodologies of addressing educational problems. However, Du Bois admitted that these methods could only get us so far. "Science is a great and worthy mistress, but there is one greater and that is Humanity which science serves; one thing there is greater than knowledge and that is the Man who knows."⁹² The search for method can work to mask an obvious form of anti-intellectualism that works against organic forms of knowledge. "Despite our strongest endeavors a shade of contempt for mere thought and theorizing, for feelings, emotions, and principles tinges our culture and our life," spoke Du Bois.⁹³ The struggle for recognition and America's subsequent adventure into integrated schooling pushes us to ask the following question: Does the American educational system as a functional structure create a situation where students are taught to seek a recognition beyond themselves, resulting in a sense of epistemological and ontological worthlessness?

In terms of his political program, Du Bois' fundamental concern was with the status of black persons as human beings in the United States and abroad, and how this status is related not only to education, but also questions regarding economics, politics and popular culture. Questions focusing on the purpose of educating black persons in twentieth-century America would become central for Du Bois because he knew well that the modern intellectual tradition posited that a human being has the capacity to be

educated and/or knowledgeable, or to reason. However, the marginalized condition produced by white supremacy also creates a schizophrenic state for black persons that Du Bois called double consciousness. Double consciousness refers to the inability of an individual to be fully conscious within him or herself. Instead, the individual sees itself through the eyes of the dominant society. Double consciousness results in a warring between two beings within one person: the first longing to define the self, the second seeking to assimilate into the dominant society that discredits as inferior the individual's true self (way of being, way of thinking, way of seeing the world). For black persons double consciousness accentuates the ability of racism to create a sense that one is American while also not being American, and also the war between being African and American. However, double consciousness is not a condition that is unique to blackness. In fact, once you free the notion of double consciousness from an inherent connection with blackness it becomes apparent that the notion of a fractured self transcends race. As I will argue, the notion of a fractured self impacts all persons regardless of identity-based politics.

The debate regarding industrial and liberal approaches to the education of black persons becomes crucial for Du Bois because of the fear he had that the industrial educational program lauded in the early twentieth century would stifle the development of a black intellectual tradition and prevent black persons from being able to critically reason about themselves and the world. In a speech written in 1908 he argued:

Today and on us the pressure is tremendous. What is the world, cries the present Philosophy? It is the growing of grain and the weaving of cloth, the moving of wheels and the building of walls; it is the ability to do, the earning of livelihood, the creation of wealth. And then by natural logic this doctrine advances and says, if this is Life, train men for life in natural ways: not by Latin and Greek, but by arithmetic and mechanics. Is this philosophy false? No, but it is almost as dangerous, for it is half-true.⁹⁴

It is no accident that Du Bois and other black educational thinkers, such as Alexander Crummell, Booker T. Washington, Carter G. Woodson, Anna Julia Cooper, Nannie Helen Burroughs, and Alain Locke appear simultaneously at a moment when blacks seek to systematically understand white subordination. As Derrick P. Alridge notes, "Collectively, African American educational thought during this period was born primarily of the pain, oppression, and suffering experienced by African Americans; their ideas emerged organically from their daily interactions as educators with black children and adults."⁹⁵ During this period reconstruction proved to be a false promise in the eyes of many blacks and what was thus required was a deeper engagement with racism. Du Bois takes up the issue of race and the human on the terrain of philosophy and psychology. However, Du Bois immediately presents the contradiction that will both haunt and terrorize black educational thinkers throughout the 20th century.⁹⁶ If in order to "attain his place in the world," as Du Bois asserts, "[the negro] must be himself, and not another," how do we reconcile the difficulties such a challenge presents against ideologies that advocate the assimilation of black persons into an educational structure that deems them epistemologically inferior?⁹⁷

A great deal has been written about Du Bois over the past century. However, scholars have not paid due attention to his educational thought. Those who have written on Du Boisian educational thought have done so from a variety of perspectives.

Some have explored Du Bois' debate with Booker T. Washington, and Du Bois' thoughts on double consciousness.⁹⁸ Rabaka has sought to tie Du Bois' "evolving Africana philosophy of education" to his historical, social, and political philosophy, and Alridge has made a significant contribution by providing the first comprehensive work on Du Bois' educational thought.⁹⁹ However, these analyses are not tied to broader historical and philosophical debates in which Du Bois was involved concerning the human in the modern era. In addition, given his vast knowledge of global philosophies and histories, questions remain over the accuracy with which scholars have connected Du Bois with an inherently Afrocentric pedagogy. In the pages that follow I will present the evolution of Du Bois' humanistic philosophy in a biographical context, and illuminate the consequences of Du Bois' pedagogical life path through a Nietzschean examination of an epistemological stance that centers race as a focus of study and has gained some ground in educational scholarship: critical race theory. I will then move us beyond the fractured human by exploring the Du Boisian human and its connection to educational thought in a Buddhist context, and conclude by exploring Du Bois' contribution to present day educational efforts.

Du Bois' Humanistic Evolution: The Search For Recognition

The world into which Du Bois was born was one laced with both racial tension and heightened optimism. The conclusion of the Civil War, which almost fractured the United States into separate nations, brought a sense of optimism to newly freed slaves. For the first time in the history of the United States blacks were presented with the possibility in shaping their own destiny sanctioned by the protection of the U.S. government. However, the conferral of freedom brought with it unanticipated epistemological and ontological challenges to both the newly freed slaves and the Union. Blacks would quickly learn that the freedom given to them was neither a given nor free.¹⁰⁰ In the wake of such a contradiction new questions would arise. What would freedom mean for a people whose very humanity was constantly called into question, both by themselves and their liberators? What would education mean to a people who were often deemed unfit to educate and whose very sense of self worth had become intertwined with absolute subservience and/or struggle at all costs? What would life mean for a people who had been taught, via a pedagogical praxis of ideological domination and physical brutality, to live in constant fear? As Leon F. Litwack notes:

The education acquired by each slave was remarkably uniform, consisting largely of lessons in survival and accommodation—the uses of humility, the virtues of ignorance, the arts of evasion, the subtleties of verbal intonation, the techniques by which feelings and emotions were masked, and the occasion that demanded the flattering of white egos and the placating of white fears.¹⁰¹

This was a pedagogical apparatus that, as Stephen Haymes argues, was well known to many former slaves and freed blacks.¹⁰² However, the supposed guardians of freedom who had risked their lives to rescue the slaves from bondage never acknowledged this apparatus. The failure to immediately acknowledge and alter the pedagogical implications of slavery, for all Americans, still haunts the American psyche to this day both on the level of governmental interaction and interpersonal relationships. It was not enough that slaves would have to continuously war against the educative and

physiological rudiments of slavery. They were also met with the formidable force of a collective agreement masked in the name of economics that blacks should be kept in roles of subservience.

While Radical Republicans worked to secure rights for the newly freed slaves, laws being passed in the South and by the U.S. government would ensure that black persons pay for their freedom in the form of work and obedience. Freedmen's Bureau legislation and philanthropy was met with a racial prejudice that prevented blacks from participating fully in the public sphere. Nowhere was this truer than in the area of education. The end of the war brought an army of teachers to the south ready to educate the newly freed subjects. But, as Du Bois would later note, like the promise of land and other reparations this endeavor would fall short. "The opposition to Negro education in the South was at first bitter, and showed itself in ashes, insult, and blood; for the south believed an educated Negro to be a dangerous Negro."¹⁰³ Du Bois' predecessors, such as Frederick Douglass, had long commented that the power of knowledge often struck fear into his white slave owner.¹⁰⁴ "Nevertheless," wrote Du Bois, "men strive to know."¹⁰⁵

The insurrection in the areas of education, politics, and work that followed the Civil War would lead whites to move to control both the public and private spheres for blacks to prevent them from asserting their humanity. Hence the creation of legislative decrees, such as the Black Codes, which forced blacks to work and prevented them from testifying in court, staying out after a certain time, carrying a firearm, or giving speeches of a critical nature.¹⁰⁶ This established a regulatory impulse of fear that prevented black subjects from being themselves both in the public and private spheres. As a result, obsolescence was taught in order to protect life. According to Saidiya V. Hartman, the act of freeing slaves only established "new forms of bondage enabled by proprietorial notions of the self, and the pedagogical and legislative efforts aimed at transforming the formerly enslaved into rational, acquisitive, and responsible individuals."¹⁰⁷ In this situation the brute force of the state commingled with an insidious notion of self-regulation via guilt in the home, resulting in a feeling of worthlessness. In this environment how, and when, would black persons become whole? Perhaps the Negro educated in the hallowed halls of the academy would be the answer.

William Du Bois' educational plan was deeply rooted in his life experiences. He was born in 1868, five years after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. William Du Bois' family background as it relates to race is interesting. Reflecting on his grandfather, William Du Bois wrote:

My grandfather, Alexander Du Bois, was born in the Bahama Islands in 1803. His father, Jas. Du Bois and his father's cousin, Cornelius Du Bois owned large plantations in "The largest Islands in the Bahamas" The Gilberts owned a plantation in the same islands. All these three owners were white but had colored families. James Du Bois brought my grandfather and my grandfather's brother, John, to the United States in 1810 and put them in private boarding school in Connecticut. The boys went as white.¹⁰⁸

The peculiar relationship between whiteness and blackness runs through William Du Bois' experiences with his family and his intellectual work. His father, Alfred Du Bois was of Haitian and French Huguenot descent, while his mother, Mary Silvina Burghardt Du Bois, was of Dutch and African descent. While most accounts assert that William

Du Bois' father left his wife when Du Bois was two-years-old, Du Bois states that his father moved away from Great Barrington and asked Du Bois' mother to join him. However, Mary Silvina Burghardt Du Bois' family objected to her leaving Great Barrington, and "the result was in the end that mother never went and father never came back to Great Barrington."¹⁰⁹

According to Alridge, growing up in Great Barrington shielded the young Du Bois from the racial hostilities experienced by blacks elsewhere.¹¹⁰ Du Bois' childhood, however, also gave him interesting insights into the nature of the black experience. For example, reflecting on opportunities for work for blacks in his community, Du Bois wrote, "Work for black folk which would lead to a more prosperous future was not easy to come by." However, Du Bois also hinted at how this problem was not simply rooted in racial discrimination. "Just why this was so it is difficult to say; it was not solely race prejudice, although this played its part; it was lack of training and understanding, reluctance to venture into unknown surroundings, and fear of a land still strange to family mores which pictured travel as disaster."¹¹¹

Reflecting on his educational experience as a child, Du Bois acknowledged that most of his schoolmates were white, and he engaged in many educational and social activities with them. "I was in and out of the homes of nearly all my mates, and ate and played with them. I was as a boy long unconscious of color discrimination in any obvious and specific way."¹¹² Although he was outside of the burgeoning southern Jim Crow system, race marked his life in multiple ways. Most of Du Bois' early experiences with "the color line" came from listening to the experiences of his family and their friends. The dissonance created by the seeming contradiction between the racial experiences of other blacks and Du Bois' own experiences created a racial ambivalence that pervades his work. "I couldn't rationalize my own case, because I found it easy to excel most of my classmates in studies, if not in games." Thus, despite his later ruminations on racism within the American polity, Du Bois contributes his own success to hard work:

The secret of life and the loosing of the color bar, then, lay in excellence, in accomplishment. If others of my family, of my colored kin, had stayed in school instead of quitting early for small jobs, they could have risen to equal whites. On this my mother quietly insisted. There was no real discrimination on account of color—it was all a matter of ability and hard work.¹¹³

This is not to say that Du Bois did not experience racial discrimination. Quite the contrary, Du Bois' theoretical power lies in the juxtaposition of Victorian ideals espoused during his early education and his own experiences recognizing that his race made him, "an outcast and a stranger in my own house."¹¹⁴ Possibly the most famous example from Du Bois' childhood is the moment when Du Bois reflects on his coming to consciousness regarding his race in *The Souls of Black Folk*. Du Bois' ruminations over the status of "being a problem" and double consciousness in *The Souls of Black Folk* began at the site of the school, where the youth of black boys "shrunk into tasteless sycophancy, or into silent hatred of the pale world about them and the mocking distrust of everything white; or wasted itself in a bitter cry." During Du Bois' schooling, a white girl "peremptorily" refused his greeting card, a move that would have titanic ramifications for Du Bois' view of himself. "Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out

from their world by a vast veil.” This childhood event is cited by Du Bois as an initial catalyst that led him to develop an awareness of racial stratification, and also to conclude that his very being was constantly scrutinized under the gaze of whiteness.¹¹⁵

Du Bois’ pedagogical lesson lies in the way he decides to respond to the problem of racial stratification, as hinted at by his reaction to the other students—both the black and white—around him. He asserts that he realizes that he is “different from the *others*.” This is an indication that Du Bois has come to a moment where he is able to recognize a difference between self and other. Rather than living into the epistemological expectation of him hinted at by the white girl refusing his greeting card, or the ontological expectation provided by the black boys around him, Du Bois chooses his own path towards recognition. At the same time that Du Bois begins to differentiate between self and other he also recognizes a certain “common contempt” for what is beyond his veil, or for the other. He then emphasizes that he has an emotional reaction when he is able to outdo the other(s); however, he knows that he needs the other(s) in order to be recognized.¹¹⁶ Much like Hegel’s master and slave dialectic, Du Bois’ contempt for those he seeks recognition from leads towards a necessary, but more socially acceptable, relation of violence: the educational pipeline.¹¹⁷ He makes a conscious decision to pursue an educational path in order to affirm his humanity. “Just how I would do it I could never decide: by reading law, by healing the sick, by telling the wonderful tales that swam in my head, --some way.” This conscious decision has drastic implications for the ways in which we view education, implications that we may have missed. What exactly is it within Du Bois that pushes him to pursue an educational path, and what are the consequences/outcomes?¹¹⁸

Du Bois’ *Souls of Black Folk* is less about the self engaging the world and more about an internal struggle within the self. As in Hegel’s drama of consciousness, Du Bois seeks recognition from the other, but he won’t kill the other because he feels like he needs the other to achieve a sense of wholeness. Like Hegel’s slave, Du Bois then embarks on a journey to achieve recognition through a form of work: scholastic achievement in the name of personal and racial uplift. However, it seems that this is a form of recognition that is one-sided, and not a form of mutual recognition. In order to receive recognition from the other Du Bois decides to become a being for the other rather than a being for self, or an independent self-consciousness.¹¹⁹ Du Bois’ decision to pursue education as a means a securing recognition established an internal war that Du Bois would fight for most of his life. Pedagogically, Du Bois’ life serves as an example of what happens when you feel as if everyone recognizes you as a problem and then you make a conscious decision to be a problem sanctioned by notions of authenticity.

Curiously, Du Bois does have a natural proclivity for the pursuit of knowledge; a way of life that he admits brings him joy. In many of his speeches we see him look to diverse sources of knowledge to make his points, including European thinkers, a fact that most intellectuals who place Du Bois in the canon of Afrocentrism conveniently ignore. Throughout most of Du Bois’ life we see this tension between engaging in a political war of recognition on behalf of blackness and a deep reverence for European thought. In a 1908 address to Fisk University, which critiques the university’s stagnation of knowledge for knowledge’s sake, Du Bois utilizes European thinkers to make his point. Referencing Galileo Galilei, he argues:

Here then was a human soul that walked into this world naked and unashamed, that dared to see what his own eyes saw and think wither his own clear logic went. A dangerous soul—a Revolutionist greater than Robespierre, a socialist wilder than Marx or Gorky—a very creator of a new heaven and a new earth.¹²⁰

The exuberance of a deep love for knowledge pervades his life and texts. Du Bois had such a love for the free pursuit of knowledge that he would be willing to declare ideological war.

Honest and earnest criticism from those whose interests are most nearly touched,—criticism of writers by readers, of government by those governed, of leaders by those led,—this is the soul of democracy and the safeguard of modern society.¹²¹

For philosophers, African Americanists, historians, and sociologists who trudge into the world of Du Bois, the battles that Du Bois is fighting are primarily between himself and the material world. However, as educators we must ask ourselves pressing questions involving the relationship between one’s humanity and a fractured sense of self. If Du Bois’ drive for educational attainment and freedom of criticism is really a quest for recognition, what would be the remedy that brings together his fractured self?

Intellectuals throughout the twentieth century have referenced this notion of a fractured self. It has been described in many different ways. Epistemologically it has been described as the battle between subject and object, dichotomous oppositional other, and intersectionality. Ontologically it has been attached to practice via stances such as black feminism and queer radical politics.¹²² But the meaning is all the same. These terms reference the emotional battles the self endures under the tyranny of dual, or multiple, identities. In the case of Du Bois, we have to ask if this dualism is simply between racial liberation and temporality, or if it is about a self-torn between doing what it loves to do and notions of indebtedness and obligation. In ways that are incredibly courageous Du Bois’ life signals a devotion to using his intellectual gifts to confront an “epistemology of ignorance,” and garner mutual recognition for himself and those of his identity not only from white persons, but also from the educational, economic, and political institutions identified with whiteness.¹²³ However, if we as educators are to take our positions seriously regarding the elimination of racial oppression then this story perhaps needs to be reframed because a haunting question remains: What epistemological and ontological gifts would Du Bois have brought into the world if he were not regulated by the issue of race?

Consequences and Conviction: The Epistemological Legacy of The Fractured Human

What is the epistemological legacy of a theoretical framework that relies on ideals instead of essences, rather than establishing a healthy balance between the two in the form of an authentic praxis?¹²⁴ To answer this question we must explore how the notion of an internalized double consciousness manifests epistemologically in our educational institutions by critiquing a body of knowledge that relies on Du Bois for much of its theoretical power: critical race theory. “Critical Race Theory and its offshoots have drawn upon W.E.B. Du Bois’ prescient insights on ‘the problem of the color line,’” notes John Shuford. He continues, “These include his rich articulation of ‘double consciousness’ and his attention to the deep significance of gender, class and

embodiment in racialization.” However, Shuford and others have also noted that critical race theory utilizes a uniquely Du Boisian standpoint: “the ‘impossibility’ of racial eliminativism.”¹²⁵ Thus, the Du Boisian notion of double consciousness and the permanence of the fractured subject who looks upon the world from behind the veil imbue critical race theory and its means of analysis. Nevertheless, it is perhaps unwise to assume that double consciousness, especially as the foundation of a humanizing epistemological project, is a good in and of itself.

One of the contemporary trends in the study of critical theory has been the symbiotic attachment of race. The product of a shift in American legal studies occurring in the 1980’s, critical race theory has primarily sought explanations to the argument that attempts at equality by means of legality result only in minimal gains in the lived experience of African American’s, as well as other people of color. Imbued with a post-structuralist analysis of the law, critical race theory scholars have attempted to deconstruct various legal doctrines in order to illuminate clandestine norms of racial exclusion. Traditional civil rights law and scholarship, these scholars contend, not only work to buttress a white supremacist order, but do so by willingly excluding the voices, experiences, and perspectives of people of color. Critical race theory as a theoretical framework has spread to many disciplines in the academy, including education, ethnic studies, and even sociology, because its centering of race has become of interest to many scholars. However, the very proliferation of this particular theoretical framework raises more questions than critical race theory scholars actually attempt to answer.

The themes of critical race theory supposedly emphasize its deep commitment to the liberation of people of color. Most critical race theory scholars rely on a particular form of perspectivism: racism is an ordinary and integral part of American society. Scholars will also admit that critical race theory is laced with a mixture of “reformist zeal and critical pessimism,” which reflects both the influence of past civil rights movement attempts to increase moral outrage and a present understanding that seeking change through legal institutions only offers limited hope. In addition, critical race theory has long championed the need to advance the voices of people of color because they provide a perceptible that is hidden from American whites. Such themes have become so popular that critical race theory has gone through a multicultural evolution and become Latino/a Critical Theory, or “LatCrit,” which lauds itself on moving beyond a black/white binary and illuminating the intersections between race, sex, class, religion, sexuality, et cetera.¹²⁶ While the proliferation and themes of critical race theory denote the encouraging of a liberatory politics, I think it is imperative that we ask, “What if the reverse is true?” The popularity of critical race theory as of late should move us to pause and consider not only the dogmatic nature of this theoretical trend as a legacy of the fractured human that has come to imbue blackness, but also to ask, “Is this an approach that—while purporting to aspire to a life affirming politics, a pedagogy of humanization—actually says No to life?”

My fear is that the notion of a double consciousness coupled with an all out “race for theory” to explain the fractured self, without rigorous self-introspection, has led to the creation of a body of work that questions and deconstructs legal texts and social phenomena but has yet to grapple with its own premises, contradictions, and consequences.¹²⁷ If my fear is correct, then critical race theory has indeed become hellishly dogmatic. However, we may find liberation from dogma and begin to unlock

the consequences of double consciousness by using the philosophies of Friedrich Nietzsche. Gazing through these lenses, we can call critical race theory into the court of ruthless criticism and ask of it certain imperative questions. For instance, is the premise that racism is ordinary and integral to American life a symptom of a politics of *ressentiment* that must always be at odds with an external world? Is the premising of voice and perspective symptomatic of a morality of *ressentiment*, where the “good” perspective of the person of color is always placed in counter distinction to that of the white (evil) perspective? Finally, does the existence of both reformist zeal and a critical pessimism create a situation of entrapment that literally says “No” to life, a euphemism for the complete denial of humanity. What are the vocational consequences of such a position, and does it amount to nothing more than a dangerous politics of conviction?

Written in 1887, Friedrich Nietzsche’s *On The Genealogy of Morals* is a text that is literally grappling with, and working against, premises and maxims that are readily understood as being “good.” Nietzsche is concerned with a moral prejudice that had become ubiquitous in late nineteenth century Europe, a conception of good and evil that he suspects is dangerous because questions of both its origin and value have either been avoided or improperly answered. Rather than accept the argument that what is known as good and evil is a given, Nietzsche insists that these ideas are manufactured and maintained under certain conditions. If Nietzsche is correct, then we have to ask what purposes do these created moral prejudices actually serve. This project necessitates the articulation of what Nietzsche calls a “*new demand*,” which he describes as such:

We need a *critique* of moral values, *the value of these values themselves must first be called in question*—and for that there is needed a knowledge of the conditions and circumstances in which they grew, under which they evolved and changed (morality as consequence, as symptom, as mask, as tartufferie, as illness, as misunderstanding; but also morality as cause, as remedy, as stimulant, as restraint, as poison), a knowledge of a kind that has never yet existed or even been desired.¹²⁸

Genealogy, a process creating “new questions, inquiries, conjectures, probabilities,” will be the modality Nietzsche utilizes to call commonly accepted truths into question.¹²⁹ Thus, he is seeking to figure out what work moral prejudice does not from “*behind* the world,” or from ethereal or religious explanations, but as it is actually lived and put into practice.¹³⁰

What does Nietzsche’s examination of the value of morals have to do with the human, Du Boisian double consciousness, and critical race theory? The connection becomes clear when one examines the temporal reasons why Nietzsche believed his genealogical endeavor to be so imperative, along with his subsequent explanations of bad health and *ressentiment*. Although his time was lauded as the apex of human potential in the areas of industry and knowledge, Nietzsche reasoned that the ubiquitous moral prejudice accompanying this period was symptomatic of an ill social body. If value judgments are produced, “men of knowledge” participate in a great blunder if they fail to ask if these values generate detrimental consequences.¹³¹ Nietzsche dares us to ask if these moral judgments are “a sign of distress, of impoverishment, of the degeneration of life? Or is there revealed in them, on the contrary, the plenitude, force, and will of life, its courage, certainty, future?”¹³² For

Nietzsche, the former question appears to be true. In a move that is strikingly similar to Hartman's exploration of the pedagogical rudiments of slavery, Nietzsche argues that the social tendency to unequivocally place high value upon "pity, self-abnegation, [and] self-sacrifice" is symptomatic of a move away from a robust affirmation of life. He asserts that this valuation in fact is evidence of the "will turning *against* life."¹³³

Here, we see a society in danger because, despite all progress, there exists the need—the longing—to produce a particular type of moral subject who is considered to be representative of the good. This type of subject, "the good man," is highly valued because he supposedly contributes to the advancement of the human species. However, Nietzsche inquires, "What if the reverse were true? What if a symptom of regression were inherent in the 'good,' likewise a danger, a seduction, a poison, a narcotic, through which the present was possibly living *at the expense of the future*?"¹³⁴ It should be clear that Nietzsche is not simply saying that "the evil man" should be held in high regard. He is daring us to consider how the consciousness of this type of moral subject is produced and how such a subject can construct the walls of its own prison. This criticism of the valuation of a specific moral subject has great implications for our examination of Du Bois and critical race theory, particularly when we think about the valuation of a specific subject voice.

This particular type of moral valuation came to imbue European society through what Nietzsche calls the slave revolt in morality. He attributes this process particularly to Jews, who from an oppressed position inverted an earlier aristocratic understanding of "good = noble = powerful = beautiful = happy = beloved of God" into good = meek = oppressed = worthy of pity.¹³⁵ The slave revolt in morality has become victorious, leading to the valuation of slave morality and the accompanying social sickness that concerns Nietzsche. This revolt is attributed to the men of *ressentiment*, those who hold a particular type of acrimony against those who are recognized as having specific forms of power. The translation of this term, which is a key part of Nietzschean philosophy, proves to be incredibly difficult. In German, *ressentiment* translates into *verstimmung*, meaning indignation or righteous anger. In English, the word translates directly into *resentment*, or bitter feelings about or towards someone as a result of insult or injury. However, Nietzsche's usage of French is telling. More than feelings of bitterness, Nietzsche appears to be speaking of a certain outlook on life that creates a particular type of knowledge and way of being. He emphasizes:

While every noble morality develops from a triumphant affirmation of itself, slave morality from the outset says No to what is "outside," what is "different," what is "not itself"; and *this* No is its creative deed. This inversion of the value-positing eye—this *need* to direct one's view outward instead of back to oneself—is the essence of *ressentiment*: in order to exist, slave morality always first needs a hostile external world; it needs, physiologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act at all—its action is fundamentally reaction.¹³⁶

An instance of rejection or oppression, such as the refusal of Du Bois' greeting card, can lead to *ressentiment*. Yet this *ressentiment* lingers, producing a subject that continuously necessitates a hostile external world in order to confirm its existence. This subject must say "No" to what is considered to be outside itself, and it must constantly assert its essential goodness against outside forms of power. Without this outside hostility, the men of *ressentiment* are thrown into a type of existential conundrum,

meaning that their very being, their reason for existing, is called into question. It is the presence of a slave morality, combined with the need to construct external hostile world(s) that seems to suggest that both double consciousness and critical race theory may produce subjects that actively contribute to a politics of regression.

Two main tenets of critical race theory make it a prime suspect for Nietzsche's sinister diagnosis. The first is that racism is an ordinary and integral part of American life. The second is the need to privilege the voices of people of color, who possess a monopoly on both seeing and understanding racism. These tenets are part of the legacy of Du Boisian double consciousness: two warring souls struggling for recognition from the American political and social body while viewing the other through an impenetrable veil. If racism is posited as ordinary, integral, and even normal then we are presented with a situation where a hostile external world is continuously created in order to affirm the existence of the subject of color.¹³⁷ This is not a project seeking the eventual elimination of American racism, but instead it is involved in a reactive crusade to identify the very atomic particles of racism concealed in every aspect of American social life.

We can track this "creative deed," a continual "No," occurring during the past century, as the very rhetoric around race has shifted from biological racism, to double consciousness, to cultural pluralism, to racial formation, and even from prejudice, to discrimination, and to white privilege. We also see "a triumphant affirmation" occurring as critical race theory transforms into Latino/a Critical Theory, or LatCrit, which is also not concerned with the elimination of a racial order, but "has explicitly devoted itself to exploring the interplays of race, ethnicity, religion, national origin..."¹³⁸ The monopolization of perspectives of color also sounds strangely similar to what the subject of *ressentiment* tells itself to affirm its existence: "For *they* know not what *they* do—we alone know what *they* do!"¹³⁹ Thus, the final "No!" to the outside world beyond the veil is stated in the meritorious guise of giving voice to the voiceless, the victims of an "evil" white population that can neither have knowledge of the malice that it commits nor hold itself accountable. A Nietzschean perspective on critical race theory brings its dogmatic tendencies to the surface and moves us to ask, "How can a position asserting that racism must exist in order to affirm the existence of people of color actually be affirming of life?" If this analysis holds then critical race theory can be accused of stifling the life that its supporters so passionately purport to affirm.

Such a criticism has powerful implications for blackness as a political project and its relation to being human. What Du Bois, critical race theory, and a plethora of scholars have tried to argue is actually a misread understanding of religious doctrine and spirituality: the notion that life is suffering. Nietzsche also made this observation regarding European society, stating, "I understood the ever spreading morality of pity that has seized even on philosophers and made them ill, as the most sinister symptom of a European culture that had itself become sinister, perhaps as its by-pass to a new Buddhism? To a Buddhism for Europeans? to—nihilism?"¹⁴⁰ Buddhism has often been misread as teaching a doctrine that life is suffering, but this reading is far from the truth of the teaching. If blackness as a political project recognizes life only as suffering then where is the necessary space for authentic life affirmation? In the words of colleague and friend Erica Lumpkin:

If you look at it really, we are no more struggle than anything else. To identify blackness with struggle is really, if anything, more disempowering than the reality of racism/classism itself. It is almost as if the ‘culture of blackness,’ or the ‘authenticity of blackness,’ is heavily reliant upon social struggle and traumatic dealings with racism and the white power structure.¹⁴¹

I am neither seeking to argue that racism has been virtually eliminated from American society, nor am I advocating for the creation of a color-blind society. Quite the contrary, a worry is that the affirmation of one’s being based upon the existence of racism is extremely problematic. A fear is that this ontological positioning is indicative of dogma because one’s increased value as a racial subject is laid down as being incontrovertibly true. If both double consciousness and critical race theory rest upon this dogma—along with the continual need for and fabrication of a hostile outside world against which one’s subjectivity is created—then they reinscribe the very racial environment that they seek to expose. Nietzsche would rightfully call some of the main tenets of critical race theory into question, exposing some of the detrimental properties of its themes that have been thus far generally accepted amongst critical race theory scholars as being constructive. The continual creation of an external outside world which posits the racial subject as existing at all times against hostile forces creates a rationale that life itself is pointless: in other words, a fatalistic nihilism.

This is not to suggest that Du Bois should be exercised from the historical canon, or that critical race theory should be completely eliminated. Part of the beneficial functions of criticism is its ability to make something better by calling into question the very premises upon which it rests. If the notion of double consciousness and critical race theory both say “No!” to life, then critical activity is imperative in order to avoid, as Nietzsche would say, the possibility of the present living at the very expense of the future.¹⁴² A theoretical frame that focuses on oppressive conditions should not be purely descriptive or explanatory. It *must* be liberatory in every way imaginable. Such a body of work should avoid *ressentiment* by establishing a deep commitment to the diversity of thought and experience that is critical to any democratic project. The reverse would lead to the creation of an anti-democratic project that imbues itself in self-aggrandizement. As Nietzsche warns:

To be incapable of taking one’s enemies, one’s accidents, even one’s misdeeds seriously for very long—that is the sign of strong, full natures in whom there is an excess of the power to form, to mold, to recuperate and to forget...Such a man shakes off with a *single* shrug many vermin that eat deep into others; here alone genuine “love of one’s enemies” is possible—supposing it to be possible at all on earth. How much reverence has a noble man for his enemies!—and such reverence is a bridge to love.—For he desires his enemy for himself, as his mark of distinction; he can endure no other enemy than one in whom there is nothing to despise and *very much* to honor! In contrast to this picture “the enemy” as the man of *ressentiment* conceives him—and here precisely is his deed, his creation: he has conceived “the evil enemy,” *the Evil One*,” and this in fact is his basic concept, from which he then evolves, as an afterthought and pedant, a “good one”—himself!¹⁴³

Such a project would be hellishly dogmatic indeed.

*Towards An Authentic Synthesis: The Ananda Project*¹⁴⁴

What Du Bois' pedagogical life lesson and critical race theory's dogma teach us is that the notion of a fractured self seeking humanization beyond the self can actually lead to a form of dehumanization. My argument is that the assuaging of the fractured self does not occur only as a result of one's relationship with the material world. Instead, double consciousness is actually a neurotic condition where one learns to affirm one's existence through seeking recognition, and thus humanization, from the material world at the expense of one's internal sense of humanity. The master and slave relationship is still maintained at the level of consciousness. This condition is dangerous because the search for recognition leads to a situation where self-love, or the internalization of worthiness, becomes impossible. In the case of pedagogues, this diagnosis pushes us to ask what role education has in this process, and how the fractured self can once again be made whole. Looking to epistemological standpoints, such as Du Bois and various forms of politics based on identity, appears to only reproduce the problem as one constantly seeks outside recognition not as a whole human being but as a fractured-neurotic self. In order to understand fully Du Bois' struggle for recognition as being an internal rather than external struggle we must use forms of philosophical analysis that are detached from regulatory identity politics.

The bringing together of the fractured self is illustrated in one of the ancient stories of the Buddha. The story involves three characters: Buddha (the enlightened one), Mara (the lord of desire), and Ananda (the Buddha's attendant). In order to fully understand its connection to Du Boisian double consciousnesses we must read the story as if the characters represent differing aspects of human consciousness. Du Bois is able to fully articulate the positions of Buddha and Mara when he explains the ways in which he views the white and black races: one having access to a type of democratic heaven and the other stuck in the purgatory of slavery and idleness. But the character that is not fully developed in Du Bois' explanation of double consciousness is Ananda. This is because Du Bois' search for recognition prevents him from fully seeing the consequences of an ego out of balance, which is what Ananda represents.

One morning the Buddha sat meditating in a cave while his attendant, Ananda, stood watch outside. A feeling startled Ananda, and he quickly looked up to see Mara, the lord of desire, approaching to have an audience with the Buddha. Upon seeing Mara Ananda was extremely troubled, but Mara walked straight up to Ananda and asked to have an audience with the Buddha. "Why have you come here? Don't you remember that in olden times you were defeated by the Buddha under the Bodhi tree? Aren't you ashamed to come here? Go away! The Buddha will not see you. You are evil. You are his enemy." Mara heard this and let out a huge-bellowing laugh. "I did not know your master had any enemies," Mara said. "This concept is new to me." Upon hearing this Ananda knew he had made a mistake and had been defeated by Mara. The Buddha had never expressed that he had any enemies, and Ananda thus had to announce Mara's visit to the Buddha.

Upon seeing Mara the Buddha was very happy and stood to greet his old friend. But Ananda was still very disturbed by this meeting. The Buddha then asked his old friend why he had come:

Mara said, “Things are not going well at all. I am tired of being Mara. I want to be something else.”

Ananda became very frightened. Mara said, “You know, being a Mara is not a very easy thing to do. If you talk, you have to talk in riddles. If you do anything you have to be tricky and look evil. I am very tired of all that. But what I cannot bear is my disciples. They are now talking about social justice, peace, equality, liberation, nonduality, nonviolence, all of that. I have had enough of it! I think that it would be better if I hand them all over to you. I want to be something else.”

Ananda began to shudder because he was afraid that the master would decide to take the other role. Mara would become the Buddha, and the Buddha would become Mara. It made him very sad.

The Buddha listened attentively, and was filled with compassion. Finally, he said in a quiet voice, “Do you think it’s fun being a Buddha? You don’t know what my disciples have done to me! They put words into my mouth that I never said. They build garish temples and put statues of me on altars in order to attract bananas and oranges and sweet rice, just for themselves. And they package me and make my teaching into an item of commerce. Mara, if you knew what it is really like to be a Buddha, I am sure you wouldn’t want to be one.” And, thereupon, the Buddha recited a long verse summarizing the conversation.¹⁴⁵

On its surface, this story looks to have nothing to do with Du Bois’ dilemma of recognition. But a deeper analysis reveals insights regarding notions of dualism. First, we must understand Buddha and Mara as aspects of Ananda’s mind rather than physical persons. Like Du Bois, Ananda seeks recognition from a person(s) that are associated with what we understand as morally good: the Buddha. However, because Ananda represents pure ego he is unable to see that the Buddha and Mara need each other in order to exist and maintain physical, psychological, and spiritual balance. Ananda exists as a fractured self that is consumed with fear that his “master” will switch sides. But this prompts a question that Hegel sought to answer regarding the nature of human consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: In this situation who is really the master and who is really the slave?

What this story teaches us is that Du Bois ultimately represents the ego caught between two notions of what it means to be human. Rather than going within himself to assuage the crisis of double consciousness he seeks an outside referential in the form of white America, but this will only work to exacerbate his problem. Scholars have noted how this problem arises in Du Bois’ thought in the form of contradictions, such as the notion of a talented tenth, that push for Negro uplift but are subsumed within a certain type of admiration for European thought, Victorian ideals, and hierarchal institutions. As Cornel West has stated, Du Bois was “a black New England Victorian seduced by the Enlightenment and enchanted with the American dream.”¹⁴⁶ This is not to say that there was anything inherently wrong with Du Bois’ interest in the Enlightenment. However, one has to wonder if Du Bois’ lifelong battle with the issue of race was about an authentic form of liberation that does not reinscribe the rudiments of regulation created as a result of double consciousness. Or, perhaps, Du Bois was also haunted by that fact that he too possessed some of those qualities and traits that he so despised in the black boys with whom he attended school.

My argument is that the “Negro problem” in the Du Boisian sense must be recognized as an extension of the self, and any search for outside recognition will not alleviate the dilemma. Only an understanding that double consciousness exists as Buddha and Mara, or Yin and Yang, or materialism and idealism: two sides of the same coin. Any search for recognition beyond self only results in a fractured self. However, this is not a condition that is subsumed within the notion of what it means to be black. This is also the problem of whiteness and here too the pedagogical lesson of blackness can be useful. While white persons create a perceived reality of the world, and therefore categorize others as deviants rather than partners in the community of life, their search for supremacy can only lead to an intellectual-self devoid of any emotional intelligence. This is why, as Du Bois hinted at, the Negro must give the white persons of America what they so sordidly lack: the ability to not only be intellectually free but also emotionally free, a condition of equilibrium where one is not ashamed of oneself. Du Bois emphasizes:

We the darker one’s come even now not all together empty-handed: there are today no truer exponents of the pure human spirit of the Declaration of independence than the American Negroes; there is no true American music but the wild sweet melodies of the Negro slave; the American fairy tales and folk-lore are Indian and African; and, all in all, we black men seem the sole oasis of simple faith and reverence in a dusty desert of dollars and smartness. Will America be poorer if she replaces her brutal dyspeptic blundering with light-hearted but determined Negro humility? Or her course and cruel wit with loving jovial good-humor? Or her vulgar music with the soul of the Sorrow Songs?¹⁴⁷

If the current way we approach education only works to exacerbate such dualisms, rather than create a sense of balance and worthiness, then change requires rethinking what we mean when we are talking about education. Are we talking about a space where students are taught to always look to outside authority to determine their life paths, or are we talking about a space where students engage in the acquisition of wisdom, self-knowledge, and insight. The sad reality may be that the site of the school as it stands now can never alleviate this problem; it can only make it worse. Thus, if the pedagogy of blackness is indeed ontological while the pedagogy of whiteness is epistemological, completeness as a result of education requires a pedagogical bridge that connects the two and maintains balance.

An Old Man And His Beloved Boat: The Pedagogical Implications of the Fractured Human

What lessons are to be learned from the life and thought of W.E.B. Du Bois and his continual struggle for recognition? We know that Du Bois spent the majority of his life working in order to assuage the problem of the “color line.” According to David Levering Lewis, “In the course of his long, turbulent career, W. E. B. Du Bois attempted virtually every possible solution to the problem of twentieth-century racism—scholarship, propaganda, integration, national self-determination, human rights, cultural and economic separatism, politics, international communism, expatriation, third world solidarity.”¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless, Du Bois was often abandoned by the very community he wished to save. A final blow was delivered when those who could be identified with “the

talented tenth” did not come to his aid when the House Committee on Un-American Activities questioned him for his communist leanings in 1951.¹⁴⁹

In 1961 Du Bois left the United States and repatriated to Ghana at the invitation of President Kwame Nkrumah to direct the creation of the *Encyclopedia Africana*, and in 1963 he became a citizen of Ghana. Scholars have noted that there is some discrepancy over whether or not Du Bois renounced his U.S. citizenship.¹⁵⁰ However, for our purposes Du Bois’ decision to leave the country is directly connected to questions regarding recognition and the human that plagued his entire life. Ironically, despite his fleeing from political repression in the wake of declaring himself a communist, Du Bois’ departure sounds very similar to Hartman’s observance that slaves exercised movement in order to claim their humanity via the freedom to move in the wake of emancipation. “In effect, by refusing to stay in their place, the emancipated insisted that freedom was a departure, literally and figuratively, from their former condition.”¹⁵¹ Du Bois may have left his former condition but it is unclear whether he was able to assuage the notion of a fractured self during his lifetime. His final words to his friend Kwame Nkrumah show the unwavering determination of a life caught in a racial crisis for recognition: “I failed you—my strength gave out before I could carry out our plans for the encyclopedia. Forgive an old man.”¹⁵²

The preceding argument is not meant to destroy W.E.B. Du Bois as a historical figure so much as to explore the pedagogical lessons of his life as a black man longing to be recognized in 20th century America. The question we must ask ourselves is if Du Bois’ life has taught us the pitfalls of a fractured self then how do we recast ourselves so that we are not forced and/or regulated to live his life all over again, especially when it comes to the creation of bodies of knowledge that require a fractured self as a foundation? Hartman adds, “The intervention made here is an attempt to recast the past, guided by the conundrums and compulsions of our contemporary crisis: the hope for social transformation in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles, the quixotic search for a subject capable of world-historical action, and the despair induced by the lack of one.”¹⁵³ Indeed, if we are living our lives in a way that shows devotion to an idea rather than an essence, or a wise way to live, then not only are we in trouble but so still is Du Bois. As Walter Benjamin so eloquently emphasized, “Only the historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that even the dead will not be safe if the enemy wins.”¹⁵⁴

Du Bois’ approach to the issue of double consciousness combined with a love of learning also has implications for the way we position students of color as learners, and the way students position us as educators. Fordham & Ogbu noted in the 1980’s that students of color often draw detrimental connections between education and whiteness.¹⁵⁵ The result is that we are met with a population of students who appear to fear to be educated or perceived as intellectual due to the burden of being perceived as acting white. I would add that this approach has been commingled with perceptions regarding intelligence and sexuality. Later, while researching the disengagement of black students in middle class communities, Ogbu noted that most researchers focus on social factors or community factors, with the overwhelming majority of researchers focusing on systemic factors. In an interesting twist, Ogbu seeks to shift the focus from systemic factors to community factors, a move which makes sense.¹⁵⁶ However, I want to suggest that our problems may not totally be with the system or communities. In fact,

no one appears to want to ask and take seriously how students perceive “educated” individuals as human beings. This is especially the case regarding male students of color.

There is a double assumption in our educational discourses that needs to be debunked. Some of us assume that students should emulate role models and intellectual giants, such as Du Bois, and those who do not try to live into this expectation are regarded as problems. We also take for granted that students, particularly black males, do not want to be intelligent. I have often asked why this fear of being intelligent exists amongst black males, especially considering that many forms of artistic creativity expressed by black men, including various forms of poetry, highlight the importance of the acquisition of wisdom. I have often been told this fear exists because intelligence is equated with whiteness and homosexuality. However, the pedagogical lesson of Du Bois’ life illustrates that both of these assumptions are problematic, and moves us to ask a deeper question: What if particular students disengage from institutional educational settings because they perceive that living the type of life Du Bois led requires a certain loss of one’s humanity? Given the legacy left by Du Bois this may appear to be an odd question to ask. But if the notion of double consciousness as a crisis of recognition is to be taken seriously then we have to wonder if young black men perceive many educators and adults as schizophrenic subjects. No doubt Du Bois was an intellectual giant, and there is nothing wrong with recognizing the gifts that he brought into the world. But there appears to be a glaring contradiction between living a life seeking a recognition that never comes, and, as James Baldwin emphasizes, making a conscious decision to say, “Yes to life.”¹⁵⁷ In the words of the soul singer-songwriter Des’ree, “Time is much too short to be living somebody else’s life.”¹⁵⁸

Such implications extend beyond the consciousness of the student to how we go about approaching the concept of race. As noted earlier, a fractured self can lead towards an ontological situation where race becomes so central to processes of recognition that it becomes permanent. But as Nietzsche reminds us, permanence can result in a dangerous Sisyphean nihilism. The frightening thing about this approach to race is that there seems to be no room for a future devoid of struggle. In effect, there is no room for a full human being that feels worthy enough to live his or her life free from the shackles of ideology. As we will see in the next chapter, the concept of race has been hotly debated, and it has morphed from a biological given, to a social construction, and back to retaining an element of the biological with the recent rise of ancestry testing. Something seems a little out of balance when you are living a life of struggle for an idea whose essence cannot be properly explained.

There is a story from the Buddhist texts that can help us with some of this confusion. An old man was on a journey to a sacred mountain, and while he was on his journey he came to a turbulent river. To the old man’s delight on the side of the river was a raft, and the old man used the raft to cross the river and continue on his journey. But when the old man arrived at the other side of the river, he was so grateful for the raft that he decided to carry it with him on the rest of his journey. The old man struggled so hard to carry his raft the he failed to see the beauty of the valley as he approached the mountain. As he climbed up the slope the weight of the boat caused him to slip and break his leg. A few days later he died a slow and agonizing death, alone with his boat,

without ever making it to his sacred mountain, all over something of which he could have easily let go.¹⁵⁹

Most people point to W.E.B. Du Bois and cite a quotation from him that has essentially become gospel, “The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line.”¹⁶⁰ Far fewer cite something else he said, “The meaning of the twentieth century is the freeing of the individual soul.”¹⁶¹ To be clear, I am not arguing for a color-blind society that ignores how race and other issues involving identity influence our intra and/or interpersonal relationships. Rather, the time has come that we seriously begin to reflect inwardly on how the notion of a fractured self prevents a full claim to an authentic humanity and the subsequent freeing of the individual soul. This is the pedagogical essence of what I referred to earlier as the Ananda Project: having the ability to practice introspection and recognize ego so you can save yourself and others from numerous dehumanizing regulations resulting from projections we place upon the world. For black persons, especially in supposed positions of power, we have to think about what we are really fighting for, what the costs are, and how our search for recognition damages our relationship with ourselves—especially in regards to health—and each other. Regarding recognition, we have to think about how the constant struggle over the epistemological issue of race prevents us from authentically engaging with ontological functions, such as sexuality.

A story from Du Bois’ life illustrates this point. Reflecting in one of his memoirs, Du Bois writes, “In the midst of my career there burst upon me a new and undreamed aspect of sex. A young man, long my disciple and student, then my co-helper and successor to part of my work, was suddenly arrested for molesting men in public places.”¹⁶² The name of this young man was Augustus Granville Dill, a scholar who worked closely with Du Bois for almost 15 years. Dill was arrested for having gay sex in a subway toilet. Although Du Bois wrote that he had never “contemplated continuing my life work without you [Dill] by my side,” he ended the relationship with Dill. This decision would haunt Du Bois for the rest of his life. “I had before that time no conception of homosexuality. I had never understood the tragedy of Oscar Wilde. I dismissed my co-worker forthwith, and spent heavy days regretting my act.”¹⁶³

Given the ways in which scholars have long wrote about the connections between black masculinity and sexuality that have imbued modernity, I find it hard to believe that Du Bois did not think about homosexuality. Du Bois’ reaction does become imaginable if one’s perception is clouded by centralizing race at the expense of sexuality. Nevertheless, Alain Locke begins to shift this discourse as he critiques vindicationist thinking, and begins to consider how to bridge the gap between individual freedom and the health of the society. The subject of sexuality also emerges as Locke seeks to assuage the distance between himself and the society as a result of him being a Negro, and himself and his community as a result of his sexuality. It is to questions of education, sexuality, cultural pluralism, and human consciousness that we will now turn.

⁸³ Janelle Monáe, "Many Moons," (Wondaland Arts Society/Bad Boy Records, 2007).

⁸⁴ Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "Honoring Dr. Du Bois, No. 2, 1968," in *Freedomways Reader: Prophets in Their Own Country*, ed. Esther Cooper Jackson and Constance Phohl (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 32.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁸⁶ While not the focus of this chapter, Du Bois was very concerned with the qualifications of the teachers who were educating black students, as evidenced in the many inquiries Du Bois made on the nature of teacher training. Such inquiries can be found in correspondence Du Bois had with educational leaders between 1900 and 1910. For an example see Superintendent of Education for the State of Alabama John W. Abercrombie to W.E.B. Du Bois, May 1, 1902, The Papers of W.E.B. Du Bois, Special Collections, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts at Amherst (hereafter, Du Bois Papers/UMass).

⁸⁷ W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Training of Negroes for Social Power," *Outlook* 1903, 409.

⁸⁸ ———, "Diuturni Silenti," in *The Education of Black People: Ten Critiques, 1906-1960*, ed. Herbert Aptheker (New York Monthly Review Press, 2001), 71. Du Bois delivered this speech in 1924, a year after the 35th anniversary of his graduation at Fisk University.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 69, 79. Du Bois was frustrated over the fact that the students were not allowed to do anything under their own initiative. No student was able to express her or his opinion in public, largely because the school newspaper, the *Fisk Herald*, had been suppressed. In addition, all student organizations were run, rather than supervised, by a faculty member who had final say over who could be included. Du Bois also tells the story of how the president of Fisk University took a group of fifteen to twenty girls from the Glee Club, "girls from the best Negro families in the United States, carried them downtown at night to a white men's club, took them down an ally and admitted them through the servants' entrance and had them sing in a basement to Southern white men, while these men smoked and laughed and talked."

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁹¹ Du Bois, "The Souls of Black Folk," 11.

⁹² W.E.B. Du Bois, "Galileo Galilei," in *The Education of Black People: Ten Critiques, 1906-1960*, ed. Herbert Aptheker (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 42.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Alridge, *The Educational Thought of W.E.B. Du Bois: An Intellectual Tradition*, 51.

⁹⁶ See Jordan, "Nobody Means More to Me Than You and the Future Life of Willie Jordan.," bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York Routledge, 1994).

⁹⁷ Du Bois, "The Souls of Black Folk," 14.

⁹⁸ Moore, *Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, and the Struggle for Racial Uplift*; Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*; Bruce Jr., "W.E.B. Du Bois and the Idea of Double Consciousness."

⁹⁹ Rabaka, "W.E.B. Du Bois's Evolving Africana Philosophy of Education.," Alridge, *The Educational Thought of W.E.B. Du Bois: An Intellectual Tradition*.

¹⁰⁰ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*.

¹⁰¹ Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery*, xi.

¹⁰² *Haymes, "Pedagogy and the Philosophical Anthropology of African-American Slave Culture."

¹⁰³ Du Bois, "The Souls of Black Folk," 29.

¹⁰⁴ Douglass, *The Narrative Life of Frederick Douglass*.

¹⁰⁵ Du Bois continues, "Perhaps some inkling of this paradox, even in the unquiet days of the Bureau, helped the bayonets allay an opposition to human training which still to-day lies smouldering in the South, but not flaming. Fisk, Atlanta, Howard and Hampton were founded in these days, and six million dollars were expended for educational work, seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars of which the freedmen themselves gave of their poverty." Du Bois, "The Souls of Black Folk," 29.

¹⁰⁶ Alridge, *The Educational Thought of W.E.B. Du Bois: An Intellectual Tradition*, 12.

¹⁰⁷ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*, 6.

¹⁰⁸ W.E.B. Du Bois to A.P. Holly, March 27, 1909, Du Bois Papers/UMass.

¹⁰⁹ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois: A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century* ed. Henry Louis Gates, The Oxford W.E.B. Du Bois (New York Oxford University Press, 2007), 46. Du Bois continues, "If he wrote, the letters were not delivered. I never saw him, and know not where or when he died."

¹¹⁰ Alridge, *The Educational Thought of W.E.B. Du Bois: An Intellectual Tradition*, 15.

¹¹¹ Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois: A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century* 40.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 47.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹¹⁴ ———, "The Souls of Black Folk," 10.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* Du Bois' interaction provides a subtle critique of present day race theorists. Many scholars articulate their central task as to account for racism in the absence of Jim Crow laws, and do so through examining instances of racial micro-aggressions as a residue of Jim Crow segregation. However, Du Bois identifies a racial micro-aggression at the site of the school not as residual, but as a central problem in the American racial situation. See Daniel Solorzano, Miguel Ceja, and Tara Yosso, "Critical Race Theory, Racial Microaggressions, and Campus Racial Climate: The Experiences of African American College Students," *The Journal of Negro Education* 69, no. 1/2 (2000).

¹¹⁶ Du Bois, "The Souls of Black Folk," 10.

¹¹⁷ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 113-14.

¹¹⁸ Du Bois, "The Souls of Black Folk," 10.

¹¹⁹ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 114.

¹²⁰ Du Bois, "Galileo Galilei," 36-37.

¹²¹ ———, "The Souls of Black Folk," 37.

¹²² Ironically, these stances are not reserved for the political left. The extreme right also carries examples of crisis ensuing the fracturing of the self.

¹²³ According to Charles W. Mills the “epistemology of ignorance” refers to “a particular pattern of localized and global cognitive dysfunctions (which are psychologically and socially functional), producing the ironic outcome that whites will in general be unable to understand the world themselves have made.” Du Bois often spoke of the frustration he experienced as a result of the work he was doing. In a letter to Dr. Frances Hoggan written in 1910 he wrote, “The pressure from those who dislike to have anything radical said is strengthening everyday, and they call anything radical which asserts the full manhood rights of Negro’s as American citizens, or which demands that they be judged by the same criterion as other men.” Indeed, in line with the experiences of many intellectuals of color in the academy, Du Bois’ earnest approach to dealing with the “Negro Problem” was often met with denial. In correspondence regarding the *Souls of Black Folk*, WD Hopper, a professor of Latin at the University of Georgia, wrote, “I have just read the tragedy which you call “The Souls of Black Folk,” and I cannot refrain from writing to tell you how profoundly it has affected me...I have, however, wanted you to know that my skirts at least are clean. I have never wittingly wronged one of your race in any way...This is a small thing, but your book has put me on the defensive.” Mills, *The Racial Contract*, 18. Frances Hoggan to Du Bois, April 2, 1910, Du Bois Papers/UMass. WD Hopper to Du Bois, September 2, 1909, in Du Bois Papers/UMass.

¹²⁴ According to Paulo Freire, praxis refers to the ability to synthesize reflection and action in order to transform the world. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 51.

¹²⁵ John Shuford, "Four Du Boisian Contributions to Critical Race Theory," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 37, no. 3 (2001): 301. See also Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate, "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education," *Teachers College* 97, no. 1 (1995); Daniel G. Solorzano, "Images and Words That Wound: Critical Race Theory, Racial Stereotyping, and Teacher Education," *Teacher Education Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (1997); Tara Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth," *Race Ethnicity and Education* 8, no. 1 (2005).

¹²⁶ Angela Harris, "Critical Race Theory," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes (Oxford: Elsevier Science Ltd., 2004), 2976-80.

¹²⁷ Barbara Christian, "The Race for Theory," *Cultural Critique* 6(1987).

¹²⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Genealogy of Morals," in *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989/1887), 20.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹³⁰ Nietzsche states, “Fortunately I learned early to separate theological prejudice from moral prejudice and ceased to look for the origin of evil *behind* the world.” Here it seems as if Nietzsche is rejecting the Kantian distinction between the phenomenal (what we experience) and noumenal (the real world that only God can see) worlds. Thus, he speaks on his shift from being a child, or childish, and explaining the problem of the origin of good and evil as being explained by God to an explanation that seeks to figure out the conditions that existed in order for man to fashion these value judgments. *Ibid.*, 17 & 21.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 17.

¹³³ Ibid., 19; Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*.

¹³⁴ Nietzsche, "On the Genealogy of Morals," 20.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 34.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 36-37.

¹³⁷ The mixture of what has been called reformist zeal and critical pessimism is indicative of *ressentiment*. A position that advocates for reform while asserting that such reforms will only amount to false hopes creates a situation of entrapment that is the antipathy of life affirmation. I witnessed this very attribute in 2008 in conversations with some colleagues concerning the possibility of an Obama presidency. A reoccurring position on this possibility went as follows: "It would be nice, but he is going to be killed anyway."

¹³⁸ Harris, "Critical Race Theory."

¹³⁹ Nietzsche, "On the Genealogy of Morals," 47.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 19.

¹⁴¹ Erica Lumpkin, (2009).

¹⁴² Nietzsche, "On the Genealogy of Morals," 20.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 39.

¹⁴⁴ While the name of the character in the story is Ananda, I am borrowing the phrase "Ananda Project" from a musical group called Ananda Project. Interesting enough, their music deals with many of the issues outlined in this dissertation including the achievement of emotional, physical, and spiritual balance.

¹⁴⁵ Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Heart of Understanding: Commentaries on the Prajñaparamita Heart Sutra* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1988).

¹⁴⁶ Cornel West, "W.E.B. Du Bois: An Interpretation," in *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African American Experience*, ed. Anthony Kwame Appiah and Henry Lewis Gates Jr. (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 1967.

¹⁴⁷ Du Bois, "The Souls of Black Folk," 16.

¹⁴⁸ Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century 1919-1963*, 571.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 550.

¹⁵⁰ See Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*, 128.

¹⁵² Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century 1919-1963*, 570.

¹⁵³ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*, 14.

¹⁵⁴ Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1969), 255.

¹⁵⁵ Fordham and Ogbu, "Black Students' School Success: Coping with the 'Burden of Acting White'".

¹⁵⁶ John Ogbu, *Black American Students in an Affluent Suburb: A Study of Academic Disengagement* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc, 2003).

¹⁵⁷ James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room* (New York: Delta, 1956), 5.

¹⁵⁸ Des'ree, "I Ain't Movin'," (Epic/550, 1994).

¹⁵⁹ For a different telling of the story see Thich Nhat Hanh, *Old Path, White Clouds: Walking in the Footsteps of the Buddha* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1991), 107.

¹⁶⁰ Du Bois, "The Souls of Black Folk," 5.

¹⁶¹ Devon W. Carbado, Dwight McBride, and Don Weise, "1900-1950 the Harlem Renaissance: "...the Perfumed Orchid of the New Negro Movement." " in *Black Like Us: A Century of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual African-American Fiction* ed. Devon W Carbado, Dwight McBride, and Don Weise (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 2002), 9.

¹⁶² W.E.B Du Bois, *Autobiography of W.E.B. Dubois: A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century*, ed. Herbert Aptheker (New York: International Publishers, 1968), 282.

¹⁶³ Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century 1919-1963.*, 205. Also see Carbado, McBride, and Weise, "1900-1950 the Harlem Renaissance: "...the Perfumed Orchid of the New Negro Movement." ", 9-10.

Chapter 4
In Search of a Diverse Humanity:
The Critical Educational Thought of Alain LeRoy Locke

*So you think I'm alone?
 But being alone's the only way to be
 When you step outside
 You spend life fighting for your sanity
 This is a cold war
 You better know what you're fighting for*
 —Janelle Monáe¹⁶⁴

The first African-American Rhodes Scholar, Alain LeRoy Locke is well known primarily as a patron of the arts. In his role as “Dean of the Harlem Renaissance,” Locke supported the liberation of African-Americans via the arts, which led to his widespread influence upon American culture as a whole. However, in addition to mentoring numerous African-American artists, Locke was a renowned academic, philosopher of education, social commentator, and advocate of both cultural pluralism and inter-race relations. A testament to his role as professor and mentor, between 1912 and 1954 the majority of American trained African-American and African students of philosophy were taught directly by Locke, or by students he had taught or hired.¹⁶⁵ Locke was also a tireless advocate of and contributor to African-American adult education, as illustrated by his helping form the Associates in Negro Folk Education in 1936 and his being elected president of the American Association for Adult Education in 1945.¹⁶⁶ Speaking on the benefits of life long learning on behalf of the Association, Locke stated, “Adults can, should and must learn continuously, not only for their own individual growth and development but for society’s social health and betterment.”¹⁶⁷ Far beyond his better-known contributions to African-American aesthetics, Locke was indeed a renaissance man.¹⁶⁸

Despite these accomplishments, Locke’s contributions to American educational thought, as well as his political arguments on culture and cultural relations, have been either overlooked or dismissed outright. This problem exists for several reasons. First, Locke, like other African-American academics during and after their time, has always held a precarious position in the largely white dominated profession of the academy. This is especially true within the area of his training: philosophy. As philosopher Charles W. Mills notes, “Philosophy has remained remarkably untouched by the debates over multiculturalism, canon reform, and ethnic diversity racking the academy; both demographically and conceptually, it is one of the ‘whitest’ of the humanities.”¹⁶⁹ Meanwhile, African-American scholars such as Harold Cruse, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Nathan Huggins, and Sterling Stuckey have all charged that Locke sought to assimilate African-Americans “out of existence,” and that the New Negro movement served only to advance “an apolitical movement of the arts.”¹⁷⁰ According to Johnny Washington:

Black people, ignorant of the breadth and depth of Locke’s works, ignored Locke in the 1960’s partly because they felt he was not sufficiently militant. In search of

an historic hero, they instead turned to people like Du Bois and Frederick Douglass...Locke's philosophic attitude was just as militant as that of Du Bois or Douglass, but people such as Douglass, Booker T. Washington, Du Bois, and Marcus Garvey were politically more visible than Locke.¹⁷¹

Scholars miss the fact that Locke advanced an aesthetic theory that not only sought to subject Western thought to critique, but also served as a useful warning against the dehumanizing impact of split subjectivity and regulatory blackness. As he so eloquently stated, "Here, then, is the present dilemma;—we feel and hope in the direction of universality, but still think and act particularistically."¹⁷²

In addition, during the 1960's and 1970's African-American scholars may have dismissed Locke because his homosexuality was a direct challenge to both nationalist and cultural masculinities that equated political freedom with the assertion of heterosexual and patriarchal masculinity. In this type of climate gay writers and activists such as James Baldwin and Bayard Rustin were disparaged, and those of the past, such as Locke, were intellectually maligned or relatively ignored. These dismissals, both on the part of white and African-American scholars, have been unfortunate, because Lockean thought—in particular his early contribution to the theory of cultural pluralism—has important implications for current conversations concerning universality, democratic citizenship, and multicultural education.

Locke is critical to our conversation regarding the human because the Lockean dilemma between his inward desires and public approval marks his search for recognition and his lifelong battle to achieve balance between individual freedom and public recognition. Although Locke was not openly gay, it has been noted that he did serve as a role model for African-American men who were struggling to come to terms with their sexuality. Sadly, it is believed that many of Locke's letters in which he openly discussed his sexuality have been deliberately destroyed.¹⁷³ Nevertheless, in a letter written in 1948 Locke wrote:

My wise and loving Mother dipped me as a very young child in the magic waters of cold cynicism and haughty distrust and distain of public opinion and this with satisfaction of an almost [illegible] child. However the all too vulnerable/invulnerable Achilles heel of homosexuality—which she may have suspected was there, both for her sake and [for] my own safety, I kept in an armoured shell of reverse and haughty caution. I realize that to bask in the sunshine of public favor, I would have to bathe in the dangerous fatal pool of publicity.¹⁷⁴

In an interview that illuminates Locke's mentorship, as well as his knowledge of the dangers of being African-American and gay, Bayard Rustin states:

I got to know Locke very well...He was gay, and he held an open house for the literati and for younger writers like Langston Hughes and Richard Wright. I suspect he was more of a model for me than anyone else then was. He never felt it necessary to discuss his gayness. He universalized his affection. He carried himself in such a way that the most people could say about him was that they suspected him to be gay.¹⁷⁵

This is also one of the reasons why Locke has been ignored: his particular subjectivity threatens attempts to place race solely at the center and begins to introduce the topic of black male homosexuality.

This chapter argues that, contrary to the arguments of his critics, Alain Locke has contributed an enormous wealth of knowledge to educational thought. Locke's educational philosophy reflected his view that marginalized groups must simultaneously maintain cultural distinctiveness while asserting their humanity through appeal to the universal. Unlike many current advocates of multiculturalism, Locke offers a way of reconciling both the claims of pluralism and universalism by appealing to what he called the "third dimension of universalized common-denominator humanity."¹⁷⁶ In other words, both in his aesthetic vision and educational thought Locke claimed that cultural and/or racial differences should be treated in terms of their universal applicability and their importance to the whole of the human experience. Locke reasoned, "If we can ever generally establish through education the implemented belief that 'no one nation and no one race can and shall dominate the earth,' we will have broken the intellectual backbone of prejudice and certainly, so far as education is concerned, will have laid an intellectual foundation for effective democracy."¹⁷⁷

A Lockean philosophy of education can reconcile educator's simultaneous commitments to cultural diversity and the assertion of universal principles of human rights. This struggle to assuage the gap between universalism and pluralism contributed to his nuanced philosophy of education. First, I illuminate Locke's particular search for recognition and affirmation of his humanity via a biographical sketch. Second, I situate Locke within an emerging multicultural-intellectual tradition developing in the early twentieth-century. Third, I explore two interrelated themes in Locke's thought that imbue his philosophy of education: his understanding of Negro humanity via the New Negro and cultural pluralism. I will conclude by reflecting on Locke's contributions to educational thought, and Lockean implications for current debates surrounding multicultural education and diversity.

Lockean Recognition: Same Same But Different

Alain Locke was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on September 13, 1885, the only child of Pliny Ishmael Locke and Mary Hawkins Locke.¹⁷⁸ Locke's father died when he was rather young. However his mother's rearing would serve as a powerful force that shaped his future educational endeavors. Mrs. Locke was concerned with education, spiritual development, and social change. She loathed the "terror and hysteria" found in the Protestantism practiced by most African-Americans in the post-reconstruction North. As Douglas K. Stafford comments, Mrs. Locke "had not borne a son to preserve a dogma that offered no more than emotional escape or empty respectability."¹⁷⁹ She was an early follower of Felix Adler and a member of the Ethical Culture Society, a movement primarily concerned with developing and living in accord with ethical principles for the benefit of all human beings.

The Ethical Culture Society was one of the only "respectable" organizations open to African-American's at the time that was "explicitly providing for [African-American] participation in all its projects."¹⁸⁰ Moreover, Adler was an early promoter of kindergarten. As a result, Locke was exposed to Froebelian pedagogy, quite possibly by a Froebelian teacher who worked with the Ethical Culture Society.¹⁸¹ These early educational experiences would later impact his work on diversity and unity. Stafford comments,

Alain credited these experiences with what was his most striking personal trait, his unusual freedom from inner conflict. He was able to distinguish between those things belonging to his temperament and earliest sub-conscious learning on the one hand, and on the other those objective necessities demanding respect. The two may exist in harmonious union, but they are obviously not the same. The difference between the two (a difference which Froebel seems to obscurely deny, but one with which Ethical Culture must sooner or later concern itself) must not be a point of wasteful friction. It must be refined by intelligent examination and behavior; hence, [Locke's] charming dictum, "all things with qualifications."¹⁸²

This early religious and social opening in Locke's life would lead to his later participation in the Bahá'í faith, to which Locke was drawn because of its emphasis on the "oneness of humanity." However, Locke's upbringing and spiritual affiliation would be fraught with tension, as he would later claim, "The classical statements of...basic Bahá'í teachings like the oneness of humanity are on the lips and tongues of many, but almost every specific program enlisting the practical activities of men today still has in it dangerous elements of sectarianism."¹⁸³ These tensions would infuse his work on value theory and cultural pluralism.¹⁸⁴

Locke graduated from Central High School in 1902 and also attended the Philadelphia School of Pedagogy, a program for Central High School graduates who were interested in becoming elementary school teachers. He then attended Harvard University, where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa during his junior year and studied philosophy with G.P. Adams, R.B. Perry, and George Santayana. Graduating from Harvard in 1907 with degrees in English and Philosophy he went on to win a Rhodes Scholarship and study at Oxford for three years where he earned a Bachelor of Letters.¹⁸⁵ Locke was initially denied admission to several Oxford Colleges due to skin color before being finally admitted to Hertford College. At Oxford University his experiences with racial prejudice served to solidify his philosophical orientation. Locke's mentor and friend Horace Kallen recalls one defining incident at Oxford where Locke was told he could not attend a Thanksgiving dinner because of his race and the presence of American southerners. Kallen writes:

Now, the impact of that kind of experience left scars. The more so in a philosophic spirit. For the dominant trend among philosophers is always to prove unity and to work at unifications—to assert *one* humanity, *one* universe, *one* system of values and ideals which somehow is coercive of the many and somehow argues away the actualities of penalization for one's being oneself into unimportant appearances, without in any way relieving the feelings of dehumanization, the pain of suffering; and without lessening the desire never again to expose oneself to them....It took [Locke] some time to find his way to that acquiescence in unalienable right to his difference. This acquiescence is not primarily defensive, not a struggle for political or economic or other form of equalization. It expresses itself in affirming the integral individuality of one's person, of taking on freely the obligations that go with it; of insisting not on becoming *like* anybody else, but on having one's singularity recognized and acknowledged as possessing a title equal with any other's to live and grow.¹⁸⁶

In response to Kallen's urging that he intervene regarding the Thanksgiving incident, Harvard Professor Berrett Wendell responded, "Professionally, I do my best to treat negroes with absolute courtesy, [but Locke has] no right to expect [anything other than this 'courtesy'] from men of my race and time."¹⁸⁷ This event would put Locke at odds with the assimilationist-philosophical-Anglo-Saxon traditions he had been exposed to at Harvard and Oxford, and lead to his interest in cosmopolitan culture.

Upon leaving Oxford, Locke received an Assistant Professorship at Howard University in 1912. He returned to Harvard University in 1916 to work on his doctoral dissertation, entitled *The Problem of Classification in the Theory of Value*, which he completed in 1918. His research addressed a longstanding philosophical question: Are value classifications fully able to grasp objective reality, or do they "arbitrarily" shape our picture of reality? He also questioned if aesthetic psychological values were the foundation of value systems. He states, "As a result aesthetic values have become the classical example of a group of values where the ground...has already been a psychological rather than logical one...and this psychological basis of differentiation has rarely been questioned."¹⁸⁸ Locke makes the argument that both psychological and logical judgments convey knowledge. According to Leonard Harris, Locke's theoretical contribution was a "Dynamic and Genetic Theory of Value," one that recognized that values are always subject to change rather than "purely logical and fixed structures [that] can be captured by a unified science."¹⁸⁹ Locke's dissertation became a key facet of his thought, and he would later modify his concern from the categorization of value to the "transposition" of values.¹⁹⁰ Locke eventually became less concerned with how values were classified and more concerned with how the "common man, in both his individual and group behavior...sets up personal and private group norms as standards and principles, and rightly or wrongly hypostases them as universals for all conditions, all times and all men"¹⁹¹

Following the completion of his doctoral work, Locke returned to Howard where he became Head of the Philosophy department in 1921. During this time Locke pushed to integrate the progressive pedagogy he learned at the Philadelphia School of Pedagogy into the Howard curriculum. Locke's approach to teaching was interdisciplinary, and he taught courses in education, anthropology, social conflict, and social theory.¹⁹² For example, he taught a course at Howard entitled "Literature of the Elementary School," which involved a deep analysis of children's literature—ranging from myths and legends to nature and science stories—and the philosophical principles necessary to explore such texts with children. "The aim, to teach through literature, at the stage when the developing mind needs stimulation through the imagination and vicarious experience," wrote Locke in his syllabus.¹⁹³

Nevertheless, Locke's unique teaching style and commitment to inter-race relations would get him into trouble at Howard. He fought to teach a course on race relations against the wishes of the Howard administration in 1915 and 1916. Although Howard University refused to approve the course, Locke taught it with the sponsorship of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Ten years later, controversial President J. Stanley Durkee finally fired Locke from Howard University in 1925. Durkee claimed that the firing of Locke and three other faculty members was due to a budgetary crisis, but Locke insisted that his firing was a result of his advocating for equal pay between black and white faculty members.¹⁹⁴ Durkee's

decision was met with harsh criticism, and as a result he resigned as President of Howard University in 1926. Following Derkee's resignation Howard hired its first African-American president, Mordecai Johnson, who eventually rehired Locke in 1927. Locke would go on to work at Howard for the next twenty-five years. However, Locke's hiatus from academia due to his firing from Howard, along with previous experiences occurring during his childhood and collegiate education, may have been more of a blessing than a curse. The former afforded him the time to participate in the burgeoning Harlem Renaissance, while the later would give him both the experiential and intellectual base necessary to articulate his philosophy of education.

Entering The Cold War: Lockean Explanations of Race and Culture

It is important to situate Locke within the developing ethnicity theory debate of the early twentieth-century between arguments for cultural conformity and the conundrum of Negro duality. Locke emerged as a philosopher at a time in the United States when the dominant biologicistic views on race were being challenged by ethnicity theory. The biologicistic view held that the inferiority of non-white races was natural. According to Michael Omi and Howard Winant, "Whites were considered the superior race; white skin was the norm while other skin colors were exotic mutations which had to be explained."¹⁹⁵ Prior to 1930, the ethnicity paradigm developed as an "insurgent approach," explicitly challenging the dominant racial views of the era. This challenge arose due to the work of both the "Chicago School" of sociology and those who adhered to Progressivism, such as Locke's mentor and friend Kallen.¹⁹⁶

Horace Kallen would introduce the term *cultural pluralism*, which became one of the major strands of ethnicity theory.¹⁹⁷ The other strand, endorsed by the "Chicago School" of sociology, Robert E. Park, Gunnar Myrdal, and E. Franklin Frazier, came to be known as *assimilationism*.¹⁹⁸ These early theorists of ethnicity held that race was only one part of what composed one's ethnic identity. According to Omi and Winant, "Ethnicity itself was understood as the result of group formation processes based on culture and descent. 'Culture' in this formulation included such diverse factors as religion, language, 'customs,' nationality, and political identification. 'Decent' involved heredity and a sense of group origins, thus suggesting that ethnicity was socially 'primordial,' if not biologically given, in character."¹⁹⁹

Despite differences in these two strands, which would have great implications for Locke and advocates for school desegregation, both assumed that race was a social category rather than a biological given. The problem with the early theories of ethnicity, a dilemma that persists to this day, is that the "new paradigm was solidly based in the framework of European (white) ethnicity" and could not grasp the ways in which racial inequality is dissimilar from ethnic inequality.²⁰⁰ Locke made a crucial intervention in this debate. On the one hand, like Du Bois, he understood that the issue of racial discrimination was directly linked to the health of the polity, emphasizing: "Racial discrimination...is even more of a challenge to the health and prospects of general democracy than a mere indictment of special plea in behalf of the Negro community."²⁰¹ On the other hand, he worked voraciously to condemn hegemonic "historical rationalizations" and "racial myths" that posited Europe as the yardstick against which all cultures and races must be measured.²⁰²

Illuminating the differences between Lockean cosmopolitanism and cultural pluralism, especially his emphasis on “education for deliberative democracy,” and the ethnic and cultural pluralist theories asserted by Myrdal and Kallen is useful.²⁰³ Myrdal was a staunch believer in the idea that the Negro problem would be solved via integration into the American polity. He wrote:

If America in actual practice could show the world a progressive trend by which the Negro would finally become integrated into modern democracy, all mankind would be given faith again—it would have reason to believe that peace, progress, and order are feasible. America would have a spiritual power many times stronger than all her financial and military resources—the power of the trust and support of all good people on earth. America is free to choose whether the Negro shall remain her liability or become her opportunity.²⁰⁴

This differs from a Lockean conception of cosmopolitanism, which promotes both unity and particularity. In Locke’s understanding there was no need to integrate the Negro into modern democracy because no nation or culture should retain dominance over others.²⁰⁵

Locke would criticize assertions such as Myrdal’s as “cloaked impositions of power,” and argued for the “need to counteract domination through education.”²⁰⁶ In addition, Myrdal sought racial integration in the U.S. in order to gain international prestige and military power, as opposed to Locke’s ideal of a “tempered national identity.” In a fascinating twist, Linda O’Neill asserts that Locke’s conception of cultural pluralism also differed from that of Kallen. O’Neill argues, Kallen often explained cultural pluralism via a metaphor of the United States as an orchestra with each ethnic group acting as a different instrument. Locke, however, used a metaphor of “a prism breaking light into many hues without destroying the light itself.” O’Neill concludes, “In all likelihood, had Locke used the orchestral metaphor, he would have explicitly recognized racist exclusions, dangers, and risks associated with African-American tone’s and timbres.”²⁰⁷ As O’Neill’s point illustrates, Locke sought to avoid the pitfalls that have continued to plague ethnicity theorists: the shrouded maintenance of white supremacy and the failure to point out that the conception of ethnicity differs from the “sociohistorical process” of racial exclusion.²⁰⁸

Locke was continually frustrated over what both the assimilationist and cultural pluralist views had to offer, most notably because white culture was still imagined to be at the center of the racial universe. According to Locke, “Under such circumstances, most cultural divergence is interpreted as cultural inferiority, and the appreciation of cultural interaction and indebtedness becomes almost completely obscured.”²⁰⁹ For both Kallen and Myrdal, questions loomed over how to incorporate minorities into the dominant society. However, Locke argued that such questions were a result of the tensions between universalism and particularity that have plagued Western thought. Contrary to his critic’s assertions, Locke was somewhat critical of Western consciousness because it is based on the premise that man was at war with a natural order that was totally indifferent to human needs. As a result, human freedom coincided with the domination of the natural order, and—as persons of color were denied access to the category of human—colonization of the globe.²¹⁰ He emphasizes, “The appropriation of the earth and the domination of so-called primitive people by Westerners armed with an imposing technology therefore represented a needless and

dehumanizing psychopathology that defeated its own purpose and oppressed those who knew another, more satisfying way of life."²¹¹

Locke was also critical of a neo-Kantian assertion that culture was a noetic realm uncontaminated by human use.²¹² Locke instead thought that the cultural realm was socially constructed, messy, and constantly in flux. Taken to their logical conclusions, assimilationist theories subtly upheld modalities of domination under the banner of neutrality, while Kallen's cultural pluralism did not recognize the particularity of the individual. Locke offered an opposing point of view, asserting:

What the contemporary mind stands greatly in need of is the divorce of the association of uniformity with the notion of the universal, and the substitution of the notion of equivalence. Sameness in difference may be a difficult concept for us,—it is. But the difficulty is historical and traditional, and is the specific blight and malady of the modern Western mind. I take it for granted that the desire and effort to reach universality in the characteristic modern and western way would be fatal if possible, and is fortunately impossible in practice.²¹³

According to Locke, the result of these paradigms of thought—especially assimilationist thinking—was the further dehumanization of the Negro due to the imposition of a restrictive crisis requiring African-Americans to choose between blackness, notions of self, and Americanness. In the words of Everett H. Akam, "The irony of this choice lay in the subsequent expectation that the price of identity entailed either a psychic or physical departure from the very country and culture that black Americans helped to build."²¹⁴

Locke refused to believe that white culture was culture *par excellence*, and argued that African-American culture had qualities that whites should "adopt or recognize as worthy."²¹⁵ Thus, he praised the historical efforts in such works as Carter G. Woodson's *The Negro in Our History* for providing a "public service" of "developing a popular interest in Negro history" and "[stimulating] race pride directly in terms of a knowledge of the salient facts about the Negro's historical past."²¹⁶ Locke's response to this dilemma, a war between assimilationist thinking and a schizophrenic Negro duality, was the development of a "cosmopolitan culture as a public discourse." This was to be done via a "critical theory of society rooted in aesthetic vision," through the activities of what Locke called the "New Negro."²¹⁷

Onward Pedagogical Soldier: Locke and the New Negro

Unlike his predecessors Frederick Douglass and W.E.B. Du Bois, Locke did not identify the Negro as a "problem." Locke, however, took into account the ways in which these authors recognized the essence of the problem Negro. Douglass posited that the problem status of the Negro had been essentially situational, stemming from the Negro's oppressed and uneducated condition during slavery.²¹⁸ Du Bois went a step further and suggested that ontology imbues circumstance. In other words, the Negro's circumstance is predicated upon the fact that white society constantly calls the very being of the Negro into question.²¹⁹ As opposed to these authors, Booker T. Washington refused to posit the Negro as being a problem. Washington argued that the Negro would gain power as a result of America's meritocratic democracy, and "that merit, no matter under what skin found, is, in the long run, recognized and rewarded."²²⁰ As a result, contrary to Douglass and Du Bois, Washington advanced an educational

model premised on the idea that the Negro needed to be trained to work harder and avoid the pitfalls of political struggle.

Locke asserted that the Negro was an American fact and not a problem. The American racial situation did not call for the designation of a problem people, but rather the attention to a people with problems, something all persons on the Earth must confront regardless of race, class, sexuality, and/or creed. In other words, the Negro was and is a participant in the “joint endeavor” that is the formation of the American Republic.²²¹ Locke himself claimed, “It is unfortunately too easy, especially if one’s approach to the Negro is through what is written about him, to forget that behind the problem there stands, after all, a human being.”²²² This human being already had plenty to offer to the American project. Thus, as opposed to Washington, Locke would find great value in Negro connections to Africa, denying any sense of inferiority and affirming Negro cultural productions. To be clear, this was not the celebration of a primitive and mythological African state of nature.²²³ Rather, Locke’s intent was to rightfully alter the public discourse around the status of the Negro in America, as well as affirm the worth of Negro cultural productions.²²⁴

For Locke the problems afflicting the Negro were both situational and ontological. They were situational due to slavery, reconstruction, and segregation. Due to the existence of what Locke called a “social purgatory” within the American society, “the Negro endured titanic toil, the complete transformation of his ways of life, and the stress of an unplanned, begrudged, *but quite redeeming* assimilation of the white man’s civilization and religion.”²²⁵ There is, however, a paradox in Locke’s line of thinking. Though the Negro had been thrown into a social purgatory, this status had a redeeming quality. Locke’s redemption is analogous to a Du Boisian notion of redemption, or the idea that a beneficial cultural exchange occurs between white and black persons in America.²²⁶ Locke reasoned that the term “Negro Problem” was in fact a misnomer. It was an “American problem” because the interaction between white and black persons was and continues to be dialectical. In true dialectical fashion, Locke suggested, “There is this double strand running through the whole scheme of the American race problem...[a] parallelism by which every white move has its black counterpart, every black stitch, its white counter-stitch.”²²⁷ This is an early articulation of what Locke would later develop into his theory of cultural contact.

Locke reasoned that the Negro was a problem in the ontological sense due to two factors: the association of all culture specifically with European culture, and the regulatory-mythological formation known as the “Old Negro.” The former of these issues is more relevant to Locke’s discussion on cultural pluralism. However, we can briefly say for now that Locke’s human—who possessed a certain degree of plasticity—was forged as individuals came into what Locke called the “phenomena of race contact.” While race contact was often described as something biologically abnormal during his time, Locke argued that the study of the phenomena of race contact and exchange provided crucial insight into the ways in which human societies develop, change, and are destroyed.²²⁸ European imperialism, along with Western thought, prevented this exchange as long as the idea that no exchanges occurred was maintained. Locke writes:

European imperialism has been supported by, or rather has generated a particularly advantageous official philosophy, a colonial-mindedness, assuming

very typically the attitude of cultural superiority, which, like the religious fanaticism of the early Moslems, has greatly facilitated the success of expansion. It is this predominant and now chronic attitude which has stood in the way of much reciprocity of cultural exchange between European and non-European peoples. European culture contacts for this whole period, therefore, have been typically characterized by unequal rather than reciprocal cultural influence upon the other countries and races which were contacted.²²⁹

For Locke, white supremacy retains its degree of power to the extent that the belief that cultural exchanges did not take place is perpetuated.

Locke described the state and function of the mythological “Old Negro” when he articulated the development of what he called the “New Negro.” However, Locke’s “New Negro” was not so new. The term New Negro was used by whites to describe African-American’s who had stepped out of their social and political places in the wake of the Civil War.²³⁰ Booker T. Washington also used the term.²³¹ However, Locke’s conception of the New Negro moved beyond stepping out of one’s place towards a more complex assertion of self that did not rest purely on race, and consequently appealed to the universal. Locke suggested that the mythological Old Negro, like the grotesque and asexual mammy or the lazy sambo, served the function of both dehumanizing and regulating the activities of African-American’s in the wake of Reconstruction:

The Old Negro had long become more of a myth than a man. The Old Negro, we must remember, was a creature of moral debate and historical controversy. His has been a stock figure perpetuated as an historical fiction partly in innocent sentimentalism, partly in deliberate reactionism.²³²

However, Locke did not overlook the social force of the myth of the Old Negro. African-American’s would contribute to their own dehumanization by taking up and living the suggested stereotypes of the Old Negro. Illuminating the problematics of Du Boisian split subjectivity, he continues:

The Negro himself has contributed his share to this through a sort of protective social mimicry forced upon him by the adverse circumstances of dependence. So for generations in the mind of America, the Negro has been more of a formula than a human being—a something to be argued about, condemned or defended, to be “kept down,” or “in his place,” or “helped up,” to be worried with or worried over, harassed or patronized, a social bogey or a social burden. The thinking Negro even has been induced to share this same general attitude, to focus his attention on controversial issues, to see himself in the distorted perspective of a social problem. *His shadow, so to speak, has been more real to him than his personality.*²³³

This claim that the Negro would be more of a spectral problem than a human personality—especially for those involved in education and the social sciences—has been a recurring theme in African-American critical thought. For instance, Ralph Ellison would make the same argument in a review of Myrdal’s *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*. Ellison stated, “In our society it is not unusual for a Negro to experience a sensation that he does not exist in the real world at all. He seems, rather, to exist in a nightmarish fantasy of the white American mind as a phantom that the white mind seeks unceasingly, by means both crude and subtle, to lay

to rest.”²³⁴ According to Locke, however, the Old Negro functioned as a discourse.²³⁵ The discourse of the Old Negro structured, and continues to structure, our understanding of what it means to be black, creates particular persons and entities (the sambo and mammy of the past, and the hip hop youth, welfare queen, and black athlete of today), and is at the center of debates surrounding authentic and inauthentic blackness.

Locke’s formulation of the Old Negro still leaves one wondering what degree of agency exists for African-Americans to escape this discourse, as even Locke stated that this myth has been “forced upon [the Negro] by the adverse circumstances of dependence” and as a means of protection.²³⁶ The answer lies in the development of what Locke termed the “New Negro.” Whereas the Old Negro produced artistic works in reaction to assumed Negro inferiority, works that essentially pleaded for the recognition of humanity, the New Negro espouses a universal claim to the human experience that transcends the confines of race. In this way, Locke sought to produce a critical theory of society and put it into practice not through militant politics (Du Bois) or industrial education (Washington), but through aesthetic and cosmopolitan educational movements that challenged artists to “speak as Negroes” rather than for Negroes, and dared schools to provide a space for honest cultural exchange.²³⁷

Locke also criticized the artistic racial propaganda championed by other African-American intellectuals, such as Du Bois. Such works engaged in a dangerous politics of respectability that continually sought the disproof of stereotypes at the expense of limiting artistic expression. “In other words,” as Akam suggests, “white standards retained their power by defining the very terms of racial expression.”²³⁸ Curiously, scholars such as Huggins have critiqued the Old/New Negro analogy, and disparaged Locke on the basis that the Old Negro metaphor was “a mere convenience of mind,” and that Locke was implying “some inadequacy in the past.” Huggins continues, “The so called Old Negro was merely carried within the bosom of the New as a kind of self-doubt, perhaps self-hate. How can one take up the promotion of race (or nationality) through art without exposing this doubt?”²³⁹ However, Locke’s Old Negro was not so much an ontological subject as much as a regulatory myth. Helbling asserts, “What was new about the New Negro was essentially a *consciousness* that all that had been said and believed in the past had little to do with the true humanity and self-worth of black Americans.”²⁴⁰

Perhaps the following illustrations will help clarify Locke’s point. Locke claimed that examples of the New Negro phenomenon could be found in the work of Harlem Renaissance writers, including Langston Hughes, Zora Neal Hurston, and Richard Bruce Nugent. For example, Nugent’s short story “Smoke, Lilies and Jade” defied the politics of respectability by focusing on the nightly wanderings of a young bisexual man and his sexual exploits with another young man by the name of Beauty. In a statement that still holds true today, Nugent emphasized, “You didn’t call a man beautiful. I did.”²⁴¹ Even though *Fire!!*, the publication that “Smoke, Lilies, and Jade” appeared in, critiqued the elitism often championed by Locke, he looked favorably upon the publication. In fact, he was one of the only Harlem Renaissance patrons who positively reviewed *Fire!!*, stating that “its strong sex radicalism...will shock many well wishers and elate some of our adversaries, but the young Negro evidently repudiates any special

moral burden of proof along with any other social disabilities that public opinion saddled upon his fathers."²⁴²

Locke also cited Richard Wright's work as another New Negro example. In the case of *Native Son*, Locke believed that Wright was locating the human universal experience through the particular racial experience of Bigger Thomas. He reasoned: Beginning with the broader social identifications of *Native Son*, and the social discoveries of common-denominator human universals between Negro situations and others...artistic expression with Negro's has become increasingly sounder, more objective and less racialistic...but withal even more racial in the better sense of being more deeply felt and projected. This third dimension of objective universality...is the ultimate desideratum for a literature that seeks universal appeal and acceptance.²⁴³

When reflecting on how Bigger came to be, Wright wrote, "There was that American part of Bigger which is the heritage of us all, the part of him which we get from our seeing and hearing, from school, from the hopes and dreams of our friends. He is that part of America that people never spoke of but take for granted."²⁴⁴ Locke argued that the obsession with recognition engages in a politics of respectability that interferes with one's ability to tell the truth. Authors such as Nugent and Wright moved the Negro out of the status of being a problem unto itself towards that of a personality that is transferable to that of the entire human experience.

Nevertheless, we should not assume that Locke's critique of a politics of respectability freed him from pressuring writers to submit to his own aesthetic program, one that involved the continual search for African roots and "an eye towards being incorporated into the American tossed salad."²⁴⁵ This activity is illustrated in Locke's dealings with Claude McKay.²⁴⁶ In addition, Locke was ambivalent about the New Negro, fearing that African-Americans might begin to look for opportunities and political programs outside of "traditional American values and institutions" and that this could result in a heightened sense of racial superiority on the part of African-Americans and reactionary hostility and violence on the part of whites.²⁴⁷ Locke cautioned that the elaborate dreams of the New Negro could easily transform into a social nightmare. In spite of his own limitations and warnings, Locke's arguments concerning the New Negro are still useful. By choosing not to be defined purely by race, Locke sought elevation from the level of being a problem to that of having a rich and complex personality, a sign of individual freedom and cultural maturity.

The transformation from Old Negro to New Negro, or from problem to rich and malleable personality, is a driving force behind Locke's educational thought. Locke urges us to rethink the ways that we go about educating people of color, especially African-Americans. Although Locke was primarily interested in the aesthetic, he was well aware—as evidenced though the various types of courses he taught at Howard—that African Americans were in need of a liberal and creative pedagogical program rather than an education that was totally prescribed. Contrary to the educational thought of both Du Bois and Washington, Locke reasoned that there was no one specific type of education, be it political or industrial, that the Negro needed. He insists:

The question [on Negro education] resolved itself often into the question of 'what kind' of education the Negro most needed,' or was 'best fitted for,' or was most 'worthy of public support,' instead of the position backed equally by the best

educational idealism and common-sense, that the Negro, like any other constituency, needed all types of education that were not actually obsolete in American educational practice.²⁴⁸

In other words, Locke's contribution to educational thought, via the Old/New Negro trope, is to point out that a *problem* is educated in a different way and via a dissimilar philosophy than a complex, malleable, and rich human *personality*. Locke urges us to consider the implications of the ways that African-Americans are represented in past and present debates regarding education and cultural pluralism. After reconsidering Locke's work, questions should be asked concerning what type of African-American is being talked about, why, and how African-Americans figure into the discourse. However, if you think that the Old Negro trope has vanished in our supposed post racial society, think again. As Gloria Ladson-Billings argues, the Old Negro has metamorphosed in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries into the culturally deprived, disadvantaged, underrepresented, and at-risk child. Ladson-Billings makes the claim that this discourse continues because African-Americans are thought of as a "distinct racial group" that does not have a "distinct culture." The ironic result, Ladson-Billings claims, is that "it is presumed that African-American children are exactly like white children but just need a little extra help."²⁴⁹

In line with Ladson-Billings, Locke would criticize such an approach to African-American students because not only are students treated as problems, but white cultural dominance also remains hidden behind a curtain of good educational intentions. Locke would not stop there, however, because he also moves us to ask questions of how white children are also talked about and pedagogically approached. In addition, he would criticize pedagogical practices that teach directly to the experience of African-American students without helping them establish cultural citizenship. Dare we say that a pedagogical approach that insists that African-American children must be taught a certain type of curriculum (be it hip hop pedagogy, culturally relevant pedagogy, or otherwise) actually perpetuates the Lockean myth of the Old Negro at the cost of further dehumanization? Rudolph Alexander Kofi Cain offers an interesting interpretation of Locke's possible relationship with culturally relevant pedagogy and Afrocentrism. While on the surface it may appear that Afrocentrism, as defined by Molefi Asante, would appear at odds with Lockean cultural pluralism, Cain argues otherwise. He asserts that Afrocentric pedagogy "is grounded in the experiences of the African person, as opposed to phenomena being viewed from the perspectives and experiences of Europeans."²⁵⁰ In my own estimation, Locke would agree with such pedagogical methods only if they sought to produce a cosmopolitan citizenry and enabled the student to approach a diverse body of knowledge without being regulated by the tyranny of identity. That is, as long as Afrocentrism did not constitute the totality of the educational program and did not produce another centrism on par with Eurocentrism. Locke continues, "Many a well-intentioned friend of the Negro and of educational progress still thinks of Negro education largely in terms of something special and private rather than something basically standard and public, but by the right of insistence the public conception in this regard must be brought to par."²⁵¹ An opposing point of view may argue that these questions are irrelevant, because integration always results in the subordinate other having to take on the epistemological and ontological standpoint of the dominate

culture. However, Locke criticized this stance as well though his position on cultural pluralism.

Freedom of the Spirit in the Midst of Regulation: Lockean Cultural Pluralism

Locke was committed to a “Whitmanesque democratic America,” and therefore struggled all his life to reconcile the ideals of difference and assimilation.²⁵² He fervently believed in the oneness of the human species. However, he also thought that this oneness should not be mistaken for uniformity through cultural or political tyranny. Locke was perceptive enough to know that the terms “humanity” and “universal” often obscured hegemonic dominance: that to become human and enter into a universal ethos one must offer up differences and be “digested into identification” with those in power.²⁵³ He was also constantly enraged about the penalization of others based upon their differences. In some ways this tension is indicative of the contradiction of his profession and racial subjectivity, not even to mention sexuality. Western philosophy demands attention to monism and the universal, while Locke’s status as a Negro in America contradicted the commonsensical philosophic claim to universality. Whatever the cause, this tension would push Locke to adopt a philosophy underpinned by cultural pluralism, and the majority of his arguments hinged on the notion that various groups can maintain their cultural uniqueness and still make valuable contributions to American society as a whole. In other words, as opposed to Douglass, Washington, Du Bois, and Garvey, Locke was more concerned with a type of cultural equality rather than a political and economic equality. However, Locke’s emphasis on culture should not detract from that fact that he thought that remedying the social conditions of African-Americans in the economic and political spheres was important.²⁵⁴

Speaking at Locke’s memorial, Kallen summed up Lockean cultural pluralism by stating, “[Cultural pluralism] postulates that individuality is indefeasible, that differences are primary, and that consequently human beings have an indefensible right to their differences and should not be penalized for their differences...”²⁵⁵ Locke thought of cooperation and ideological peace as occurring in five different ways. The first was illustrated through the U.S. policy of containment, in which what is different is held at bay though force. The second was co-existence, exemplified though global balance of power politics. The third was passive toleration, which essentially meant that the other was recognized but not necessarily liked, a politics of “live and let live.” The final phase of co-existence signified by Locke’s pluralism involved a “voluntary cooperative relationship where each...also helps, and is helped, by others in living,” or a truly cosmopolitan culture.²⁵⁶ Locke was to advocate for a cosmopolitan culture created through a processes of collaboration, and a cultural citizenship that involved different racial and ethnic groups working together, sharing, and exchanging their gifts.²⁵⁷ This was to be done though aesthetic and educational movements because Locke believed that both these areas preceded democratic participation in the American polity.

Locke understood culture as a site of both beneficial and detrimental historical and political conflict. Conflict due to “cultural propaganda” and biases that posited one culture as being more or less civilized than another.²⁵⁸ However, Locke approached social history from the vantage point that cultural contact had a great deal to do with the development of civilization. He asserted, “Cultures may develop complexity through

certain internal development and variation, but by far the main source of cultural growth and development seems always to have been through the forces of external contact.” Civilization grows as cultures come into contact with each other and exchange new ideas and practices. Segregation—be it de jure, de facto, or self-imposed—was thus the ultimate evil in Locke’s philosophy because he reasoned that culture develops through the forces of external contact rather than in isolation. He continued, “Civilization is largely the accumulative product and residue of the ever-widening process of cultural contact, interchange, and fusion.”²⁵⁹ Without this constant exchange human civilization would cease to exist.

Locke’s attention to cultural pluralism, like his thoughts on the New Negro, has great implications for educational thought. There are two problems that Locke identified with the idea of culture in American society. The first problem is that culture as a concept has often been conflated with European civilization. In other words, through the imperial project Europe presented itself as bestowing culture among all of the societies that it came into contact with. Locke critiques this idea by claiming:

Even in its more or less one-sided process, a certain amount of reciprocal influence and interchange has persisted. Modern imperialism has bred, in addition to its half-castes, its hybrid and border-line cultures. A number of complex cultural reactions have resulted, according to the variations in modern colonial contacts and the divergent degrees of cultural level and resistance encountered.²⁶⁰

This “false identification of civilization with one particular type of culture” has been at the foundation of African-American fears of integration; the concern being that one will be assimilated out of existence.²⁶¹ Second, America shifts between a having a “melting pot” and “reciprocity” conception of culture.²⁶² In comparison to that of the Negro, Locke argued that other cultural traditions have melted into the larger American culture with the cost of losing distinctiveness. However, Negro culture had not melted into the greater American culture due to white supremacy, slavery, and segregation. When America as a nation decided that it needed to have distinct native American cultural productions it turned to the Negro because “with the almost complete obliteration of the American Indian and the lapse of most of the folk cultures that could have been preserved, we still had in the Negro folk spirit and its idioms a vital folk tradition in the land.”²⁶³

This complex shift between the melting pot approach and building an appreciation for Negro culture worked as a double-edged sword, especially in the area of education. On one hand, an education that highlighted the both favorable and unfavorable characteristics of a cultural group could lead to greater cultural appreciation. On the other hand, as Diana Selig notes, true cultural appreciation and exchange could not happen in separate schools. Selig adds, “Locke saw ‘flagrant inconsistencies and contradictions’ in white Americans’ ability to appreciate ‘the Negro’s spiritual products’ and at the same time ‘to despise his person and exclude his normal society,’ claiming to love black culture but then ‘oppressing, terrorizing, and lynching him.’”²⁶⁴ Thus, within Locke’s work we see a tension between the need to retain cultural distinctiveness without that distinctiveness as being seen as pathological or exotic. The school would prove to be the site where the gap between these two positions could be bridged. Locke’s solution to the problem of racism in the twentieth-century was to

increase cultural exchange and contact in the school. However, this was not to come though the celebratory approach of culture envisioned by many advocates of multiculturalism today. Locke “preferred that information be incorporated into a liberal curriculum that addressed ‘the practical issues of group differences and group maladjustment’ and their ‘social causes and conditions’ rather than added separately to induce tolerance.”²⁶⁵ He passionately argued that schools needed to provide all students with a cosmopolitan experience. However, Locke also was hesitant to declare that the school was a site of change in and of itself, and argued that legal steps would have to be taken to end segregation so true cultural contact could take place. Thus, in Locke’s work we see an impassioned plea for integrated schooling to induce a factual cultural exchange, but also the notion that the school is not solely responsible for democratic change.

Locke’s philosophical orientation, underpinned by his writings on the New Negro and cultural pluralism, is still relevant to current debates concerning school integration. He first gives us new insights into the ways we go about teaching African-American children. Locke outlined three courses of action for the education of African-Americans. First, they could seek an education that prepared them for a particular profession. Second, they could be educated in a way that allowed, or forced, them to remain with their specific racial group. Finally, according to O’Neill, they could be educated to “challenge the assumptions of both assimilation and segregation in an attempt to construct democratic, cosmopolitan, and collaborative cultural groups.”²⁶⁶ In order for the latter to happen, African-Americans would have to be taught as personalities rather than problems, and this education could not be premised on a politics of respectability. Locke stated, “Really intelligent education of this sort will not shirk the problem of unfavorable and unpleasant group characteristics.”²⁶⁷ However, Locke also admitted that the “Dilemma of Segregation” also meant that African-American students would have to be thrown into the hell fire of mixed schools with “indifferent pedagogic attention from white teachers.” Locke argued that the advantages to this situation far outweighed the disadvantages, because the school was the “logical and perhaps the only effective instrument for corrective treatment of the situation.”²⁶⁸ Thus, the school existed as the cauldron of social change where cosmopolitan culture could be created. While Locke may have been speaking to us from the early twentieth-century, his words still resonate today.

Writing on Locke’s contributions, Selig notes, “Locke’s politics of race and culture was complex and evolving, revealing creative tensions between pragmatism and radicalism, between gradual and immediate solutions, between educational and material reforms.”²⁶⁹ Indeed, there are many tensions in Lockean thought that still haunt us today. For instance, his insistence that Negro folk culture is the only remaining culture able to contribute to the national culture of the United States of America is clearly problematic. Locke’s reasoning would lead to the conclusion that African-Americans had to remain in a situation of segregation in order to remain culturally distinct. Surely, as his thoughts on segregation illustrate, Locke was adverse to this conclusion, but it was a problem that he could not resolve. In addition, Locke’s argument that cultural distinctiveness should not be equated with social pathology would often fall on deaf ears without a rigorous critique of how hegemonic white dominance was to be undone. Locke offered that such a critique would take place

through aesthetic and educational movements, but even he knew this would not be enough. In an essay entitled “Harlem: Dark Weather Vane” written in 1936, he asserted:

[N]o cultural advance is safe without some sound economic underpinning, the foundation of a decent and reasonably secure average standard of living; and no emerging elite—artistic, professional, or mercantile—can suspend itself in thin air over the abyss of unemployed stranded in an over-expensive, disease-and crime ridden slum. It is easier to dally over black Bohemia or revel in the hardy survivals of Negro art and culture than to contemplate this dark Harlem of semi-starvation, mass exploitation and seething unrest. But turn we must. For there is no cure or saving magic in poetry and art, an emerging generation of talent, or in international prestige and interracial recognition, for unemployment or precarious marginal employment, for high rents, high mortality rates, civic neglect, capitalistic exploitation on the one hand and racial exploitation on the other.²⁷⁰

No doubt, Locke’s thinking was indeed infused with a certain degree of romanticism. However, it is quite clear that he knew the limits of his own critical program. In fact, although Locke was heavily interested in the political power of the cultural realm, he knew that social and political progress would also have to be made. This should not be an indication of a critical flaw in Lockean thought, but rather a signal of the intellectual struggles he engaged with in order to uplift both the Negro and the American polity as a whole.

How are we to measure Locke’s intellectual and pedagogical contributions, as well as his engagement in the cold war over humanity and the regulation of consciousness? As Harris notes, “Locke’s legacy is a picture of *homo humanitas* as a unified species with diverse ways of being in the world, a diversity endemic to its nature, but a diversity that need not lead to heinous cultural conflict.”²⁷¹ Locke took up the incredibly difficult task of trying to bridge the very old gap between *plurum* and *unum* that has plagued much of American political and social life. He pursued a career in philosophy, but rejected the scientific objectivity of western philosophy in favor of modes of inquiry and modalities of critique in the interest of society. There is much we can learn from Locke and his search for a diverse humanity and his efforts to reconcile claims of both the collective and the individual. His aesthetic thought continues to be incredibly relevant to scholars interested in the politics of African-American cultural production. Locke challenges us to think and rethink American education in an effort to support African-American children who dare to be themselves, as well as schools that can contribute to the creation of an American polity that can finally live up to its creed.

Despite these facts, Locke’s real battle regarding regulation of the self in terms of sexuality, and the feeling of needing to be recognized publicly was never resolved. There are a plethora of stories involving Locke’s homosexual antics: from assumed romances with Harlem renaissance writers to tales of him donning drag and parading down Washington, D.C.’s U Street corridor. Whether or not these stories are true is not really of the greatest concern. However, in line with Du Boisian double consciousness, Locke’s decision to regulate his homosexual self in order to “bask in the sunshine of public favor” meant that he too lost a sense of his humanity. Like so many other scholars, Locke forgot that he was not really fighting for the abstract ideas of race. His real conundrum involved saving his own life in the midst of a culture that told him that

both his race and sexual subjectivity were worthless. However, there is a shining light at the end of this tunnel. In 1949 Locke received a letter requesting financial support from a young, black, gay male writer who had chosen to leave everything, move to France, and “say Yes to life.”²⁷² The language of this letter reflects the fear involved in this decision:

I shan't even try to apologize for not having written sooner. I'm forced, in a way, to throw myself on your mercy and hope you'll understand. It's rather a lot to ask of you, for I'm compelled to hope that you are willing—not to say able, for I've given you very little help—to understand that my actions do not always and never wholly reflect what I would like to be or what I hope I am...I know you are not rich and you have a perfect right to be angry. And I am not a good investment, no-one knows better than I how problematical my future is.²⁷³

The man who wrote this letter left a pedagogical legacy of defiance and a praxis of courage so beautiful that it resonates throughout the final fifty years of the twentieth century. It is to James Baldwin and the shining pedagogy of high faggotry that we will now turn.

¹⁶⁴ Monáe, "Cold War."

¹⁶⁵ Leonard Harris, "Rendering the Text," in *The Philosophy of Alain Locke: Harlem Renaissance and Beyond*, ed. Leonard Harris (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 22.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁶⁷ Alain Locke Papers Box 164-105 Folder 8; Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

¹⁶⁸ Harris notes, "Hheads of state such as Léopold Senghor and Kwame Nkrumah; leaders such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, George Padmore, Paul Robeson, A. Philip Randolph, and Ralph Bunch; authors such as Charles S. Johnson, E. Franklin Frazier, Carter G. Woodson, and Arthur Schomburg; artistic giants such as Richard Wright, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Claude McKay, Sterling Brown, Jean Toomer, Aaron Douglass, Wallace Thurman, Roland Hayes, Myron O'Higgins, Ann Perry, Lena Horn, James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Chester Hines, Kelly Miller, Richmond Barthé, René Maran; philosophers ranging from Otto Abel to Horace Kallen to modern Afro-American philosophers Eugene Clay Holmes, William T. Fontaine, William Banner, Broadus Butler; and dignitaries ranging from Eleanor Roosevelt to Mary McLeod Bethune were all enriched by the frail traveling philosopher Locke." Harris, "Rendering the Text," 21. (1989, p. 21).

¹⁶⁹ Mills continues, "Blacks for example, constitute only about 1 percent of the philosophers in North American Universities—a hundred or so people out of more than ten thousand—and there are even fewer Latino, Asian American, and Native American philosophers. Surely this underrepresentation itself stands in need of an explanation, and in my opinion it can be traced in part to a conceptual array and a standard repertoire of concerns whose abstractness typically elides, rather than genuinely includes, the experience of racial minorities. Since (white) women have the demographic advantage in numbers, there are of course far more female philosophers in the profession than nonwhite philosophers (though still not proportionate to women's percentage of the population), and they have made far greater progress in developing alternative conceptualizations. Those African American philosophers who do work in moral and political theory tend either to produce general work indistinguishable from that of their white peers or to focus on local issues (affirmative action, the black 'underclass') or historical figures (W.E.B. Du Bois, Alain Locke) in a way that does not aggressively engage the broader debate." Mills, *The Racial Contract*, 2.

¹⁷⁰ Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: A Historical Analysis of the Failure of Black Leadership*, 437; Gates Jr., "The Trope of a New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black," 147; Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance*; Stuckey, *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America*.

¹⁷¹ Johnny Washington, *Alain Locke and Philosophy: A Quest for Cultural Pluralism* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), xxii.

¹⁷² Locke, "Unity through Diversity: A Bahá'i Principle," 135.

¹⁷³ Christopher Buck, *Alain Locke: Faith and Philosophy* (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 2005), 196.

¹⁷⁴ Quoted in *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ "An Interview with Bayard Rustin," *Open Hands: Journal of the Reconciling Congregation program* (1987): 14.

¹⁷⁶ Alain Locke, "Self-Criticism: The Third Dimension in Culture," *Phylon* 11, no. 4 (1950): 392.

¹⁷⁷ Alain *Locke, "Whither Race Relations?," *Journal of Negro Education* 13(1944): 405.

¹⁷⁸ Harris notes how Locke's life was full of enigmas. His original name was Arthur Locke, and while he was born on September 13, 1885, he used September 13, 1886 as his birth date. Harris & Molesworth offer an interesting story as to how Locke's name was changed. However, it is unclear as to why he chose to change his birth date.

Harris, "Rendering the Text," 3. Leonard Harris and Charles Molesworth, *Alain L. Locke: Biography of a Philosopher* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 5.

¹⁷⁹ Douglas K. Stafford, "Alain Locke: The Child, the Man, and the People," *Journal of Negro Education* 30, no. 1 (1961): 27.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*: 26-27.

¹⁸¹ Friedrich Wilhelm August Froebel is best known for creating the concept we now know as kindergarten.

¹⁸² Stafford, "Alain Locke: The Child, the Man, and the People," 28-29.

¹⁸³ Locke, "Unity through Diversity: A Bahá'í Principle," 136.

¹⁸⁴ Harris adds, "Locke was disaffected from his family's Episcopalian background and was seeking a spiritual home; one he seems to have eventually found, at least during the 1920's and 1930's, in the Bahá'í faith. On May 29th and 21st, 1921, for example, Locke participated in an Inter-Racial Amity conference, convened at the suggestion of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Mrs. Agnes S. Parsons in 1920 when she was on pilgrimage to Haifa. The Bahá'í belief in the unity of humanity was expressed in practical terms by inter-racial meetings (then a fairly unusual situation in Christian America). The Bahá'í belief in the ultimate spiritual unity among the plurality of religious faiths and the treatment of death as a passing into another present, instead of the traumatic ending of a condemned born sinner hoping for an uncertain redemption, were appealing to Locke." Harris, "Rendering the Text," 5.

¹⁸⁵ Eugene C Holmes, "Alain Leroy Locke: A Sketch," *The Phylon Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (1959): 82.

¹⁸⁶ Horace M. Kallen, "Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism," *The Journal of Philosophy* (1957): 122-23.

¹⁸⁷ Quoted in Everett H. Akam, "Community and Cultural Crisis: The "Transfiguring Imagination" Of Alain Locke," *Am Lit Hist* 3, no. 2 (1991): 257.

¹⁸⁸ Alain Locke, "The Problem of Classification in the Theory of Value" (Harvard University, 1918), 201.

¹⁸⁹ Harris and Molesworth, *Alain L. Locke: Biography of a Philosopher*, 132.

¹⁹⁰ Harris, "Rendering the Text," 31.

¹⁹¹ Alain Locke, "Values and Imperatives," in *The Philosophy of Alain Locke: Harlem Renaissance and Beyond*, ed. Leonard Harris (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 35. For a further understanding of Locke's critique of categories see Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*

¹⁹² Holmes, "Alain Leroy Locke: A Sketch," 83.

¹⁹³ Alain Locke Papers Box 164-163 Folder 4; Manuscript Division, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

¹⁹⁴ Harris, "Rendering the Text," 5-6. Curiously, Howard University makes no claim that this incident occurred. The Howard University Bibliography of Locke states the following, "Locke's career as a teacher began at Howard University in 1912 and extended over a period of forty-one years. In 1921 he became Head of the Department of Philosophy and held this position until his retirement in 1953. In that year, Locke was awarded the honorary Doctor of Humane Letters by Howard University." University Howard, "Alain Leroy Locke Bibliography," <http://wwwFOUNDERS.howard.edu/Locke.htm>.

¹⁹⁵ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1994), 15.

¹⁹⁶ Kallen writes on how he first used the term *cultural pluralism* in 1906 or 1907, when Locke was in a section of a class where Kallen worked as an assistant to Santayana. Kallen, "Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism," 119.

¹⁹⁷ Horace M. Kallen, *Culture and Democracy in America* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1924/1915).

¹⁹⁸ See E.C. Hughes et al., *Race and Culture, Vol 1 of the Collected Works of Robert E. Park* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1950); Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944); Edward Franklin Frazier, *The Negro in the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1957).

¹⁹⁹ Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 15.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 16. Omi and Winant continue, "Were the historical experiences which racial minority groups encountered similar to those of white Europeans? Were the trajectories for their perceived eventual incorporation and assimilation the same? To these questions ethnicity theorists generally answered yes. Many minority activists and movement groups, though, disagreed."

²⁰¹ Alain Locke, "Patterns of Negro Segregation [Review of the Book Patterns of Negro Segregation]," *The American Journal of Sociology* 49, no. 1 (1943): 95.

²⁰² Quoted in Stafford, "Alain Locke: The Child, the Man, and the People," 32.

²⁰³ Linda O'Neill, "Tempered Dreams: Alain Locke as Pluralist and Pragmatist," *Philosophical Studies in Education* 39(2008): 114.

²⁰⁴ Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, 39 & 1022.

²⁰⁵ *Locke, "Whither Race Relations?," 405.

²⁰⁶ Everett H. Akam, "Race Contacts and Interracial Relations: Lectures on the Theory and Practice of Race [Review of the Book Race Contacts and Interracial Relations: Lectures on the Theory and Practice of Race]," *The Journal of American History* 80, no. 2 (1993): 725; O'Neill, "Tempered Dreams: Alain Locke as Pluralist and Pragmatist," 114.

²⁰⁷ O'Neill, "Tempered Dreams: Alain Locke as Pluralist and Pragmatist," 108.

²⁰⁸ Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 1994.

²⁰⁹ Locke, *When People Meet: A Study in Race and Culture Contacts*, 9.

²¹⁰ Akam, "Community and Cultural Crisis: The "Transfiguring Imagination" Of Alain Locke," 264.

²¹¹ Ibid.: 265.

²¹² Ibid.: 258.

²¹³ Locke, "Unity through Diversity: A Bahá'í Principle," 135.

²¹⁴ Akam, "Community and Cultural Crisis: The "Transfiguring Imagination" Of Alain Locke," 262.

²¹⁵ Johnny Washington, "Alain Locke and Philosophy: A Quest for Cultural Pluralism [Review of the Book Alain Locke and Philosophy: A Quest for Cultural Pluralism]," *Journal Of Black Studies* 20, no. 4 (1990): 489.

²¹⁶ Carter G. Woodson, *The Negro in Our History* (Washington, D.C.: The Associated Publishers, INC., 1922); Alain Locke, "The Negro in Our History [Review of the Book the Negro in Our History]

, " *The Journal of Negro History* 12, no. 1 (1927): 101.

²¹⁷ Akam, "Community and Cultural Crisis: The "Transfiguring Imagination" Of Alain Locke," 258.

²¹⁸ Douglass makes this case after an incident when his Master, Mr. Auld, finds out that Douglass is being taught to read. Auld then proclaims, "If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master—to do as he is told to do. Learning would *spoil* the best nigger in the world. Now...if you teach that nigger...how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master. As to himself, it could do him no good, but a great deal of harm. It would make him discontented and unhappy." In light of this incident, Douglass understands that the slave is not inhuman, but kept in a dehumanizing condition because of the psychological trauma and mis-education necessary for the situation of slavery to exist. Douglass writes, "I now understood what had been to me a most perplexing difficulty—to wit, the white man man's power to enslave the black man." Douglass, *The Narrative Life of Frederick Douglass*, 20.

²¹⁹ Du Bois, "The Souls of Black Folk."

²²⁰ Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 40-41.

²²¹ Kallen, "Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism," 124; Alain Locke, *The Negro in America* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1933).

²²² Locke, *The Negro in America*, 40.

²²³ For a further explanation of the critique of mythological formations of an African past see Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*; E. Frances White, "Africa on My Mind: Gender, Counterdiscourse, and African-American Nationalism," in *Dark Continent of Our Bodies: Black Feminism and the Politics of Respectability* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2001).

²²⁴ Harris, "Rendering the Text," 7.

²²⁵ Locke, *The Negro in America*, 11.Emphasis added

²²⁶ Du Bois, "The Souls of Black Folk," 15-16.

²²⁷ Locke, *The Negro in America*, 17.

²²⁸ ———, *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations: Lectures on the Theory and Practice of Race*.

²²⁹ ———, *When People Meet: A Study in Race and Culture Contacts*, 87-88.

²³⁰ Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery*.

²³¹ Harris, "Rendering the Text," 6.

²³² Locke, "The New Negro," 3.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 3-4. Emphasis added

²³⁴ Ralph Ellison, "An American Dilemma: A Review," TeachingAmericanHistory.org, <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=554>.

²³⁵ By discourse, I am not referring to simply language and speech. Foucault would argue that discourse operates as a set of knowledge practices that carry values, classifications, and meanings that constitute a persons making, positioning, and representation. However, at the same time that a discourse produces power it also creates the means of being able to critique and expose that power. Foucault states, "Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it." Discourse is not just one system that must be opposed, but an ever changing and often oppositional *process*. Therefore, the thrust of Foucault's theory is that discourses operate in a polymorphous way, and that they are continually renewed, recreated, defended, and modified, as well as resisted, challenged limited, and altered. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 101.

²³⁶ Locke, "The New Negro," 3.

²³⁷ Mark Helbling, "Alain Locke: Ambivalence and Hope," *Phylon* (1960) 40, no. 3 (1979): 291; Locke, "Negro Youth Speaks," 48.

²³⁸ Akam, "Community and Cultural Crisis: The "Transfiguring Imagination" Of Alain Locke," 263. The subject of negative and positive images of African-Americans continues to be debated. In an argument quite similar to that of Locke's, Michele Wallace critiques the negative/positive dichotomy, stating: "First, since 'racism', or the widespread conviction that blacks are morally and/or intellectually inferior, defines the 'common sense' perception of blacks, a positive/negative image cultural formula means that the goal of cultural production becomes simply to reverse these already existing assumptions...Secondly, the negative/positive images conception is unable to contend with the important question of how African-American culture, which is a product of 'internal colonization,' constitutes an important variation on postcolonial discourse." This debate would benefit greatly from revisiting Locke's work. Michele Wallace, *Invisibility Blues: From Pop to Theory* (New York: Verso, 1993), 1-2.

²³⁹ Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance*, 65.

²⁴⁰ Helbling, "Alain Locke: Ambivalence and Hope," 293.

²⁴¹ Nugent's story, and his insistence to call a man by the name of Beauty, transgressed the sexual and gender based politics of the time. Indeed, more work needs to be done on the homosexual politics of the Harlem Renaissance. Locke's sexuality, and his possible sexual interest in some male Harlem Renaissance writers, has long been a subject of debate. Carbado, McBride, and Weise, "1900-1950 the Harlem Renaissance: "...the Perfumed Orchid of the New Negro Movement." ", 11; Richard Bruce Nugent, "Smoke, Lilies, and Jade," in *Black Like Us: A Century of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual*

African-American Fiction, ed. Devon W. Carbado, Dwight McBride, and Don Weise (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 2002).

²⁴² Quoted in Harris and Molesworth, *Alain L. Locke: Biography of a Philosopher*, 246-47.

²⁴³ Locke, "Self-Criticism: The Third Dimension in Culture," 392.

²⁴⁴ Richard Wright, "How 'Bigger' Was Born.," in *Native Son* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991), 451.

²⁴⁵ Charles W. Scruggs, "Alain Locke and Walter White: Their Struggle for Control of the Harlem Renaissance," 14, no. 3 (1980): 97.

²⁴⁶ Scruggs outlines the disagreement: "In his dealings with Alain Locke, McKay found further cause for his dissatisfaction for the Harlem Renaissance. McKay had submitted, at Locke's request, several poems for the 'Special Negro Number' of *The Survey Geographic*. Locke found one poem, 'Mulatto,' too 'strong' for this white journal. McKay was furious that the poem was excised, and he complained to Locke that 'Mulatto' was 'not stronger than 'If We Must Die' which *The Liberator* first published. 'I guess if The Liberator had not set that example not a Negro publication would have enough of the 'guts' you mention to publish it! It isn't *The Survey* that hasn't guts enough. It is you.' For taking 'such a weak line,' McKay called Locke 'a dyed-in-the-wool pussy footing professor.'" However, Scruggs claims that Locke's refusal of the poems was less about his courage and more about upholding his commitment to cultural pluralism, and McKay's "romantic individualism was simply too anarchic to deal with." Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Helbling, "Alain Locke Ambivalence and Hope," 297; Locke, *The New Negro: An Interpretation*.

²⁴⁸ Alain Locke, "Negro Education Bids for Par," in *The Philosophy of Alain Locke: Harlem Renaissance and Beyond* ed. Leonard Harris (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 244.

²⁴⁹ Ladson-Billings, *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African-American Children*, 9.

²⁵⁰ Rudolph Alexander Kofi Cain, *Alain Leroy Locke: Race, Culture, and the Education of African-American Adults* (New York: Rodopi, 2004), 97. According to Asante, "Afrocentricity is a frame of reference wherein phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person. The Afrocentric approach seeks in every situation the appropriate centrality of the African person. In education this means that teachers provide students the opportunity to study the world and its people, concepts, and history from an African world view...By seeing themselves as subjects rather than objects of education...African-American students come to see themselves not merely as seekers of knowledge but as integral participants in it." Asante, "The Afrocentric Idea in Education," 171.

²⁵¹ Locke, "Negro Education Bids for Par," 242-43.

²⁵² Holmes, "Alain Leroy Locke: A Sketch," 85.

²⁵³ Kallen, "Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism," 120.

²⁵⁴ Washington, *Alain Locke and Philosophy: A Quest for Cultural Pluralism*, xxii.

²⁵⁵ Kallen, "Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism," 120.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.: 127.

²⁵⁷ Locke, *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations: Lectures on the Theory and Practice of Race*; Akam, "Race Contacts and Interracial Relations: Lectures on the Theory and Practice of Race [Review of the Book *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations: Lectures on the Theory and Practice of Race*]."

²⁵⁸ Locke, *When People Meet: A Study in Race and Culture Contacts*, 4.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 8; Akam, "Community and Cultural Crisis: The "Transfiguring Imagination" Of Alain Locke."

²⁶² Locke, *The Negro in America*, 48.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 49.

²⁶⁴ Diana Selig, *Americans All: The Cultural Gifts Movement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 218.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 220.

²⁶⁶ O'Neill, "Tempered Dreams: Alain Locke as Pluralist and Pragmatist," 109.

²⁶⁷ Alain Locke, "Minorities and the Social Mind," *Progressive Education* 12(1935): 143-44.

²⁶⁸ _____, "The Dilemma of Segregation," *Journal of Negro Education* 4, no. 3 (1935): 408-09.

²⁶⁹ Selig, *Americans All: The Cultural Gifts Movement*, 216.

²⁷⁰ Quoted in Harris and Molesworth, *Alain L. Locke: Biography of a Philosopher*, 303-04.

²⁷¹ Harris, "Rendering the Text," 22.

²⁷² Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 5.

²⁷³ Alain Locke Papers Box 164-12 Folder 17; Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

Chapter Five
Faggot Pedagogy:
James Baldwin and the Praxis of Defiance

Tell me are you bold enough to reach for love?
—Janelle Monáe²⁷⁴

The dawn of the American twenty-first century has been marked by furious debates concerning the status of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals. While the American white gay community has made a conscious effort to make itself visible in the popular political discourse, too often black LGBTQ individuals and their political concerns are rendered invisible. This is true not only regarding the marriage debate, but also on issues concerning hate crimes, HIV/AIDS, health care, and access to education. While this invisibility is in part due to America's white supremacist structure, the peculiar relationship between blackness, recognition, and the human can be implicated in rendering black LGBTQ individuals as ontologically defunct. The crisis of recognition that has been subsumed within the categories of race, gender, and sexuality has certainly influenced the life paths of black LGBTQ individuals, with many being caught between the rock of an assumed racial and sexual inferiority and the hard place of acceptance under the condition of high sexual exoticism. Regarding educational institutions, the crisis of recognition manifests in a notion that some black gay men find a pseudo acceptance because they are viewed as less threatening than their heterosexual counterparts.

This crisis has been exacerbated by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which has created a situation where a highly stigmatized disease established a deep sense of sexual worthlessness. Indeed, many black LGBTQ persons are *taught* via pedagogical projects of gossip imbued with fear that they will contract HIV if they decide to pursue a life path that moves away from the politics of respectability required so one can *appear* to be an upstanding black person in America. In addition, throughout the latter half of the twentieth century differing camps within the black community posited black LGBTQ persons as the ultimate enemy of black liberatory politics and the perpetrators of colonial mentalities. Despite all this, there is much to learn from black LGBTQ individuals who have made a conscious effort, through both their writings and activism, to "Say Yes to Life."²⁷⁵ In other words, it is possible to locate innovative political/pedagogical projects in the life-work of black LGBTQ persons, particularly black gay men.

In this chapter, I revisit the work of James Baldwin in order to understand how the process of coming to terms with himself not only influenced his thoughts on education, but also how his particular perspective as a self-actualized faggot navigating the American racial menagerie influenced the development of his critical educational thought. James Baldwin's life is an example of what Paulo Freire called "conscientização," a process of "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality."²⁷⁶ The question we must seriously ask ourselves as educators is if schools as they are possess the ability to establish such an "independent self-consciousness" or if they actually

perpetuate a fear of individual freedom.²⁷⁷ Reflecting on how a literal straightjacket of recognition is produced within the context of a society that appears magnanimous, Baldwin wrote:

Ancient maps of the world—when the world was flat—inform us, concerning that void where America was waiting to be discovered, HERE BE DRAGONS. Dragons may not have been here then, but they are certainly here now, breathing fire, belching smoke; or, to be less literary and biblical about it, attempting to intimidate the mores, morals, and morality of this particular and peculiar time and space. Nor, since this country is the issue of the entire globe and is also the most powerful nation currently to be found on it, are we speaking only of this time and place. And it can be said that the monumental struggles being waged in our time and not only in this place resemble, in awesome ways, the ancient struggle between those who insisted that the world was flat and those who apprehended that it was round.²⁷⁸

To be clear, I am not interested in an exposé on who Baldwin slept with, but rather how the tension of living with and possibly transcending the policing power of identity creates a particular epistemological and ontological perspective, one where a powerful sense of worthiness comes not from without but from within. This notion of inner worthiness may seem ethereal to many academics and educators who are primarily concerned with creating successful students via the superficial coining of slogans, such as “the achievement gap” and “No Child Left Behind.” However, establishing a sense of inner worthiness and subsequently having the ability to take responsibility for one’s own life is a real issue for those who have had to literally fight and die to be who they are. For example, in the midst of educational debates that focus primarily on test scores and student performance have we really paused and thought about how the educational system as an organizational apparatus prevents the creation and maintenance of healthy human relationships, especially between men?

Considering how the upright male is linked to one who is devoid of emotion and feeling, this may seem an odd question to ask. But it is in fact very important when we begin to consider the experiences of young men who fail to navigate the educational system and are subsequently labeled as losers. We interpret this problem as one of personal motivation, but Baldwin pushes us to consider that deeper issues are in fact at play. “The male desire for a male roams everywhere, avid, desperate, unimaginably lonely, culminating often in drugs, piety, madness or death.”²⁷⁹ The subject of desire is one that, I believe, is tied to how we maneuver within and between interpersonal relationships, and therefore requires conversations concerning what does and what does not constitute *love*. A deep and authentic sense of self-love must be at the core of all educational endeavors because our sense of inner worthiness determines how we conduct ourselves in the context of interpersonal and pedagogical relationships. In the words of drag queen extraordinaire RuPaul Andre Charles, “If you can’t love yourself, how in the hell can you love somebody else? Can I get a Amen?!”²⁸⁰

Debates surrounding sexuality have been central to African American pedagogical struggles since slaves were brought to the Americas. This approach is informed by Roderick A. Ferguson’s critique of Michel Foucault. Ferguson asserts that a Foucaultian analysis of sexuality divorced from issues of race and class ignores how sexuality has been central to race and class formations. He argues that we should not

seek to make sexuality the object of study for a discipline such as education, but rather examine the ways in which “racialized, classed, and gendered discourses known as sexuality” are dispersed in a particular historical period or lineage of thought.²⁸¹ For instance, in the case of Booker T. Washington and the Tuskegee model we see the development of a new intellectual formation, the black middle class. Within the context of Washingtonian industrial education we also see a racialized, classed, gendered, and sexualized site of regulatory control.²⁸² The teaching of the domestic sciences, for instance, was not simply a means to produce proper female subjects, but also to bring the newly freed population into the proper realm of American morality. Washington’s logic posited that this class would find its rightful place in modernity and attain the status of being human by adhering to gender and sexual propriety. As Ferguson asserts, “The domain of African American sexuality—a domain punctuated with notions of gender and sexual propriety, morality, domestic health and education, virile manhood, and genteel femininity—is an arena whose foundations are laid by African American intellectual discourse.”²⁸³

Ferguson presents his argument by utilizing women of color feminism—which he asserts “has had the longest engagement with racialized sexuality”—in order to point out how queer studies’ heavy reliance upon Foucault often leads to an “epistemological ignorance” of race and class formations in its regulatory march towards a postmodernist sexual freedom.²⁸⁴ However, I want to be clear in asserting that my focus on pedagogy, the human, and sexuality will primarily involve the ways in which men of all identifications have confronted the issue of sexuality, especially at the hands of racist and feminist discourses that often ignore the deep emotional concerns of men. Thinkers such as Baldwin move us to ask whether or not such discourses inflict damage via a restrictive politics of expectation and authenticity. In this chapter I illuminate these topics by presenting James Baldwin in a biographical sketch and excavating a Baldwinian theory of education. I then explore how Baldwin’s life path of defiance, or what I call high faggotry, led to a nuanced epistemological and ontological critique of regulatory systems of thought and practice. I then place this in the context of practice by showing how Baldwin’s high faggotry, as well as the antics of other groups and individuals such as Jean Genet, influenced the political/pedagogical work of the Black Panther Party.²⁸⁵ I will conclude by opening up a conversation on how Baldwin’s conscious decision to be himself at all costs opens up the possibility of not only new ways of being, but also the potential of creating educational spaces that can support such an endeavor.

James Baldwin: A Harlemiter in Vogue

In a television interview towards the latter part of his life James Baldwin was asked, “Now when you were starting out as a writer you were a black-impoverished-homosexual. You must have said to yourself, ‘Gee, how disadvantaged can I get?’” Baldwin’s cheerful reply was, “No, I thought I hit the jackpot! It’s so outrageous you could not go any further, so you had to find a way to use it.”²⁸⁶ And use it, he did. Throughout his lifelong career as a writer James Baldwin produced a plethora of artistic works that included novels, social commentary, literary criticism, and plays. The majority of these works focus on topics that often made many uncomfortable,

irrespective of identity, including the ways in which racial, class, sexual, and religious categorizations influence one's ability to fully embrace life. Some of his works, such as *The Fire Next Time*, directly confront the ways in which strict adherence to categorizations, such as race and religion, impact our ability to love ourselves and each other. "Yes, it does indeed mean something—something unspeakable—to be born, in a white country, an Anglo-Teutonic, antisexual country, black," wrote Baldwin. "You very soon, without knowing it, give up all hope of communion. Black people, mainly, look down or look up but do not look at each other, not at you, and white people, mainly, look away."²⁸⁷

In other texts, such as *Giovanni's Room*, Baldwin enters the "third dimension in culture" to explore how tyrannical notions of self can even prevent white men from loving each other.²⁸⁸ Writing about a sexual incident between two young friends, Baldwin illuminates the terror and longing experienced when one is confronted with real desire:

Joey's body was brown, was sweaty, the most beautiful creation I had ever seen till then. I would have touched him to wake him up but something stopped me. I was suddenly afraid. Perhaps it was because he looked so innocent lying there, with such perfect trust; perhaps it was because he was so much smaller than me; my own body suddenly seemed gross and crushing and the desire which was rising in me seemed monstrous. But above all, I was suddenly afraid. It was borne in on me: *But Joey is a boy...* A cavern opened in my mind, black, full of rumor, suggestion, of half-heard, half-forgotten, half-understood stories, full of dirty words. I thought I saw my future in that cavern. I was afraid.²⁸⁹

To approach James Baldwin is really an act of submission to the deep desires of the soul. Regarding schools, often such desires are ignored or exacerbated as pathological by educators seeking to craft the "successful student." However, Baldwin's literary insight has pedagogical implications for issues influencing schools, including the attention paid to violence against LGBTQ students.²⁹⁰ Baldwin continues:

When I finally did see [Joey], more of less by accident, near the end of the summer, I made up a long and totally untrue story about a girl I was going with and when school began again I picked up with a rougher, older crowd and was very nasty to Joey. And the sadder this made him, the nastier I became.²⁹¹

Within the Baldwinian literary imaginary we see a notion of violence that scholars and educators often miss, but was articulated by Hegel in his understanding of the ideal relationship between master and slave: how regulated desire for the other can result in a need to destroy the other.²⁹² Being an individual who knew of his sexual desires, and was often called ugly even by those in his family, Baldwin's life would be one lived in the face of seeking out authentic love while at the same time being confronted with a deadly and destructive hatred both from within and without.

James Arthur Jones (Baldwin) was born on August 2, 1924 in Harlem New York, an illegitimate child to his mother, Emma Berdis Jones. Ms. Jones had migrated to New York from Maryland, part of a movement of southern blacks fleeing strict segregation and unemployment. According to James Campbell, Ms. Jones knew the name of James' father but she never revealed this identity to her son. Baldwin would later reflect on his younger years with statements such as, "I never had a childhood," "I did not have any human identity," "I was born dead."²⁹³ Campbell attributes this deep sense of

loneliness to that fact that Baldwin never really had a father. In addition, Ms. Jones was a devout Christian woman, and the idea that she had conceived her son through sinful means meant that there was never any discussion of Baldwin's biological father. But this silence, the regulatory control of supposedly unspeakable things, would be the later inspiration behind Baldwin's work.²⁹⁴ Campbell writes, "If it is necessary to isolate a single, dominating impulse driving James Baldwin's work, it would be the need to defeat the silence which lives behind slavery and his people's first forced arrival in America—the Land of the Free, as Baldwin never tired ironically of speaking."²⁹⁵

Emma Berdis Jones married David Baldwin in 1927. Mr. Baldwin, a laborer and Baptist preacher, had migrated from New Orleans to New York to escape the horrors of lynching, and because "of an inability to communicate with people, to establish ordinary social relationships."²⁹⁶ Baldwin credits his stepfather with raising him, forming him both mentally and physically, and giving him a detailed knowledge of the Bible.²⁹⁷ However this rearing was not without a dark side. Mr. Baldwin constantly ridiculed James, calling him both ugly and worthless. In the semi-autobiographical work *Go Tell It On The Mountain*, Baldwin reflects on his childhood through the protagonist John. When John asks his mother if his father is a good man, her reaction mimics the same distortion of perspective practiced by racist whites:

He had not known that he was going to ask that question, and he watched in astonishment as her mouth tightened and her eyes grew dark. "That ain't no kind of question," she said mildly. "You don't know no better man, do you."²⁹⁸

In a move that young males labeled as "trouble makers" often make in the classroom, Roy, James' younger brother, offers an opposing point of view:

Yeah...we don't know how lucky we *is* to have a father who don't want you to go to no movies, and don't want you to play in the streets, and don't want you to have no friends, and he don't want this and he don't want that, and he don't want you to do *nothing*. We so *lucky* to have a father who just wants us to go to church and read the Bible and beller like a fool in front of the alter and stay home all nice and quiet, like a little mouse. Boy, we sure *is* lucky, all right. Don't know what I done to be so lucky.²⁹⁹

Roy is quickly reprimanded for acting beyond his years. Mrs. Baldwin often dismissed Mr. Baldwin's behavior as the normal actions of a father that loves his sons. However, what is interesting regarding the question of worthiness is that a question (John) and statement (Roy) that contain elements of truth are both dismissed as being illogical. It was not as if the actions of James Baldwin's father were not meant to inflict a type damage regarding a sense of confidence in oneself. This type of subjugation even occurred at the level of dress. Baldwin's father kept him dressed in short pants longer than was necessary, resulting in his classmates calling him "sissy." This continual taunting resulted in a heightened sense of self-pity that would haunt Baldwin for most of his life, specifically at the level of desire. "The idea of myself as a sexual possibility or target, as a creature capable of desire, had never entered my mind."³⁰⁰

It was Baldwin's participation in two institutions that have been critiqued as regulatory spaces that allowed him to go about creating a strong sense of self: the church and the school. Baldwin's participation in the church was guided mainly by the strict religiosity of his family. The structure of Baldwin's prose and conversational style resulted from his religious upbringing. However, despite its benefit, the religious

strictness of his parents was often at odds with Baldwin's educational activities. Baldwin became an avid reader at a young age, which his father viewed with suspicion. According to Campbell, "David Baldwin's disapproval stemmed mainly from religious convictions, but there was another reason: bright black boys with ambition, his experience in the south at taught him, could be a menace to themselves and those around them."³⁰¹ Ironically, it was Mr. Baldwin's strict religiosity that would help Baldwin have full confidence in his perspective of his father as a flawed man. At age 14 Baldwin joined and began preaching in the Pentecostal Church. Preaching gave him a sense of authority and confidence that was not allowed in the home, and this newfound sense of self shined though in his sermons. Eventually, Baldwin began to draw more crowds to his sermons than his father, which caused a great deal of torment in the house, but also allowed Baldwin to make "his 'father' into a mere 'father-figure.'"³⁰² In other words, Baldwin's preaching allowed him to perform both an epistemological and ontological critique of his father as an authoritative figure. Not only did he think that the activities of his father were meant to attack his sense of self, but his actual success as a preacher confirmed the answer to the question that plagued him throughout his childhood: "Is my father a good man?" It was Baldwin, in fact, who began to be someone better.

Baldwin also found a place for expressing personal freedom through his schooling. This was not only a freedom from the harshness of his home environment, but also a haven from the poverty and malnutrition that impacted manly blacks living in Harlem. Baldwin began school in 1929, the same year as the stock market crash, at P.S. 24. P.S. 24 had the first black principle in New York City, Mrs. Gertrude E. Ayer. Reflecting on Principle Ayer, Baldwin remarks that she was an individual whose intent he could recognize clearly. "I loved and feared the lady—for she really was a lady, and a great one—with that trembling passion only twelve year olds can feel."³⁰³ According to Baldwin biographer David Leeming, "P.S. 24 was the beginning of a new world for Jimmy Baldwin, a world in which he could survive, not by means of physical strength—he had little of that—but through his intelligence, of which it quickly became apparent to his teachers that he had a great deal."³⁰⁴ Baldwin's educational journey would also be guided by a group of supportive, independent thinking, teachers who took special pride in their work and paid close attention to the young writer. These teachers included Orilla "Bill" Miller, Countee Cullen, and Herman W. ("Bill") Porter. In 1963, Bill Miller reflected on the pedagogical relationship she had with the young Baldwin:

James, I want to tell you that the promise of the wonderful child has been fulfilled in the man. I am not referring alone to the development of your writing ability, the incisive use of your intelligence in social commentary. I am referring to the moral you—in the broad sense of one's individual relationship to man around him. That Evan and I had a small part in your life adds to the value of ours. I also say, thank you, that there is this James Baldwin in America in the year 1963.³⁰⁵

The schools Baldwin attended gave him more than just the ability to take a test or write a college statement of purpose. These schools gave Baldwin the support necessary to strengthen his unique character and natural talents, including his proclivity for reading, writing, and oratory. Writing would be a particular form of salvation; with Baldwin later reflecting that writing "was an act of love" and "an attempt...to be loved...a way to save myself and to save my family. It came out of despair...it seemed the only way to another world."³⁰⁶

Much can be said regarding the many accolades Baldwin received in school. However, I want to pause and point out that Baldwin as an educational success story should not give the impression that schools are good in and of themselves. To draw such a conclusion would be akin to not seeing the forest for the tree, and it automatically dehumanizes Baldwin by making him into a caricature of success. Unlike Du Bois and Locke, Baldwin retained a healthy degree of criticism towards devoting one's sense of self to institutions that are man made, which are inherently flawed and necessitate constant critique and change. He would later write, "The Negro's experience of the white world cannot possibly create in him any respect for the standards by which the white world claims to live."³⁰⁷ Although Baldwin was lucky enough to enter into a supportive school environment, the educational setting still did not answer his deeper questions regarding the human and love, especially in regards to other men. In addition, his preaching in the church did not give him a sense of wholeness, and he was often disgusted with the hypocrisy and unspoken sexual innuendoes he experienced in the church. "It is not too much to say that whoever wishes to become a truly moral human being (and let us not ask whether or not this is possible; I think we must *believe* that it is possible) must first divorce himself from all prohibitions, crimes, and hypocrisies of the Christian church."³⁰⁸

By age sixteen Baldwin was faced with a problem that many young men of color still experience today as they traverse the contradictions of home, school, and society: the prospect of having no future at all. Baldwin noted how being faced with this overwhelming sense of futurelessness leads to the participation in gimmicks, be they dealing drugs, preaching, pimping, or doing well in school. "Every Negro boy—in my situation during those years, at least—who reaches this point realizes at once, profoundly, because he wants to live, that he stands in great peril and must find, with speed, a 'thing,' a gimmick, to lift him out, to start him on his way."³⁰⁹ Leeming adds, "Baldwin always said sixteen was the age at which the child in Harlem can suddenly see the past and the future—his future—in his father's or mother's eye's, in the drunks and pimps of the street."³¹⁰ Baldwin's terror would be the fear that, like his father, if he stayed in the same place in terms of thought and action, and did not flee the pedagogies of suffering, guilt, and self-pity, he too would go mad.³¹¹

The story of Baldwin's exodus from school and home is a tale of power and imagination too broad to focus on in the context of this study. However, what can be gleaned from the preceding biographical sketch are two key elements that mark James Baldwin for the rest of his life. The first is Baldwin's conscious decision to trust his instincts and leave home despite the fact that his perception of reality was constantly delegitimized by those around him. Under the bombardment of multiple systems of thought, especially regarding religion and black authenticity, Baldwin should have stayed at home and endured his earthly punishment to receive salvation in the afterlife or to participate in the uplift of the race. Baldwin made a conscious decision to leave everything he ever knew in order to confront his existential questions regarding identity, self, and love. Second, Baldwin did not subsume his identity with the context of a successfully educated black man, and his closest teachers did not produce an environment where he felt forced to fashion his identity in such a way. Thus, without the trappings of recognition via the educational pipeline Baldwin received pedagogical guidance by developing the talents that his teachers recognized as being already there.

Such a pedagogical approach should move educators to ask two very important questions: how can we go about rethinking schooling to mimic such an environment, and how does the very socio-cultural-ego identity of teacher as expert rightfully in a position of power prevent students from cultivating their natural talents? Baldwin had much to say regarding this issue later in life as he confronted the issue of education within context of massive social upheaval.

Reflections of a Native Son: Baldwinian Critical Educational Thought

In 1948, after years of striving to define self against a country and a race that were doing everything possible to capture his unique spirit, Baldwin expatriated to Paris. The rest of his life would be spent mostly in Europe, but he frequently visited the United States, especially as the civil rights and black liberation movements gained momentum. Like Saidiya V. Hartman's analysis of slaves needing to make a physical departure to a new land to achieve a sense of freedom, Baldwin's expatriation signaled his need to leave the United States to define himself.³¹² But simply leaving was not enough. While he had admitted that writing had been a source of inspiration that saved his life, as he entered the materialism of the literary world he began to face the dilemma articulated by Alain Locke over twenty years earlier: how do I write as myself, a rich human personality, and not simply as a Negro.³¹³ In order to write as himself and not another he would have to free himself from the epistemological prison that dictates what black persons can write about and why. This meant critiquing a literary genre that appears to be inherently linked with being a black person, the protest novel.

In his declaration of literary independence, "Everybody's Protest Novel," Baldwin asserted, "The failure of the protest novel lies in its rejection of life, the human being, the denial of his beauty, dread, power, in its insistence that it is his categorization alone which is real and which cannot be transcended."³¹⁴ Focusing directly on a novel that had become a euphemism for protest and the plight of the black slave, Baldwin wrote, "*Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a very bad novel, having, in its self-righteous, virtuous sentimentality, much in common with *Little Women*."³¹⁵ Baldwin attributed his loathing for the novel to a type of emotional dishonesty that goes hand and hand with split subjectivity:

Sentimentality, the ostentatious parading of excessive and spurious emotion, is the mark of dishonesty, the inability to feel; the wet eyes of the sentimentalist betray his aversion to experience, his fear of life, his arid heart; and it is always, therefore, the signal of secret and violent inhumanity, the mask of cruelty.³¹⁶

Baldwin was highly critical of persons and institutions that feigned a type of niceness and care that in fact operated as a mask to protect one's true intentions. One can mistake this as a type of politics of respectability, a call for the publication of a particular type of novel. But Baldwin's attack was not on literary freedom, and his critique runs deeper than mere appearances to an analysis of the importance of what activates one's actions:

Uncle Tom's Cabin, then, is activated by what might be called a theological terror, the terror of damnation; and the spirit that breathes in this book, hot, self-righteous, fearful, is not different from that spirit of medieval times which sought to exorcize evil by burning witches; and is not different from that terror which

activates a lynch mob. One need not, indeed, search for examples so historic or so gaudy; this is a warfare waged daily in the heart, a warfare so vast, so relentless and so powerful that the interracial handshake or the interracial marriage can be as crucifying as the public hanging or the secret rape. This panic motivates our cruelty, this fear of the dark makes it impossible that our lives shall be other than superficial; this, interlocked with and feeding our glittering, mechanical, in-escapable civilization which has put to death our freedom.³¹⁷

“Everybody’s Protest Novel” operates as a type of emancipatory treatise in Baldwin’s literary archive. Many of the themes in the work, including Baldwin’s attention to emotional contradictions and the “panic that motivates our cruelty,” appear throughout his novels and essays. These themes also support his criticism of institutions, such as the educational system. Unlike Du Bois and Locke, who possessed faith in the American educational apparatus and wanted to be recognized at the pedagogical table, Baldwin directed his criticism of intent and action directly at the foundational heart of the educational system.

Baldwin did not write as much directly on the status of the educational system as his counterparts Du Bois and Locke. The argument could be made that this dearth of literature does not warrant discussion on Baldwin as an educational thinker. I would disagree with such an argument on three grounds. First, Baldwin’s educational critique was leveled at the ethos of dehumanization that he recognized as only being further codified at the site of many schools in the United States. Second, Baldwin was concerned with pedagogy not in the sense of, for instance, curriculum development, but rather in the sense of how society itself teaches persons how and how not to be and act. As we will see, this approach requires shifting the conversation on education from the site of the school to the pedagogy of a socio-cultural-historical force that imbues all aspects of life and history. Baldwin’s understanding of society thus mirrored that of Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, who argued that the oppressive elements of society could be garnered and accepted through an active relationship of force and consent known as hegemony.³¹⁸ Force can be enacted by the repressive elements of the state. However, consent can be established by placing value into an institution like the educational system as means of securing recognition and garnering a pseudo sense of self worth via a hierarchal structure that tracks who and who does not wield power over “accepted” forms of knowledge. Third, Baldwin’s educational critique did not require the publication of numerous books and treatises on education because his approach did not rest on a notion of making schools better, but rather on a question of whether our concept of schooling destroys lives by creating a schizophrenic relationship within the child between self and other.

While Baldwin’s critique of this profound sense of un-freedom can be found throughout his writings, he specifically focuses on schooling and teaching in the text, “The Negro Child—His Self Image.” This has been republished as “A Talk To Teachers.” He opens this text with a statement that speaks to the educational issues facing our times:

Let’s begin by saying that we are living through a very dangerous time. Everyone...is in one way or another aware of that. We are in a revolutionary situation, no matter how unpopular that word has become in this country. The

society in which we live is desperately menaced, not by Khrushchev, but within.³¹⁹

He then points out that there is a core problem facing educational institutions. The common sense level issues one thinks of when speaking on the educational system—including teacher capability, testing, the achievement gap, and issues of diversity—actually work to mask a deeper issue: a paradox that lies at the very root of how we cognize what education is supposed to be. “Now, the crucial paradox which confronts us here is that the whole process of education occurs within a social framework and is designed to perpetuate the aims of society.” Baldwin’s paradox involves the very function of the school vs. how his experiences of family, school, exile, and introspection taught him how we go about naturally thinking. “The paradox of education is precisely this—that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated.” Baldwin is tapping into the notion that education is supposed to create independent thinkers, someone who asks “questions of the universe, and then learn[s] to live with those questions,” and thus achieve “his own identity.” This is someone who in some sense is applauded, the independent thinker. But Baldwin notes that praise of the independent thinker is superficial, and therefore not sincere. “No society is really anxious to have that kind of person around. What societies really, ideally, want is a citizenry which will simply obey the rules of society.” Baldwin then offers a powerful warning regarding this paradox:

If a society succeeds in this, that society is about to perish. The obligation of anyone who thinks of himself as responsible is to examine society and try to change it and fight it—at no matter what risk. This is the only hope society has. This is the only way societies change.³²⁰

Baldwin then argues that this particular educative situation has implications for everyone, but finds it most amplified example in the case of the Negro child. This child in particular “runs the risk of becoming schizophrenic,” specifically because he is the most aware that a contradiction exists in reality but is denied by many of those around him:

On the one hand he is born in the shadow of the stars and stripes and he is assured it represents a nation which has never lost a war. He pledges allegiance to that flag which guarantees “liberty and justice for all.” He is part of a country in which anyone can become president, and so forth. But on the other hand he is also assured by his country and his countrymen that he has never contributed anything to civilization—that his past is nothing more than a record of humiliations gladly endured.

And this condition creates a particular crisis in the black male, who, despite what everything within him says, is still taught, “that the value he has as a black man is proven by one thing only—his devotion to white people.”³²¹

What does it really mean to be devoted to white people? We can think of this question in the context of time, and the argument could be made that this is a temporal problem that we have moved beyond. But perhaps the activities of young black males who “check out” in educational settings are showing us what it means *not* to be devoted to white people. Is this what is meant but not clearly understood when we talk about a “burden of acting white.”³²² I want to return to a question I raised in chapter three regarding how the educational system is perceived by students:

What if particular students disengage from institutional educational settings because they perceive that living the type of life Du Bois led requires a certain loss of one's humanity? Given the legacy left by Du Bois this may appear to be an odd question to ask. But if the notion of double consciousness as a crisis of recognition is to be taken seriously then we have to wonder if young black men perceive many educators and adults as schizophrenic subjects.

James Baldwin answers this question, and his answer is worth quoting at length:

All this enters the child's consciousness much sooner than we as adults would like to think it does. As adults, we are easily fooled because we are so anxious to be fooled. But children are very different. Children, not yet aware that it is dangerous to look too deeply at anything, look at everything, look at each other, and draw their own conclusions. They don't have the vocabulary to express what they see, and we, their elders, know how to intimidate them very easily and very soon. But a black child, looking at the world around him, though he cannot know quite what to make of it, is aware that there is a reason...And it isn't long—in fact it begins when he is in school—before he discovers the shape of his oppression.³²³

"A Talk to Teachers" is a fundamental text in global educational thought and needs to be read as such. Often, however, when it is read it is placed alongside other black thinkers in the hopes of proving that black persons possess the capability of producing an intellectual tradition. Others may look at this text as only focusing on black persons, and thus become imprisoned within narcissistic identity politics. It is much more beneficial to read Baldwin as a critic of most traditional educational thought, particularly those thinkers who believe that black persons climbing the educational ladder can automatically result in an egalitarian society. The notion of schizophrenia becomes visible to the black child because the very far otherness of blackness in the paradigm of race creates a situation where black persons become invisible and/or maligned as natural human beings *first*, and only become partially visible when they take up regulatory and accepted ways of being in both the public and private realms. Visibility is not akin to just seeing with the eyes, but they ability to cognize someone for whom they are beyond what identity says they should or should not be. As Baldwin pointed out, a black child sees and knows this. However, this crisis of recognition influences *everyone* regardless of identity due to the fact of the dichotomy that is established between self and other. It in fact becomes worse because the constant denial of the situation combined with the continual search for recognition begins to border on the pathological and the suicidal. Thus, the problem Du Bois faced in terms of his greeting card and the recognition he sought, and the problem Locke faced in terms of having to be a race man that could not broach the contradictions of his sexual desires is not different from the cases of young men today who kill themselves, often though hanging specifically, because they are being called faggots. We have created a social and educational situation that causes an individual to look so far outside of the self for recognition and humanization that the highest form of attention is now a form of suicidal martyrdom.

Baldwin's answer to the question of what is to be done regarding the educational system can be found within his writing, but it is even more pronounced in his life. At the

conclusion of “A Talk to Teachers” he encourages teachers to teach their students to *know*:

That those streets, those houses, those dangers, those agonies by which they are surrounded are criminal. I would try to make each child know that these things are a result of a criminal conspiracy to destroy him. I would teach him that if he intends to get to be a man, he must at once decide that he is stronger than this conspiracy and that he must never make peace with it. And that one of his weapons for refusing to make his peace with it and for destroying it depends on what he decides he is worth. I would teach him that there are currently very few standards in this country which are worth a man’s respect. That it is up to him to change these standards for the sake of the life and the health of the country.³²⁴

In the simplest terms this means knowing what your life is worth against what everything else in the society obviously or subtly tries to tell you. This understanding is critical as we shift from looking at how Baldwin approached the issue of schooling to how we can understand Baldwin’s life as a pedagogical praxis.

Returning to themes I presented earlier in this chapter, what Baldwin’s life and educational critique teach us specifically is that there are deep issues involving the regulation of relationships between men that are not honestly being address at the site of the school. However, despite the fact that he was openly gay, Baldwin did not endure the crisis of recognition that someone like Locke did. This is due to the fact that with Baldwin we are dealing with an individual whose life experiences and sense of self worth taught him not to be ashamed of himself regardless of what everyone else said about him. This is not a superficial-commonsense notion of loving oneself; it is an actual state of being in balance at the epistemological and ontological levels, something that I call “high faggotry.” As Baldwin and others show us, it has the power to alter communities and societies, as one literally becomes the change he wants to see in the world.³²⁵

What’s The T? James Baldwin and the Pedagogy of High Faggotry

Baldwin’s dilemma of retaining a degree of his humanity while being both black and gay began during his teenage years, a natural period for young men to experience heightened sexual desire and arousal. Leeming notes that it was the summer after his graduation from junior high school that he was “nearly overwhelmed by sexuality and, almost at the same moment, by religion.”³²⁶ These two themes would remain central in his life’s work, indicative of Baldwin seeking to assuage the gap between his desires and religious obligations. This conundrum was further amplified by the fact that he was black. Baldwin had already experienced the sexual exoticism that surrounds blackness while being manhandled by white police officers at the age of ten. Leeming writes, “In the context of the self-depreciation that resulted from these events and others like them, the sexual touch of another human being was difficult to associate with beauty or love.” Joining a church was a way that Baldwin could protect himself from himself. “Religion,” Leeming continues, “could mean ‘safety,’ safety from himself, who at age fourteen had become, he feared, ‘one of the most depraved people on earth.’”³²⁷ The issues of sexuality and religion would be increased by awkward situations Baldwin would experience while visiting young married churchwomen at home who wanted special

council.³²⁸ Baldwin found an outlet to cope with these two issues through academic achievement. However, like the situation between the David and Joey and *Giovanni's Room*, Baldwin's desire for male affection would be met with awkwardness and ridicule at the site of the school.³²⁹ Rather than dismiss these issues as the awkward interactions teenage boys go through, I think we should probe deeper into how Baldwin's sexual awkwardness was due to a type of regulation that happens in schools regarding male/male and female/female relationships. In order to fully embrace his friendship/sexual desires in a way that transcended cooptation and he would have to reject the ways in which subtle and obvious pedagogical practices regulate students into accepting limited definitions of home, family, and friendships.

Let's shift from the ways in which of concept of racial identity and education create a type of crisis of recognition to the ways in which masculinity as a regulatory identity also causes a crisis. To be clear, this is not a discussion that seeks to emasculate men. I personally really enjoy being a man and appreciate multiple forms of masculinity. However, I want to begin to open up space around the ways in which young men begin to live their lives as they seek to live into a proscribed and narrow definition of masculinity, one that is polymorphous within society but becomes particularly pronounced in social interactions within schools. What are the consequences of this search for recognition, and does it produce a sense of worthlessness within young men as they seek to live into a phantasm. Baldwin had particular thoughts on this, which he outlined throughout all of his works, but specifically explored in two texts: "Preservation of Innocence" written in 1949 and "Here be Dragons" written in 1985.³³⁰ The first of these essays is akin to "Everybody's Protest Novel," and while Baldwin used the former to free himself as a writer, he used "The Preservation of Innocence" as an opportunity to unabashedly embrace his homosexuality. In the essay he first critiqued how our notion of what is and what is not natural contradicts our manipulation of the "natural" world. He then uses this critique to call into question the ways in which we have deemed certain human relationships as natural and unnatural, thus criticizing the argument that homosexuality—as the consensual love one man has for another man—is an unnatural condition. For Baldwin, the fear of not only homosexuality but more importantly the fear of homo-social relationships between men is in fact tied to a popular fear of not only sex, but also a fear of the fluidity of gender relations.

In "Here Be Dragons" written in 1987, Baldwin clarified his point on looking at the problem of homosexuality not in terms of a sexual act, but the fear induced by notions of masculinity of men simply loving other men. Focusing on the concept of androgyny, Baldwin notes that within every person there can be found both male and female characteristics, a recognition that we strive to avoid. Baldwin states, "Love between a man and a woman, or love between any two human beings, would not be possible did we not have available to us the spiritual resources of both sexes."³³¹ However, our denial of the masculine and feminine characteristics within each of us creates a situation where self-love, and therefore interpersonal-love, become impossible. For Baldwin, our proscribed definition of masculinity puts us at odds with each other and the world:

The American ideal, then, of sexuality appears to be rooted in the American ideal of masculinity. This ideal has created cowboys and Indians, good guys and bad

guys, punks and studs, tough guys and softies, butch and faggot, black and white. It was an ideal so paralytically infantile that it is virtually forbidden—as an unpatriotic act—that the American boy evolve into the complexity of manhood.³³² But Baldwin, through his high faggotry, through embracing the side of himself that desired the love of men, transcended this conundrum:

All the categories of male and female, straight or not, black or white, were shattered, thank heaven, very early in my life. Not without anguish, certainly; but once you have discerned the meaning of a label, it may seem to define you for others, but it does not have the power to define you to yourself.³³³

In effect, he accepted his full humanity and by doing so defeated a sense of worthlessness that I believe impacts the majority of men in the society, regardless of identity. “The American idea of masculinity: There are few things under heaven more difficult to understand or, when I was younger, to forgive.”³³⁴

Baldwin gives us insight into the idea that desire may actually be at the core of violence against LGBTQ youth in schools. This is not regarding a type of sexual desire but how we go about relating to each other. However, this desire becomes perverted because we often automatically link the desire for companionship for another with the need for sex. We even seem to automatically link physical sexual arousal with the immediate need for sex without asking ourselves if physical sexual arousal necessitates sex or if it can actually be an indication that someone just feels good around another person. Baldwin’s explanation of this is quite profound:

On every street corner, I was called a faggot. This meant that I was despised, and, however horrible this is, it is clear. What was *not* clear at that time of my life was what motivated the men and boys who mocked and chased me; for, if they found me when they were alone, they spoke to me very differently—frightening me, I must say, into a stunned and speechless paralysis. For when they were alone, they spoke very gently and wanted me to take them home and make love. The bafflement and the pain this caused in me remained beyond description. I was far too terrified to be able to accept their propositions, which could only result, it seemed to me, in making myself a candidate for gang rape. At the same time I was moved by their loneliness, their halting nearly speechless need. But I did not understand it.³³⁵

Baldwin also writes on how he became friendly with many of the young boys who ridiculed him during his teenage years, but unfortunately most of the boys from that period ended up dead, “some in the streets, some in the Army, some on the needle, some in jail.”³³⁶ What is interesting is that Baldwin expressed that he was able to develop friendly relationships with the surviving men later in life. It is also interesting that, despite his sexuality, many prominent males who participated in the social upheavals of the 1950’s and 1960’s—including Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Amiri Baraka, Stokely Carmichael, and Huey P. Newton—respected Baldwin even if they disagreed with his politics. I think that the development of Baldwin’s homo-social relationships later in life had a lot to do with his state of being, his high faggotry, through which the full embrace of the self and the dissolution of double consciousness commands respect.

Put quite simply, high faggotry refers to the ability to:

1. Ask questions of life in order to develop better ways of living.

2. In terms of our present condition, learning how to embrace our natural desires in the hopes of becoming better human beings.

3. In the case of men who have sexual desire for other men, it means accepting the desire for the *consensua*/love of another man, whether in the form of friendship or sex, as natural and healthy aspects of the self.

These three tenants create an epistemological situation where the person who identifies with the label of being gay can take responsibility for his life and participate in healthy relationships with self and other. It creates an ontological situation because the person achieves a level of balance that allows him to be comfortable within his own skin because he has developed the capacity to define his own life.³³⁷ In fact, the faggot and the nigga, two terms that are linked with devaluation and seem contradictory, actually support each other as balanced states of being. Du Bois could not achieve this state because he could not embrace that part of himself illustrated by young Negro boys at his school.³³⁸ Locke could not achieve this state because his search for recognition within the academy forced him to deny his sexual self. But Baldwin could achieve this state of by coming to accept his desire and living in accordance. One could interpret this argument as one for complete anarchy, but that is not the case at all. What I am pushing us to ponder is whether the denial of desire creates an internal battle between self and other that results in violent relationships between self and other as we operate in the world.

An example of high faggotry can be found in the life of another individual who learned to live with her unique desires: Audre Lorde. Like Baldwin, Lorde comments on how education allowed her to exceed the limits of her regulatory condition at home. However, the oppressive conditions she experienced while in school would not only move her to transcend the oppressive order of whiteness, but also the regulatory power of her West-Indian family. Lorde's later embrace of both her lesbianism and her abilities as a poet resulted from her maneuvering within and between educational and home sittings in which she felt she did not belong. Lorde emphasizes:

In a paradoxical sense, once I accepted my position as different from the larger society as well as from any single sub-society—Black or gay—I felt I didn't have to try so hard. To be accepted. To look femme. To be straight. To look straight. To be proper. To look "nice." To be liked. To be loved. To be approved. What I didn't realize was how much harder I had to try merely to stay alive, or rather, to stay human. How much stronger a person I became in that trying.³³⁹

Both of these examples have particular implications for the way we think of schooling. Educational settings provided a space for these persons to ask deeper questions of themselves, but their identities did not become subsumed within the educational apparatus. In other words, their states of being were not defined by the fact that they were educated, but rather because they entered into educational spaces that allowed them to transcend identity and be themselves. What kind of society would we live in if schools operated as spaces where students were not regulated into particular roles and did not develop a sense of self based on educational attainment, but instead allowed them to ask deeper questions of themselves and the contributions they wish to make to the world.

Baldwin's high faggotry played a big part in his pedagogical/political work, specifically with the Black Panther Party during the 1960's and 1970's. The Black

Panther Party has been labeled as a primarily black nationalist and hyper-masculine organization, so it seems odd that someone as open about their sexual desire as Baldwin would have any influence. It is even more odd that Baldwin would embrace the Panther's in the wake of attacks made on his sexuality by Panther members. Eldridge Cleaver, later Minister of Information for the Black Panther Party specifically criticized Baldwin's openness regarding sexuality as a pathological form of self-hatred.

"Homosexuality is a sickness, just as are baby-rape or wanting to become head of General Motors," wrote Cleaver.³⁴⁰ However, Baldwin's still supported the Panthers, and his sense of self worth left an impression on many male Panther members.

According to Angela Y. Davis, Baldwin became a source of inspiration for members of the Black Panther Party due to his openness regarding issues of sexuality, a state of being that many members of the Panthers had never experienced.³⁴¹ His decision to be himself naturally raised questions regarding the need to transcend identity politics within social movements. Davis notes that this influence led to deeper discussions regarding notions of the self, recognition, and how to engage in political movements that simultaneously work for the betterment of all while affirming difference. "We may not have been able to talk about gendered racism; 'sexuality' may have still meant sexiness; homophobia, as a word, may not have yet existed; but our practice, I can say in retrospect, was located on a continuum that grouped and zigzagged its way towards this moment of the deliberation on the pitfalls of nationalism and essentialism."³⁴² Not only Baldwin, but also individuals such as writer and activist Jean Genet, would challenge assumptions regarding regulatory masculinity not through intellectual discourse, but by simply being themselves.

The high faggotry of both Baldwin and Genet would move some in the Panther's to shift rigidly held views regarding blackness and masculinity. These influences would lead Black Panther Party co-founder and leader Huey P. Newton to write "A Letter From Huey to The Revolutionary Brothers and Sisters About the Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements." While this text has remained obscure, its import should not go unnoticed. According to Devon W. Carbado, Dwight A. McBride, and Donald Weise, "Never before had a black civil rights group recognized lesbian and gay men as an oppressed population...facing a struggle for acceptance and equality comparable to that of African Americans."³⁴³ Newton made very bold statements regarding the political potential of homosexual persons. "I know through reading and through my life experience, my observations, that homosexuals are not given freedom and liberty by anyone in the society. Maybe they might be the most oppressed people in the society."³⁴⁴

Newton also pushed men to examine their very own insecurities regarding the subject. "When I say 'insecurities,' I mean the fear that [homosexuals are] some kind of threat to our manhood." Newton went even further, claiming that such insecurities were not innate, but part of a pedagogical process that teaches a man what he is supposed to be and how he is supposed to legitimate himself. "Because of the long conditioning process which builds insecurity in the American male, homosexuality might produce certain hang ups in us." And this "long conditioning process" produces "hang ups" that can lead to relations of violence. "As we very well know sometimes our first instinct is to want to hit a homosexual in the mouth because we're afraid we might be homosexual."³⁴⁵ But such relations of violence are not natural aspects of boys being

boys. James Baldwin's pedagogical life lesson illustrates that they become necessary because a man must affirm his sense of masculinity, and his state of being, through enacting violence upon the other.

Newton's letter became a pedagogical tool within the Black Panther Party. This does not mean that members of the Black Panther Party readily complied with his statement, but it did provide a space for members to openly discuss their thoughts on the issue. The same issues that Baldwin raised regarding the commingling of regulatory identity and sexuality came up in these spaces. According to Ericka Huggins, BPP member and Director of the Oakland School Community Project, there was internal criticism of the letter, but teach-ins were held to broach the issue of homosexuality and homo-social relations. In line with Baldwin's argument regarding regulatory and violent masculinity as an identity, Huggins asserts, "The women really did not have a problem with it, but the men were not down. One man said to me something like, 'I can't believe Huey wrote that. I'm not getting fucked in the ass,' not realizing the memo highlighted social change, not a change in one's sexuality."³⁴⁶

Conversations regarding historical moments like this, as well as the topic of how desire often transcends identity, become silenced as persons are still urged to pursue politics in the name of codifying and rescuing particular identities. Returning to our topic of blackness and the human, this has particular import for young persons seeking to recognize themselves, and not parodies of themselves, within the movements and spaces they negotiate. Davis adds, "Young people with 'nationalist' proclivities ought, at least, to have the opportunity to choose which tradition of nationalism they will embrace. How will they position themselves en masse in defense of women's rights and in defense of gay rights if they are not aware of the historical precedents for such positionings?"³⁴⁷ Unfortunately, the coalitions created as a result of the Panther's openness to multiple political causes fell apart as the influence of police repression and public attention caused numerous factions in the party. However, Baldwin's influence and the unique contribution Newton made regarding insecurities within the American male should not be ignored. In fact, these are lessons educators should consider as the issue of sexuality and violence between males in schools based upon notions of what it means to be both a human and a man become more visible in popular discourse.

Beginning to excavate the pedagogical contributions of Baldwin as a by-product of his navigating within, between, and sometimes beyond his race and sexuality helps us understand how particular subject positions play a role in the redefining of education itself. In addition, it helps us critique recent trends, particularly in black educational thought and projects that focus primarily on achievement, illuminating that this one-sided focus ignores the ontological, teleological, and existential concerns of individuals whose experiences traverse and transcend multiple identities. Perhaps we can even begin to use Baldwin to generate an innovative critical educational theory that can revitalize the way we think about education and the educational system itself. Baldwin's high faggotry, his conscious decision to be defiant and know his worth, pushes us to move beyond the notion that we just need to, for instance, desegregate schools. He also pushes us to move beyond the achievement gap by showing us that there may be something much deeper at play than equal performance on standardized tests. Finally, Baldwin illuminates the policing power of blackness at home and masculinity at his schools as regulatory identities that prevent us from reaching our full human potential.

Through his educational thought Baldwin also warns us to avoid the perpetuation of policing strategies in current educational reform movements that actually work to replicate white supremacy and homophobia through the archetype of an authentic subject. Now we can ask new and innovative questions. For instance, how are black gay students supported in schools when they are caught between the rock of a white supremacist educational system and the hard place of African-American mentoring programs that are hetero-normative? What impact do such programs have on black students who may not be LGBTQ, but do not necessarily fit into the dominant discourse in educational policy and studies that reinscribe an authentic black subject? How do student who identify as gay, straight, or simply exist outside of the contours of regulatory masculinity, live in harmony with each other when we perpetuate a notions of masculinity that necessitate dehumanizing violence? My hope is that we can utilize the particular experiences of not only Baldwin, but also Du Bois and Locke, to articulate a critical educational praxis developed throughout the 20th century. Baldwin illustrates that relying on the rigid categories of blackness and masculinity as articulated in current educational studies and/or policy cannot lead to the robust development of such a critical educational praxis: one where students do not feel they have to legitimate themselves in order to become human and men can laugh together and express love for one another without feeling ashamed.



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In her poem, “Making James Baldwin,” Nikki Giovanni captures what it means to practice high faggotry and know one’s worth. I end with her as a reminder of what it means to participate in a praxis of defiance:

what does this mean...Countee Cullen taught you in junior high...in Harlem...with that great history of renaissance but only Langston remained...what does it mean when you

know you really don't want to deliver packages or be some sort of clerk in a backroom somewhere downtown...what does it mean when you know what nobody has told you YOU WERE BEFORE HIM WHOM YOU CALL FATHER who didn't so much dislike you as simply not understand why you were a witness that he wasn't first and you had all this to deal with while thinking maybe I'm not so good-looking and maybe I'm not ordinary...

so when you are looking around and you realize you're angry because it just ain't right that people who look like you people who are small and black and lonely but bright and funny and sweet can't find a way in this world and everytime you do something you think is pretty wonderful that man WHOM YOU CALL FATHER is trying to grind you down to his size which isn't so much small as afraid of what's out there and somehow you keep trying to please the unpleasable so you kiddie preach in church because at least everybody says amen and you think *have I found a place* but you know you can't find a place when people still look at what your heart desires and what your arms need as the worse sin worser than lynching black men and women worser than denying prescription drugs to old people worser than withholding vaccinations from poor children worser than anything because even bad-off niggers want to find something worser than their pitiful lives and they are trying to use you and your talent and your hopes and dreams to make themselves think they are whole...would that make you a James Baldwin

and then it occurs to you If You Are A Deer In Headlights MOVE and avoid being steamrolled MOVE and don't take the hit MOVE and find another place to be...move downtown and meet people who accept you not judge you move to Europe and fall in love move with your love to Switzerland and write your books and determine never to deny what your heart knows is true never turn your back on what your mind knows it right

never refuse to hear the cry of the anguished nor the laughter in the blues do it all because this one time you go round is the only time to do it so be a stand-up guy who stands up first for yourself then all the people who need an arm to lean on or a heart to hear a voice to raise for the righteousness of it and maybe that would make you a James Baldwin³⁴⁹

²⁷⁴ Monáe, "Many Moons."

²⁷⁵ Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 5.

²⁷⁶ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 35.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

²⁷⁸ James Baldwin, "Here Be Dragons," in *The Price of the Ticket: Collected Nonfiction 1948-1985* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 679.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 683.

²⁸⁰ RuPaul's Drag Race. Logo. Directed by Ian Stevenson

²⁸¹ Roderick A. Ferguson, "Of Our Normative Strivings: African American Studies and the History of Sexuality," *Social Texts* 23, no. 3-4 84-85 (2005): 87.

²⁸² Ferguson cites one of Washington's speeches regarding the political power of an education for women in the domestic arts to illustrate this point. Washington asserts, "Production and commerce are two of the great destroyers of race prejudice. In proportion as the black woman is able to produce something that the white or other races want, in the same proportion does prejudice disappear. Butter is going to be purchased from the individual who can produce the best butter and at the lowest price, and the purchaser cares not whether it was made by a black, white, brown, or yellow woman. The best butter is what is wanted. The American dollar has not an ounce of prejudice in it." This quote shows Washington's assumption that participating in commerce can have the power to make a woman an upstanding citizen, and that one's genitalia is a prerequisite for the production of butter. However, Washington also severs any spiritual connection to the land and knowledge of where our food comes from in the name of an unaware consumerism. Booker T. Washington, "Industrial Training for Southern Women," in Booker T. Washington Papers, Library of Congress, Box 541.

²⁸³ Ferguson, "Of Our Normative Strivings: African American Studies and the History of Sexuality," 95.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*: 85. Also see Roderick A. Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Mills, *The Racial Contract*.

²⁸⁵ The Black Panther Party is an organization that has often wrongly been described as focusing primarily on race at the expense of other issues, such as sexuality and/or gender. See Ronald K. Porter, "A Rainbow in Black: The Gay Politics of the Black Panther Party," in *Sexualities in Education: A Reader*. Forthcoming.

²⁸⁶ *James Baldwin-On Being Poor, Black, and Gay* [Video] (2009). Retrieved November 28, 2011, from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-rfiG6ubVc>.

²⁸⁷ Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*, 45-46.

²⁸⁸ Locke, "Self-Criticism: The Third Dimension in Culture."

²⁸⁹ Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 8-9.

²⁹⁰ Human Rights Watch, *Hatred in the Hallways: Violence and Discrimination against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Students in U.S. Schools* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2001).

²⁹¹ Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 9-10.

²⁹² Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 111-19. To be clear, I am not speaking of desire just in the sense of sexual desire, but the desire to have sexual and/or companionship and/or friendship with another person.

²⁹³ Quoted in Campbell, *Talking at the Gates: A Life of James Baldwin*, 3.

²⁹⁴ See Toni Morrison, "Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature," in *Black Feminist Reader*, ed. Joy James (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000).

²⁹⁵ Campbell, *Talking at the Gates: A Life of James Baldwin*, 3.

²⁹⁶ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁹⁷ James Baldwin referred to David Baldwin as his father. In keeping with that relationship I refer to David Baldwin as James Baldwin's father.

²⁹⁸ Baldwin, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, 17.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁰ Quoted in Weatherby, *James Baldwin: Artist on Fire*, 13.

³⁰¹ Campbell, *Talking at the Gates: A Life of James Baldwin*, 8.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁰³ Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography*, 15.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

³⁰⁵ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 19.

³⁰⁶ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 21.

³⁰⁷ Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*, 35.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 67.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 37-38.

³¹⁰ Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography*, 30.

³¹¹ Regarding the madness of Baldwin's father resulting from an uncontrolled politics of conviction, Leeming argues, "Today's statistics tell us that fathers in David Baldwin's situation often leave home. But Jimmy's stepfather did not leave home—he went mad. But he did so in stages, beginning in the south before he migrated to New York. If the 'white devil' would not recognize him as a man, perhaps God would. He became a preacher, stressing in the tradition of the pentecostal black church, the hope for a better life after the 'crossing over,' and calling down the wrath of God on the sinners of the white Sodom and Gomorrah. In the pulpit his bitterness and despair could become righteous anger and power. The subservient wage earner could become the Old Testament prophet preaching the hard and narrow path to self-identity and self-esteem that the economics of real life made impossible: 'Choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the lord.'" *Ibid.*, 5.

³¹² Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*, 128.

³¹³ See Locke, "The New Negro."; ———, "Negro Youth Speaks."

³¹⁴ Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son*, 23.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

³¹⁸ According to Gramsci, “The educational relationship should not be restricted to the field of the strictly “scholastic” relationships by means of which the new generation comes into contact with the old and absorbs and develops a personality of its own which is historically and culturally superior. This form of relationship exists throughout society as a whole and for every individual relative to other individuals. It exists between intellectual and non-intellectual sections of the population, between the rulers and the ruled, *élites* and their followers, leaders [*dirigenti*] and led, the vanguard and the body of the army. Every relationship of “hegemony” is necessarily an educational relationship and occurs not only within a nation, between the various forces of which a nation is composed, but in the international and world-wide field, between complexes of national and continental civilizations. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, 350.

³¹⁹ Baldwin, "A Talk to Teachers," 325.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 326.

³²¹ *Ibid.*

³²² Fordham and Ogbu, "Black Students' School Success: Coping with the 'Burden of Acting White' ".

³²³ Baldwin, "A Talk to Teachers," 327.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 331-32.

³²⁵ Most people are aware of this quote by Gandhi. However, I do not think people sit with these statements long enough and deeply enough to really know intuitively what it means.

³²⁶ Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography*, 23.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*

³³⁰ James Baldwin, "Preservation of Innocence," in *James Baldwin : Collected Essays : Notes of a Native Son / Nobody Knows My Name / the Fire Next Time / No Name in the Street / the Devil Finds Work / Other Essays*, ed. Toni Morrison (New York: Library of America, 1998/1949). “Here Be Dragons” was originally published as “Freaks and the American Ideal of Manhood.”

³³¹ Baldwin, "Here Be Dragons," 677.

³³² *Ibid.*, 678.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 681.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 683.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 684.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

³³⁷ I invite persons to view some of Baldwin’s speeches and public appearances. It is clear that he is maneuvering in the world in a different way, and via a different mode of being. See James Baldwin v. William F. Buckley Jr. Debate <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbkObXxSUus>

³³⁸ Du Bois, "The Souls of Black Folk," 10.

³³⁹ Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*, 181.

³⁴⁰ Cleaver, *Soul on Ice*, 136.

³⁴¹ Quoted in Ronald K. Porter, "A Rainbow in Black: The Gay Politics of the Black Panther Party," in *Sexualities in Education: A Reader*. Forthcoming.

³⁴² Davis, "Black Nationalism: The Sixties and the Nineties," 291.

³⁴³ D. McBride Carbado, D & Wise, D, "1950-1980: The Protest Era 'I Dream of Your Freedom/as My Victory,'" in *Black Like Us: A Century of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual African American Fiction* (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 2001), 113-14.

³⁴⁴ Huey P. Newton, "A Letter from Huey to the Revolutionary Brothers and Sisters About the Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements," *The Black Panther* 1970, 5.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Quoted in Ronald K. Porter, "A Rainbow in Black: The Gay Politics of the Black Panther Party," in *Sexualities in Education: A Reader*. Forthcoming.

³⁴⁷ Davis, "Black Nationalism: The Sixties and the Nineties," 292.

³⁴⁸ Huey P. Newton and James Baldwin. Photographer Unknown. 1995. *The Legacy of the Panthers: A Photographic Exhibition*. Berkeley, CA: Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation. 61.

³⁴⁹ Nikki Giovanni, *Quilting the Black-Eyed Pea: Poems and Not Quite Poems* (New York: William Morrow/Harper Collins, 2002), 73-74.

Chapter Six
Towards A Holistic Educational Praxis

These dreams are forever...
—Janelle Monáe³⁵⁰

We are now in the midst of a transformative situation. I say this not to be alarmist, although to ignore the massive political, social, geographical, and geological upheavals that are occurring would be an act of unconsciousness.³⁵¹ Unfortunately, unconsciousness is a means of being that we have embraced for far too long. I am not speaking of a negligence of the knowledge of persons, places or events. The amount of knowledge that we have of such things is already overwhelming, and due to the Internet and social networking it is safe to assume that we have access to amounts of information that persons living only twenty years ago could only have dreamed of. What I am speaking of a negligence regarding ourselves: our desires and how we affirm ourselves in the world. While this study has focused primarily on the subject of blackness and masculinity in an American context, I hope it is clear that the crisis of recognition and the denial of desire that I have touched upon transcend the confines of nation and identity. These reflections on Du Bois, Locke, and Baldwin move us to begin an introspective dialogue. It is time that we begin asking the big pedagogical questions: who are you, are you content with your life, and what do you honestly want out of this experience called life.

In this age we have lost touch with such questions, and therefore ourselves. It is rather odd that the posing of such questions is not a natural part of educational curricula, especially because numerous cultures and persons have stressed the importance of knowing the self. Lao Tzu stated, “Knowing others is intelligent. Knowing yourself is enlightened.”³⁵² Sadly, we have come to a moment in history where knowing and trusting yourself in a deep philosophical sense has become taboo. What we are concerned with, especially in the area of education, is how much someone knows about something else and/or how much one can live into a proscribed identity. Paulo Freire was well aware of this, asserting, “Education is suffering from a narration sickness.”³⁵³ I remember when I was in elementary school I would sit there and listen while the teacher would go on and on about things that were not really interesting, but when anyone tried to raise a point that was thought provoking they were shot down. Many of the teachers I had certainly did not appreciate it when their authority over knowledge was challenged, and I was often punished for such actions.

I have used the experiences of Du Bois, Locke, Baldwin, and myself to add the human element to our discourses on educational achievement. If you really sat down with students, especially young black and Latino boys, and asked them what they think of their teachers and the educational system you would probably get some very negative responses. Most young boys and men are well aware of the difference between false charity and true generosity.³⁵⁴ True generosity necessitates being able to relinquish control, while false charity asserts a moral high ground that operates as a masked form of regulation. The need to control others, be it on the micro or macro

levels, comes from an internal place where one's sense of being is in disarray. Rather than pausing and working to alleviate the existential crisis, the person seeks to control others in order to affirm the self. This is essentially why Europe expanded in the way it did. Global colonization was a direct challenge to the discovery of persons and places that systems of European knowledge said did not exist. Rather than pausing and considering what could be learned from these new persons, Europe experienced a collective existential shock and sought to affirm its sense of self through the conquering of others. Our current pedagogical problem is that European modalities of thought, and their manifestations in the United States, can only marshal a very limited means of being human in the modern era. Thus, in terms of race and masculinity, the problem we are facing is not with the white man, but rather with an epistemological tradition that basically posits, "The only way you can be human is by being like us, a specific type of us mind you, and we will show you how to do this even though we will subjugate you at the same time because we are better, even though we are really curious about how you all can dance so good and how you make such exotic artwork, and then one day the world will be just like us and everything will be wonderful." If this past year has taught us anything it is that the current state of the world is not so wonderful.

Unfortunately, the educational system that we have come to embrace is rife with false charity, and therefore has come not to be an institution that enhances the human ability to *know*, but rather a perpetuator of regulation through teaching students that they do not have permission to interrogate the world:

The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable. Or else he expounds on a topic completely alien to the existential experience of the students. His task is to "fill" the students with the contents of his narration—contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance. Words are emptied of their concreteness and become a hallow, alienated, and alienating verbosity.³⁵⁵

Education thus becomes an enterprise in conquest: the conquest of consciousness for the supposed betterment of the social body. However, this conquest is producing a people who do not even know how to function within the social body and at the same time are deathly scared of being alone. Lao Tzu was also keen on this drive to conquer, stating, "Conquering others takes force." However, "Conquering yourself is true strength."³⁵⁶

I would like to return to the question I asked at the beginning of this study, which really was the question I asked myself as soon as I entered elementary school: what does it mean to be human? When I began to research this question formally at U.C. Berkeley and was immediately met with the argument that the human is just another identity that regulates who we are. However, I intuitively knew this was not right, that such a critique operates from a very narrow articulation for a state of being that entertains so much possibility. I then began to understand that our problem is not with the notion of the human, but that we have defined the human in such a narrow way that *we don't allow for different ways of being*. Put rather simply, what it means to be human is to have the ability to trust in one's own judgments and desires in spite of outside forces that try to tell us to do otherwise, or that we are incapable utilizing our powers of imagination. The notion of imagination has become so cliché, but having the ability to

make a creative contribution to the world, in a world that is open to such contributions, is the key to maintaining global balance.

What Du Bois, Locke, and Baldwin were trying to teach us, over the span of a century, is that double consciousness, vindication, and a resulting schizophrenia produce a situation where one cannot trust in oneself. When one does not trust in oneself one gives his power to someone or something else. In other words, one begins to live one's life for the other: a state of being also known as false idolatry. Ours is a situation that cannot be undone by alleviating the "achievement gap." In fact, rather than leaving no child behind, our solution may require leaving children behind in order to allow them to come to terms with their own abilities and unique contribution they will make to the world. And such a contribution need not be subsumed within an identity. The solution is not the exaltation of, for instance, blackness as an identity worthy of being codified, because it is just that, a transient identity. It is not and never should be a static essence. Once you codify what it means to be any identity you automatically stifle growth and change. This will make many uncomfortable, but pause for a second and think: what would it look like if I maneuvered through the world and approached life in a way where I did not have to live through race all the time? How would my life and interests be different? This process is not akin to the colorblindness that is insincere, but it means that we begin to engage in a critique that seeks to make blackness better, joyful, and more allowing of the full spectrum of who we are.

The answer to the question of what it means to be human is that the human can be anything and everything, if we only learn to let go and not be so self-conscious. However, if what I have presented is true then questions of realism immediately come to mind. "All this sounds nice, but how do we go about putting this into practice." In actuality, a great deal of work is emerging regarding how we begin to approach some of these problems. I wish to only add my thought: the establishment of a healthy balance between epistemology and ontology. In other words, a praxis that merges thought and action together to continuously create new ways of being. Building from the thought of Du Bois, Locke, and Baldwin—which was both epistemological and ontological—I want to explore a modality of thought and being called holistic pedagogy.

In the wake of this work I have a few recommendations, which involve changing education into a holistic enterprise. First, as a nation we need to pause and seriously rethink education and the entire educational system. I say this not only based upon what my research illustrates, but also because our current economic climate combined with growing internet access is on the verge of rendering schools as defunct. If schools are primarily supposed to prepare persons for the work force, what purpose do they serve if we are in a limited job situation? If schools are supposed to be places where the learned teach "the people," what happens when people have access to knowledge at home? And in the current situation it would be remiss to speak of job creation, because the very idea of public schooling still prepares students for jobs that no longer exist either because they have gone overseas or because they have become unnecessary in today's economy. Rethinking schools also means rethinking work and our relationship to working. We live in a society where we are taught that we should live to work, especially because many of our identities are subsumed within what we do. However, what if we started thinking in the reverse: working to live instead of living to

work? Imagine how much less stress we would experience, how rates in, for instance, cancer deaths would be drastically reduced.

Second, we need to insert the physical arts and the humanities back into education. For over that past two decades we have seen a drastic reduction of art and physical education programs in schools. No wonder we are dealing with epidemics of childhood obesity and diabetes. However, the introduction of the physical arts and humanities back into education, where they rightfully belong, should not be done as a means of recognition. We need these programs so that students learn very early on that a balance in life requires a balanced mind and body, and such equilibrium cannot be achieved by seeking recognition through artistry or physical strength. While I was writing this dissertation I took up both yoga and running not for someone else, but to maintain my own sense of balance. I also took up yoga without paying money for a class, and by learning to develop my own unique capabilities I can now do things with my body at age 29 that I could not do when I was 15.

Third, we need to begin an honest dialogue regarding the educational hierarchy and how it impacts one's sense of being. Often, this conversation is masked within discourses of guilt, which results in a type of pity party of claiming to act against the system by being in the system. I don't know what that means, but I do know that my educational attainment has the power to make someone else feel less than me. That makes me feel very uncomfortable, especially because we are taught that the only way to assuage this type of worthlessness is to get a degree. But this reasoning has become accepted without reason, because by the system's logic everyone can't get a degree. The maintenance of hierarchy has even been illustrated in the ways in which education as a discipline and educators as subjects have been marginalized, a position that is ridiculous because education deals directly with the development of consciousness and thus is the corner stone of all other disciplines. We have the power not only to critique the K-12 apparatus, but also to look very deeply into modalities of education practiced at the university level that hinder the development of consciousness and a sense of self worth.

The reader may laugh at these recommendations, and she or he is free to do so. But I know that there are those out there who feel what I am saying, and who are tired of the limited sense of what it means to be human that teaches us to be ashamed of ourselves and imprisons us within our own bodies at the expense of health and happiness.³⁵⁷ We are tired of a society and educational system that raises reason and rationality to such a high level that it prevents the capacity to feel, and therefore love. "Somebody...your father or mine, should have told us that not many people have ever died of love. But multitudes have perished, and are perishing every hour—and in the oddest places!—for the lack of it."³⁵⁸ Thus, I strive for a pedagogy that places holistic love at the center. Otherwise, we run the risk of never breaking the spell of emotional solitude that holds all of us captive, and subsequently destroying ourselves. Or, we can finally embrace ourselves and give true meaning to the power that love has to both make the human, as well as fashion the human into a being of infinite possibilities.

³⁵⁰ Janelle Monáe and Saul Williams, "Dance or Die," (Wondaland Arts Society, Bad Boy, 2010).

³⁵¹ This dissertation was written in 2011.

³⁵² Lao-Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, trans. Stephen Addiss and Stanley Lombardo (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993/600 B.C.E.), 33.

³⁵³ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 71.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 45.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 71.

³⁵⁶ Lao-Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, 33.

³⁵⁷ Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 57.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 58.